



INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
MARÍA "CUCA" ROBLEDÓ MONTECEL, PH.D., PRESIDENT & CEO
5815 CALLAGHAN ROAD, SUITE 101
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78228
210.444.1710 • FAX 210.444.1714
CONTACT@IDRA.ORG • WWW.IDRA.ORG

IDRA Priority Policy Issues for Texas for 2017

Fair Funding Means Equity and Excellence for All Students

IDRA Stands

- All state and local aid made available for public schools should be funded through equalized formulas.
- All hold-harmless revenue, including Target Revenue, must be terminated and those funds should be redistributed through the formulae to help all school districts.
- Efforts to reduce recapture must be done in an equitable manner, and the state must provide additional aid for all districts to make up the difference.
- State aid for underserved students, such as low-income and English learner students, must reflect actual costs.

Why?

The quality of children's education should not be determined by their family income or the neighborhood where they happen to live. In the new context of global competition, excellent schools are needed for all students – not good schools for a few and mediocre ones for the rest. The research is clear: educational resources matter and the state must invest in all children's education. This especially rings true for underserved students, like low-income and English learner (EL) students. Over 30 years ago, the state set their funding four times below the recommended level and it remains unchanged. Forcing schools to play shell games with their funds is a Texas culture that must end now.

See...

- IDRA's [Fair Funding for the Common Good](#) website
- Statement: [Fair Funding is Nonnegotiable – Texas Must Have Excellent Schools for All](#)
- [In School Finance Decision, the Poor People Have Lost Again](#)
- Podcast: [Key Issues in the Texas School Funding Trial](#)
- IDRA's initiative, [Fair Funding Now!](#) for Texas Education
- Testimony: [Equity Matters for All Schoolchildren](#)
- [Low Funding for Educating ELLs Affects Students Across Texas – Symposium Proceedings](#)
- IDRA's [English Language Learner Education](#) website
- Principles for [Fair Funding for the Common Good](#)

Keep the Public in Public Education

IDRA Stands

- Public money must have public oversight and must not be diverted to private interests.
- There must be no further expansion of charter schools and limited public funds for facilities should not be siphoned off for charter schools.

Why?

The best way to strengthen public schools is to strengthen public schools. Diverting public money for private schools and subsidies for the rich takes money away from our communities resulting in higher taxes for homeowners and businesses. More importantly, private school vouchers, education savings accounts (ESAs), charter schools and related schemes are based on life-raft thinking: "saving" a few students while harming the children left behind. They also tend to further segregate students and do not result in improved learning.

See...

- IDRA's [Keeping the Public in Public Schools](#) website
- Testimony: [Texas Needs to Keep Its Eye on the Ball – Keep the Public in Public Schools](#)
- Testimony: [The State of Texas Open-Enrollment Charter Schools and a Modest Proposal to Diversify and Improve Public Charter Schools](#)
- Statement: [Vouchers: Unwise, Unworkable & Unfair](#)
- IDRA Policy Brief: [Why More Charter Schools and School Vouchers Are Not Needed in Texas](#)
- Statement: [HB5 Does Not Have to Block Students from College](#)

Effective Accountability that Supports Schools and Puts Children First

IDRA Stands

- The state's accountability system should be supportive, moving away from the *No Child Left Behind Act's* rigid, punitive structure.
- The state should collect some valid testing data and other performance measures to enable it to hold schools accountable for student achievement with data disaggregated by sub-groups.

- School accountability should be achieved by sample testing, saving millions of state tax dollars and simultaneously eliminating the misuse of tests for such high-stakes, dysfunctional practices as in-grade retention or denial of diplomas.
- The state accountability system must include “opportunity-to-learn metrics,” including resource allocation, college preparation and teacher quality.

Why?

We must make sure our schools are doing a good job with all of our students, and disaggregated data helps us know where to focus improvement efforts. But it is not necessary to test all students to ensure schools are producing good results. Sample testing achieves this and can also prevent misuse of testing data for holding students back or preventing them from graduating. In addition, Congress’ passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* gives Texas an opportunity to focus its accountability system on improving struggling schools through asset-based approaches rather than punishing them. Texas can be a leader in this area by dropping its A-F accountability grading system and avoiding the creation of a state- or privately-controlled “opportunity school district” that strips local control from communities. Instead, the state should add opportunity-to-learn metrics as part of its accountability system, which will allow the state to focus its resources on areas of need, thereby increasing the efficiency of the system.

See...

- IDRA’s [Accountability](#) website
- Article: [Accountability that Doesn’t Hurt Students](#)
- Factsheet on [Accountability that Doesn’t Hurt Students](#)
- [Failing Our Children - Finding Alternatives to In-Grade Retention](#)

Testing that Doesn’t Hurt Children

IDRA Stands

- No single measure should be used to make high-stakes decisions for promotion or graduation.
- The state should continue to graduate students who prove their well-rounded academic qualifications to independent graduation committees.

Why?

Reliance on a single measure fails to consider multiple factors that impact student achievement, including the fact that students have no control over inequitable school resources or the quality of teaching they receive. More importantly, the use of a single test score ignores several other academic achievements, including grades, projects, college readiness measures and teacher recommendations. The independent graduation committees remain a viable option for qualified students and should be continued.

See...

- News Release: [Texas’ temporary policy relieved high-stakes for 6,000 students](#)
- Infographic: [Use of Individual Graduation Committees Unlocks Diplomas for Qualified Students](#)
- Article: [In-Grade Retention in the Early Years – What’s Holding Children Back?](#)
- Article: [Use of Tests When Making High-Stakes Decisions for Students](#)

Instruction for English Learners Must be Bolstered

IDRA Stands

- Laws requiring bilingual education programs in elementary schools must remain, and exceptions must be strongly discouraged.
- Secondary programs for ELs should be revised to require sheltered English instruction in the content areas and training for content area teachers to enable them to adapt their instruction.
- The state should modify its procedures for monitoring EL performance by disaggregating EL performance data for each level of schooling.
- New immigrant students, including refugees, equally deserve a high quality education.

Why?

EL students, with their potential for bilingualism, are a great asset that should be nurtured. Research shows that bilingual and dual language education programs are highly effective in helping EL students learn English while also learning their core subjects. Texas must ensure these programs are properly supported and implemented. But secondary EL students, many of whom only get 45-minute ESL classes each day, do poorly on several metrics. This middle and high school EL under-achievement is masked by the current practice of data reporting that lumps EL student performance across all grade levels. The state must monitor EL performance by school-level data instead, and it must vastly improve its efforts to support schools identified for intervention. Additionally, the state must ensure access to a strong public education for students, including new immigrant and refugee students, who may require more intensive, comprehensive services.

See...

- IDRA’s [English Language Learner Education](#) website
- Testimony: [Texas Must Seize the Opportunity to Improve the Education for English Language Learners](#), Testimony of IDRA on English Language Learners
- [Education of English Language Learners in U.S. and Texas Schools – Where We Are, What We Have Learned and Where We Need to Go from Here](#)
- IDRA’s [Framework for Effective Instruction of Secondary English Language Learners](#)

Higher Education Access for Success

IDRA Stands

- Texas' high school curriculum should prepare all students for college with high quality, rigorous courses.
- In-state tuition rates for all Texas students, including undocumented immigrant students, must remain.
- Funding for need-based financial aid, including the Texas Grant Program, must be increased.
- College tuition must be re-regulated but state aid also must increase to help fill the void.
- No changes should be made to the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan.

Why?

Today's workforce needs many more people to have college degrees. In order to increase access, retention and college completion rates, we need expanded access, improved student financial aid, and strengthened support programs. High schools must ensure that all students receive a rigorous course of study that prepares them for college. Re-regulation of high tuition rates is desperately needed, but the state must ensure that it adequately

supports the state's colleges and students needing assistance. This includes in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrant students who are a vital part of our future. The Top Ten Percent Plan is helping to increase the number and diversity of students applying for and enrolling in Texas colleges and universities. It has increased the number of high schools that are sending their students to the state's top institutions and remains one of the state's most successful policies.

See...

- [College Bound and Determined](#)– A report profiling what happens when a school district raises expectations for students instead of lowering them
- IDRA's [Access to College](#) website
- Policy solutions for [Latino Access to College](#)
- IDRA's book, [Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework™](#)
- "Of Course the Top Ten Percent is Constitutional... And It's Pretty Good Policy Too," [Texas Hispanic Journal of Law and Policy](#)
- [Top Ten Percent Plan in Texas](#) resources
- [Expecting Less is Not Better](#) bilingual statement
- Statement: [HB5 Does Not Have to Block Students from College](#)

The issues identified above highlight priorities for the upcoming session but readers should know that IDRA works with its partners in many other important areas, including early childhood, school discipline, bullying, multicultural education, school integration, teacher and teaching quality, and sex/gender equity.

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization, led by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.

For more questions, please contact our National Director of Policy, David Hinojosa, J.D., at david.hinojosa@idra.org.