

A History of IDRA Policy Work to Secure Excellent and Equitable Schooling for All Children

Year	Event	Issue/Community Concern	Result	IDRA Role	Related Links
1973	Rodríguez vs. San Antonio ISD	<p>Is inequity in school funding prohibited by the federal constitution?</p> <p>What is the impact of funding on the quality of schools?</p>	The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that education is not fundamental right in the U.S. Constitution; it rather is an issue to be resolved at the state level.	Future IDRA leaders provided research and strategic technical assistance to lawyers and advocate groups. Following the decision, IDRA participated in each reform study group, attended each session of the Texas legislature and provided research data to promote fair funding.	<p>“Fiscal Inequities in Texas School Finance: An Empirical Analysis of Who is Injured,” by Robert Brischetto</p> <p>“Destined to Get an Equitable System of School Funding,” by Anna Alicia Romero, September 2001</p>
1975	Texas HB1126 adopted	<p>Is inequity in Texas school funding to be addressed?</p> <p>Was this enough for all schools to be of high quality?</p>	The Texas school funding system was reformed. Equalization aid was created, and bilingual and compensatory education funding was created.	IDRA provided research and technical assistance to policymakers and advocated for more equity in funding. IDRA also launched a statewide information campaign on the issue.	“Insufficient Funding for Bilingual Education in Texas,” by Albert Cortez, Ph.D., February 2004

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1977	Texas SB1 adopted	Need for additional changes to make school funding more equitable. Again, is this enough?	Further changes to equalized funding were adopted. Equalization aid was tripled.	IDRA provided research and technical assistance to policymakers and advocated for more equity in funding.	<p>“Senate Bill 1 revises distribution of state aid,” by Albert Cortez, August 1977</p> <p>“SB1 rewards superintendents; steps 11, 12, & 13 aid teachers,” by Sam Lester, August 1977</p> <p>“Bridging the Gap Between Schools and Families: A Family Friendly Approach,” by Anita M. Foxworth, Ph.D., June-July 2000</p> <p>“Families United for Education Conversations with Parents and Friends, editorial,” by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., September 1996</p>
1980	U.S. vs. Texas motion to enforce filed	Inadequate education of English learners in Texas. Does this ensure high quality of schooling for all students?	The federal court ruled that Texas needs to adopt bilingual education/ESL programs for K-12.	IDRA provided expert testimony on the poor quality of programs for Texas ELs.	“Court Rules in U.S. vs. Texas,” January 1981
1981	Texas SB 477 adopted	Need for statewide policy on instruction of ELs. Does this meet the court mandate?	State-mandated bilingual elementary programs, and ESL secondary programs were established with corresponding funding.	IDRA provided technical assistance to policymakers drafting state policy regarding EL education and testified at legislative hearings. IDRA also coordinated strategies among policymakers and EL advocacy groups.	“Third Major Piece of Legislation Affecting Bilingual Education,” by Abelardo Villarreal and Dolores Cardenas, July 1981

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1981	Texas HB 1 adopted. First time school funding is included in an appropriations bill.	Need to increase equity in funding. Did the legislation go far enough?	Equalization aid was increased by 25 percent.	IDRA provided research and technical assistance to policymakers and advocates fighting for more equity in funding.	“Texas Legislature Increases Funding for Texas Public Schools,” by Albert Cortez, July 1981
1982	Doe vs. Plyler	Challenge to policy that denied access to public education to undocumented immigrant children. What is the impact of excluding immigrant children from schools?	The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that denial of education to innocent immigrant children violates the U.S. Constitution and created a new intermediate review standard where damage to children was weighted against state interests.	IDRA provided expert testimony in the case and publicized the ruling to immigrant communities and organizations working with them. IDRA also worked with policymakers and advocates to fend off efforts to adopt policies that were designed to discourage immigrant student enrollment.	“Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Undocumented Children,” by Albert Cortez and Sharon Sepúlveda-Hassell, August 1982 “Court Rules in US v Texas,” January 1981 Education of Immigrant Children, IDRA website
1984	Texas HB72 adopted	Major reforms in education pushed but included more funding in exchange for more accountability. Do the curriculum and funding reforms accomplish all that is needed for all children to have an excellent education?	Changes were adopted in Texas, including standardized curricula, introduction of state testing and assessment-based accountability; pupil-based funding, extra funding for educating ELLs and low-income students using weighted funding. Equalization funding was increased.	IDRA provided expert testimony on the need for greater equity, targeted funding for EL and low-income students, and more school-focused accountability. IDRA analyzed the impact of proposed reforms on funding equity and support for special population students. IDRA worked with IAF to support adoption of school finance reform as that organization’s first state-level focused reform effort.	“A Decade of School Finance Reform,” August 1984 “Highlights of the Education Reform Bill Passed by the 68th Texas Legislature, Second Called Session June 4 – July 2, 1984,” by Jesse Bernal, August 1984

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1984	Edgewood I filed	Lack of legislative action to seriously address inequities led to decision to launch legal challenge. Is the funding equitable?	The Texas system of school funding inequity was ruled unconstitutional in 1988.	IDRA convened legal and research experts to identify the right time for state litigation. IDRA also conducted extensive research on the extent of funding inequity and reforms needed and provided expert testimony at state court trial.	"Constitutionality of Texas School Finance System Challenged," by Albert Cortez, June 1984
1986	IDRA commissioned to conduct Texas' first statewide dropout study	Up to 1986, Texas schools did not collect or report any data related to high school dropouts. Who are the children not in school and in what numbers?	After conducting and disseminating research, the state adopted HB 1010 which mandated counting and reporting of dropouts and implementation of dropout prevention efforts.	IDRA conducted research on dropout counts and percentages (attrition rates), existing dropout prevention programs, and evaluation of effectiveness. IDRA's report included policy reform recommendations. IDRA worked with policymakers and advocates in drafting policy reforms needed to address issues and has continued to release updated attrition studies every year thereafter.	"The Texas School Dropout Survey Project: A Summary of Findings," November 1986 "Texas School Holding Power – Past, Present and Future," by Josie Danini Cortez, M.A., October 2006
1990	Texas SB1 Adopted. Cosmetic changes made to Texas school finance system	Texas drafts a weak plan that includes minor reforms in response to 1989 Texas Supreme Court ruling.	Changes were so weak that MALDEF and equity advocates challenged the revised funding system.	IDRA conducted research on reforms adopted in 1990 to assess impact on equity and recommended a new state court challenge to funding system.	"Senate Bill 1 Non-Finance Provisions," by Albert Cortez, August 1990
1991	Edgewood II filed. Texas Supreme Court rules revised funding system unconstitutional.	The Texas Legislature's adoption of new – still inequitable – state funding system required a court new challenge	The Texas district court ruled that the state did not go far enough in changes to system to achieve equity. Texas Supreme Court again ruled that the Texas system of funding schools is unconstitutional.	IDRA conducted equity analyses of 1990 reforms, provided technical assistance to attorneys involved in case and provided expert testimony. IDRA supported legal efforts in presentations before the Texas Supreme Court.	"Supreme Court Narrows Finance Reform Parameter," by Dr. José A. Cárdenas, February 1991

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1991	Texas SB350 adopted. Creates County Education Districts-based funding	Major disparities in district property wealth that were at the center of inequitable funding were neutralized by new funding plan. Are the disparities reduced?	New CED system greatly reduced inequities but drew strong reaction from wealthy school districts.	IDRA conducted initial research on the alternative, “county based” funding plans and provided technical assistance in designing a new system and in explaining the plan to policymakers, advocates and community groups.	“Senate Enacts Equitable Finance Plan,” by José A. Cárdenas and Albert Cortez, March 1991 “Texas Legislature Adopts School Funding Plan,” by Albert Cortez, May 1991
1991	Edgewood III filed challenging CED-based funding system	Wealthy school districts oppose consolidating tax bases for funding because they lose advantages and thus decide to challenge the Texas school funding system.	The Texas Supreme Court overturned the CED-based system stating that wealthy school districts needed to vote to agree to share property bases.	IDRA provided testimony in the case verifying the greater equity achieved in the county-based funding system.	“Wealthy Districts File Suit Challenging Constitutionality of Senate Bill 351,” by Albert Cortez, June 1991
1992	CED-based system ruled unconstitutional	Although the new system closed funding gaps, the Texas Supreme Court rules that the new system was unconstitutional because local districts did not “vote” to share local property revenue. Was this an improvement on the previous system?	The third revision of the funding plan was rejected, prompting the need for creating a new funding system.	IDRA provided technical assistance to policymakers on the advantages of the CED-based plan and worked with advocates on a constitutional amendment referendum.	“Supreme Court Overturns New Texas Plan,” by Albert Cortez, March 1992 (pdf) “Governor Richards Decides to Delay Special Session – Legislators Struggle with Options for Respond to Edgewood III Decision,” by Albert Cortez, June 1992 (pdf)

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1993	Texas SB7 adopted	New system of school funding neutralizes wealth disparities by giving districts several “options” to equalize wealth.	New school funding system was designed to reduce disparities from several thousand to less than \$700 per pupil.	IDRA provided technical assistance to policymakers and advocates on the impact of funding reforms and provided advice and technical assistance related to proposed litigation.	<p>“School Finance Update: Senate Bill 7 is Legislators’ Latest Attempt at Equity,” by Albert Cortez, June-July 1993 (pdf)</p> <p>“School Finance Reform and Intra-District Equity: An Excerpt,” by José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D., March 1997</p>
1994	Edgewood IV challenges the Texas revised school finance system	Equity advocates argue that the system does not go far enough in reducing gaps (left at \$700 per pupil by SB 7). Did this open the door to make the funding more equitable?	Texas system of funding schools was finally ruled constitutional in 1995.	IDRA provided technical assistance to assess school funding inequities left in the revised system and provided expert testimony in the case.	<p>“The Texas Supreme Court’s Decision in Edgewood IV: Findings, Implications, and Next Steps,” by Albert Cortez, March 1995</p>
1997	Texas HB588, commonly referred to as the “Top 10 Percent Plan”	The law guarantees Texas students who graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school class automatic admission to all state-funded universities.	The bill was created as a means to avoid the stipulations from the <i>Hopwood v. Texas</i> appeals court case banning the use of affirmative action	IDRA conducted research on implications of the proposals and provided technical assistance to policymakers and advocates.	<p>“Since When are Good Grades and Diversity a Bad Thing? – 7 Recommendations and the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan,” by David Hinojosa, J.D., February 2017</p> <p>“Texas Legislature Considers Much for Education, Accomplishes Little,” by Albert Cortez, Ph.D. and Anna Alicia Romero, August 1997</p>

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1999	Texas' 78 th legislative session	Funding for schools, addressing pay disparities contributing to the teacher shortage. Voucher proposals threaten public school success.	The 76 th Texas Legislature approved a \$2.5 billion increase in state funding for education over the biennium, and a \$3000 teacher salary increase.	IDRA provided research and expert testimony. IDRA organized the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education comprising community organizations and individuals who support the use of public money for neighborhood public schools and who oppose any effort to divert public tax funds to subsidize private education.	"Texas Legislative Update," by Albert Cortez, Ph.D., August 1999 "For Our Children: Preserving Our Neighborhood Public Schools," March 8, 1999
2001	Texas Latino Education Coalition established	TLEC would have the opportunity to bring advocates together with a common voice for education in the state.	The coalition focuses on critical educational issues in Texas and improve the state of education for Latino students in public schools, to include equitable funding and quality education for all Latino students.	IDRA convened a group of organizations and individuals to establish the Texas Latino Education Coalition. Representing thousands of Texans, founding member organizations included: IDRA, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Mexican American School Board Members Association, League of United Latin American Citizens, among many others.	Texas Latino Education Coalition, web page

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2002	Zelman v. Simmons-Harris	Public funding for private school, taking funds away from poor schools via vouchers.	The United States Supreme court upheld that public money can be used to fund school vouchers.	In Texas' voucher battle, IDRA has provided expert research and testimony on the importance of keeping public money in public schools and addressing raising the standards and ability of neighborhood campuses.	"Supreme Court Ruling Bad for Neighborhood Public Schools," by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., June-July 2002
2005	West Orange-Cove challenging the "adequacy" of the existing funding plan is filed by wealthy school districts. Equity plaintiffs intervene in the case to challenge level of equity in system	Wealthy Texas school districts cite increased requirements not supported by adequate funding. Equity advocates take stance that the system provided funding that is inadequate and inequitable.	Legislators back-tracked on the 1995 commitment to make the system equitable.	IDRA provided technical assistance in assessing funding school inequities left in the revised system and provided expert testimony in the case.	General Information West Orange-Cove, web page West Orange-Cove Ruling, web page
2005	Texas' 79th legislative session	The West Orange-Cove required the state to modify the funding system in 2005 to correct constitutional violations	The legislature held a special session and passed HB1. Most of the new funding was used for tax reductions and very little for actual increased spending.	IDRA launched Texans for Fair Funding website that showed how schools are funded, what's at stake, and what people can do about it. The website and initiative were cosponsored by TLEC.	"Upcoming 2007 Texas Legislative Session – Key Issues and Expectations," by Albert Cortez, Ph.D., November–December 2006
2007	No Child Left Behind Act renewed	Reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)	NCLB was is one of the most far-reaching education reform efforts since the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Brown vs. Board of Education that separate is not equal.	IDRA presented testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor about dropout prevention and student engagement strategies.	"Graduation for All Students- Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement Strategies and the Reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act," by María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., June-July 2007

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2009	Texas Top Ten Percent Plan revised	Texas policymakers considered whether or not to water-down the successful Texas Top Ten Percent Plan	Changes slightly limited automatic admissions beginning in the fall of 2011 to UT Austin only. But this policy opened the door to additional limitations at UT Austin in the future.	IDRA provided analysis on the impact of proposals and engaged in a community education effort to clarify the changes.	"Update on Texas Top 10% Plan for Your Students," 2009
2009	Treatment of immigrant children at the T. Don Hutto Family Detention Center	Learning conditions were inappropriate to the minors' level of development, basic academic competencies were not adequately taught, and EL curriculum was not in compliance with Texas state requirements. Hutto was in violation of Flores v. Meese.	The administration committed to ending family detention at Hutto in 2009.	The American Civil Liberties Union contracted with IDRA to conduct a thorough review of the education records for all plaintiffs, analyze teaching credentials of the Hutto instructional staff, read 28 additional documents submitted by ACLU and observe the classrooms of the T. Don Hutto Family Detention Center.	"Tools for Action – Enlightened Public Policy," 2007
2011	Texas lawmakers cut \$6.4 billion for public education	Instead of ending funding disparities, the Texas legislature walked away – pushing millions of Texas children aside.	12,000 teachers got pink slips, classrooms were more crowded, and qualified college students lost scholarship funds.	IDRA's Fair Funding Now! initiative helped communities across the state get information and speak out against the state's funding cuts and to stress their desire to guarantee that all children graduate ready for college and career.	"Fair Funding is Essential to Having Excellent Schools for All Texas Students," by María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., November-December 2011

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2012	Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition, et al. vs. Williams	More than 600 school districts file five different court challenges to the current system of school funding (the cases were consolidated into one).	Texas district court issued a bench ruling that the Texas school funding system is both inadequate and inequitable.	IDRA provided research and expert testimony for MALDEF suit on the status of funding inequity and inadequate funding for poor and EL students affecting all school districts.	“IDRA Director of Policy, Dr. Albert Cortez, Testifies in School Finance Case Analysis Shows Wide Funding Disparities – Educational Opportunity in Texas Depends on Where You Live,” December 5, 2012
2013	HB1 adopted with new funding. State district court re-opens the Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition, et al. vs. Williams case	State district court re-opens the case to assess impact of new funding on adequacy and equity.	New state district court hearing was scheduled. The court later issues extensive findings concluding system is inequitable and inadequate.	IDRA provided expert testimony in the new phase of the case.	“The Latest Texas School Finance Equity and Adequacy Court Case – Round Six Texas Taxpayers and Student Fairness Coalition et al vs. Williams,” by Albert Cortez, Ph.D., February 2014 “Court Rules Again: Texas School Funding Must Serve All Students Equitably – IDRA Statement on the Texas District Court Ruling on Texas School Finance System.” by Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, September 2014

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2013	HB5 reducing number of end-of-course tests and weakening graduation requirements	Community groups were concerned that the required 4x4 (4 math, 4 science, 4 English, 4 social studies) was ended and a new element called, “endorsements,” was added which might relegate poor and of color students to non-college strands.	IDRA and community organizations informed families, convened meetings on the issue and began studying the policy’s impact.	IDRA provided testimony before the legislature and State Board of Education, convened community groups to clarify the new policy, and conducted training on the key issues for families.	<p>“A Post Session Assessment of Texas Education Policy Changes Considered, Adopted and Rejected in 2013.” by Albert Cortez, Ph.D., August 2013</p> <p>“Texas Endorsement System Threatens to Track Poor and Minority Students – IDRA Calls on Texas State Board of Education to Ensure All Students Have Access to High Quality Curriculum.” November-December 2013</p> <p>“Ready Texas – Gathering Stakeholder Input to Guide Research on New Texas High School Graduation Plans.” by Laurie Posner, M.P.A., March 2016</p> <p>“More Comprehensive Advising Needed in the Aftermath of Changes to Texas High School Curriculum Requirements.” by Albert Cortez, Ph.D., August 2015</p> <p>IDRA Infographic – Ready Texas Graduation Requirements Study, 2017</p>

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2015	Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition, et al. vs. Williams Supreme Court Appeal	Texas Supreme Court hears appeal of the case by the state charter schools and wealthy school districts	Court takes argument under review	IDRA coordinated important amicus briefs on equity and why money matters. Assisted MALDEF attorneys for oral argument.	“Court Can End Neglect of Millions of School Children – Texas Supreme Court School Finance Hearing Held.” September 2015
2015	Fisher vs. Ex II, U.S. Supreme Court	Caucasian student challenges UT Austin's use of race in admissions	Supreme Court affirms racial diversity as a compelling interest for universities and allows UT Austin's holistic admissions process to continue.	IDRA wrote an amicus brief of the impact of harmful education policies for Latino and African American students in K-12 in Texas and the important benefits resulting from diversity. IDRA consulted with groups on other briefs.	IDRA Amicus Brief, SCOTUS Blog, October 30, 2015
2015	Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) adopted	Reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)	ESSA advanced some civil rights protections, but it also was saddled with many questionable provisions and uncertainty.	IDRA identified key issues in the ESEA reauthorization that are vital to ensuring high quality education for all students	The New Every Student Succeeds Act – Progress and Promise or Retreat and Surrender, IDRA, December 15, 2015
2016	Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition, et al. vs. Williams Appeal to Texas Supreme Court	Texas Supreme Court issues ruling	Court lowered legal standards of equity and adequacy	IDRA consulted with statewide groups and legislators, conducting analysis of the decision and its impact on the education of under-served children.	“Fair Funding is Nonnegotiable – Texas Must Have Excellent Schools for All: The Texas Supreme Court Ruling Does not Excuse State Policymakers from Putting Texas Children First,” IDRA, Friday May 13, 2016

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2017	Texas' 85th legislative session and special session	Issues in the session included school funding, special population funding, diverting public money for private schooling, Texas Top Ten Percent plan	No significant school funding improvements were made.	IDRA and TLEC presented testimony and analysis for many hearings and meetings.	25 Education Groups Push Texas Leaders to Invest in High Quality Public Education for All Children , July 21, 2017
2018	Texas School Finance Commission hearings on school finance	Senate committee held interim session hearings on school funding	Hearings will inform the 2019 session.	IDRA presented testimony on research and analysis to inform the legislature's policy work prior to the 2019 session.	"What the Research Says on Expanding High Quality Educational Opportunities for All Students," by David Hinojosa, April 4, 2018

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization, led by María "Cuca" 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.

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