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More than 3 Million Students Have Been Lost from Texas High Schools Since 1986

Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2009-10, Released by IDRA

"The prospect of losing another 2 to 3 million students leaves no doubt that we must take immediate, comprehensive action," says IDRA president

San Antonio (October 26, 2010) – For the first time in 25 years, the Texas high school attrition rate is below 30 percent. Twenty-nine percent of the freshman class of 2006-07 left school prior to graduating in the 2009-10 school year. Fourteen students per hour leave continue to leave before graduating high school.

Since 1986, Texas high schools have lost 3 million students. "This is the equivalent of losing Houston and Austin over the course of two and half decades," said Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA president and CEO. "And, at the current pace, we could be looking at losing as many as 3.5 million more students – or the entire populations of San Antonio, Dallas, El Paso and Lubbock over the next three decades."

The Intercultural Development Research Association released detailed findings today from its latest study. Key findings show:

- At 29 percent, the overall attrition rate was less than 30 percent for the first time in 25 years.
- About three of every 10 students from the freshman class of 2006-07 left school prior to graduating with a high school diploma – meaning, Texas public schools are failing to graduate one out of every three students.
- The gaps between the attrition rates of White students and of Hispanic students and Black students are dramatically higher than 25 years ago. The gap between the attrition rates of White students and Black students has increased from 7 to 18 percentage points, and the gap between the rates of White students and Hispanic students has increased from 18 to 24 percentage points.
- For the class of 2009-10, Black students and Hispanic students are about two times more likely to leave school without graduating with a diploma than White students.
- Since 1986, Texas schools have lost a cumulative total of more than 3 million students.

A supplemental analysis indicates that, based on one statistical scenario of Texas attrition rate history, **the state will not reach an attrition rate of zero until 2040**. At this pace, the state will lose an additional 1.9 million to 3.5 million students.

IDRA releases its annual attrition study in the October issue of its newsletter, which became available today online at www.idra.org. Attrition rates are an indicator of a school's holding power, or the ability to keep students enrolled in school and learning until they graduate. IDRA is the only organization that has examined Texas attrition rates consistently, with the same methodology, for 25 years. IDRA was commissioned to conduct Texas' first-ever comprehensive state-wide study of high school dropouts using a high school attrition formula to estimate the number and percent of students who leave school prior to graduation. The study in 1986 was the state's first major effort to assess the school holding power of Texas public schools and resulted in state-level policy reforms for the state education agency to count and report dropout data.

IDRA's inaugural study in 1986 found that 33 percent of students had not graduated from Texas public high schools, costing the state \$17 billion in forgone income, lost tax revenues, and increased job training, welfare, unemployment and criminal justice costs. Former state demographer, Steve Murdock has stated that dropouts are 75 percent more likely to be unemployed and far more likely to be living in poverty than graduates. He estimated that if Texas does not address the dropout rate of Hispanic students, in particular, household incomes may drop by about \$6,500. Costs to youth themselves, and their families and communities are immeasurable. Texas economist Ray Perryman estimates that just a 10 percent reduction in dropouts would produce 175,000 new Texas jobs and \$200 billion in economic output.

The annual attrition studies released by IDRA include county-level data by race and ethnicity. **Trend graphs of high school attrition in each Texas county are available online.**

"Investment in change must clearly reflect our full commitment to quality public schools in all neighborhoods for children of all backgrounds," added Dr. Robledo Montecel.

IDRA's **Quality School Action Framework** guides communities and schools in identifying weak areas and strengthening public schools' capacities to graduate and prepare all students for success. IDRA's new book, ***Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework***[™] shows how communities and schools can work together to be successful with all of their students. The book's web page (<http://www.idra.org/couragetconnect>) provides a table of contents, excerpt, related podcasts and other resources. In addition, IDRA has developed a one-page **School Holding Power Checklist** with a set of criteria for assessing and selecting effective dropout prevention strategies and for making sure your school is a quality school.

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IDRA Attrition Study & Resources Online

[2010 Study](#) – Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2009-10 (and [jpg graphics](#))

[Supplemental Analysis](#) – Sluggish Attrition Rate Descent Means 1.9 Million to 3.5 Million More Texas Students May be Lost

[Look Up Your County](#) – See attrition rates and numbers over the last 10 years

Tool – [Quality School Holding Power Checklist](#)

[OurSchool data portal](#) – see district- and high school-level data

[Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework](#)

Overview of the [Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program](#), which keeps 98 percent of students in school

[Ideas and Strategies for Action](#)

Set of [principles for policymakers](#) and school leaders

Classnotes Podcast: [“Counting Dropouts”](#)

[Graduation for All E-letter](#) (English/Spanish)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

www.idra.org

See also www.delicious.com/IDRA for related articles and studies (keyword: dropouts)

IDRA is an independent, private non-profit organization, directed by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., dedicated to creating schools that work for all children. As a vanguard leadership development and research team for more than three decades, IDRA has worked with people to create self-renewing schools that value and empower all children, families and communities. IDRA conducts research and development activities, creates, implements and administers innovative education programs and provides teacher, administrator, and parent training and technical assistance.