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Welcome to Graduation for All! • www.idra.org • October 2007

Dropout Rates High: It's Time for Bold Action. Welcome to [Graduation for All](#) - a monthly e-letter providing research, tools and resources for people concerned about the dropout issue and taking action to strengthen schools. To unsubscribe, click the link at the bottom of this e-mail.

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Schools and Communities in Action

Important News: 2007 IDRA Annual Attrition study findings are in – please see “TOOLS” section below for a briefing. For full details on the study released today, visit <http://www.idra.org/Research/Attrition/>.



IDRA [School Holding Power Portal](#) powers up for school-community partners in Texas.

- *Are students at my school on track to graduate and go to college?*
- *Are high disappearance rates of students a problem at my school?*
- *How well is my school preparing students to succeed academically?*
- *What can I do?*

Pilot tested with school and community leaders, parents and students, [IDRA's School Holding Power Portal](#) is a web-based tool that helps schools and communities get key data to: assess dropout rates; find out how well schools are holding on to students and preparing them for college; and partner and take action to strengthen schools. Where there is little formal data on a particular feature, you'll find a set of starter questions to help find out more about your local neighborhood public school. Visit IDRA's School Holding Power Portal at www.idra.org/portal. Organized around IDRA's [Quality Schools Action Framework](#), the portal provides:

- Easy-to-use tables and comparison graphs on student outcomes and the core features (e.g., teaching quality, curriculum quality and access) that make up strong schools.
- Links to attrition rates for every county in Texas, based on IDRA's annual attrition research and the disappearance rates* for every campus.
- Email feature you can use to share data with others and attach charts or graphs, keep track of your own notes, or call a community-school meeting to work on a specific issue.

*Disappearance rates, courtesy of Dr. Ed Fuller, UT Austin, are calculated by comparing 9th Grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) score sheets with 11th grade score sheets, providing data at the campus- or district-level.

School, Community and Parent Leaders in Texas: IDRA is working with schools, community groups, youth, business and parent leaders to draw on data from the School Holding Power Portal as part of school capacity-building, local and regional forums, needs assessments and community-school action planning. To find out more, please contact us now at: gradforall@idra.org.

KentuckyCAN to promote education beyond high school. A new coalition in Kentucky reports that of

every 100 Kentucky ninth graders, 65 graduate from high school, 39 enter college and only 15 earn a college degree. The coalition has vowed to improve these odds. KentuckyCAN, just launched by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and Kentucky's Council for Postsecondary Education, with funding from the Lumina Foundation, will develop a cross-state network of business, civic and youth groups, educators and policymakers and knit together secondary and postsecondary programs to "create a college-going culture" throughout the state. KentuckyCAN will use the website GoHigherKY.org to provide youth and their families information on college admission and costs, virtual campus tours and careers. To find out more about this statewide cross-sector coalition model and interactive online tools, visit the Prichard Committee online at www.prichardcommittee.org and GoHigherKY.org.

Communities in Schools - from the outside in. In "[Battling the Dropout Epidemic](#)," a blog on an October issue of the [Huffington Post](#), William Milliken, founder and vice chairman of Communities in Schools, describes the path of his work from storefront schools in Harlem in 1965 to today's partnerships with public schools. A key reason for the shift, Milliken notes, is that by the time students had left "...they had already been scarred by the failures of the system... We had to find a way to move our operation inside the public schools, and reach potential dropouts before they quit." Click [here](#) for the full article. Speaking of this, Communities in Schools national conference [Leadership for Change: A Nation Without Dropouts](#) takes place October 31-Nov. 4, 2007 in Atlanta. A schedule of workshops can be found [here](#). We will be there, presenting on IDRA's [Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program](#) in "Best Practices."

Give Kids Good Schools. October 15-21 was *Give Kids Good Schools Week*, a national campaign spearheaded by the Public Education Network to provide resources and information people can use to improve local public schools. You may have hosted a Give Kids Good Schools site visit to spotlight best practices or a community forum. To keep up the momentum, [visit the campaign online](#), where you'll find links to key issues, quick facts on public schools, and the "411" on what others are doing locally and statewide.

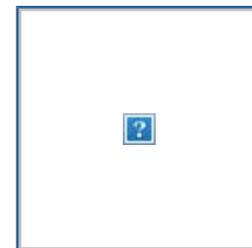
PTA Grassroots Advocacy Kit Online. This kit provides a step-by-step guide for defining issues and mobilizing local, state and national action to improve programs and policies on behalf of children. Check it out at: <http://www.pta.org/advocacy/>.

Youth Voices

"You showed us all the doors in the future and taught us how to open those doors." - Former tutor, IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program in Mesa, Arizona. In 2007, she is in her freshman year at the University of Arizona College of Nursing on a full scholarship.

Toolbox

Findings from [IDRA's 2007 IDRA Annual Attrition Study](#) are in: Texas attrition rates remain high overall; grow worse for some groups. IDRA has conducted research on the dropout issue in Texas since 1986, providing a 2-decade snapshot of trends, data for every county in the state, and a comprehensive look at state progress on this issue. The IDRA study is based on an enrollment methodology, a model for calculating attrition rates that is now widely used by independent researchers to examine data in other states.



Key findings are:

- **Texas public schools are failing to graduate one out of every three students.** Today, Texas has a 34 percent rate of attrition - higher than the 33 percent rate that so alarmed Texans back in 1986.
- **Texas schools are losing a student every four minutes.**
- In 2006-07, **134,676 students were lost from public school enrollment** in Texas.
- **The attrition rate in 2006-07 was more than 40 percent for Black students and Hispanic students.** Attrition rates for Native American students have declined from 45 percent in the inaugural study to 35 percent today; Asian/Pacific Islander students have seen the greatest improvement (a decline in attrition rates from 33 percent in 1985-86 to 14 percent in 2006-07).
- **Gaps are growing.** The gap between the attrition rates of White students and Black students has increased from 7 percentage points in 1985-86 to 20 percentage points in 2006-07. The gap between attrition rates of White students and Hispanic students has increased from 18 to 25 percentage points during this same period.
- **Rates are worsening for boys.** Attrition rates for male students have increased from 35 percent to

37 percent since our first study.

- Since IDRA's first study, **more than 2.6 million students have been lost** from public schools.

Click [here](#) for complete findings from the 2007 IDRA Annual Attrition study, including data on every county in Texas, and longitudinal outcomes, spanning two decades of research at IDRA's October 2007 newsletter includes a full analyses.

Official Counts in Texas Mount

In 2004-05, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported that 18,290 seven to 12th grade students had dropped out. In 2005-06, the number of dropouts surged to 51,841 students—an increase of 183%. (The annual dropout rate increased from 0.9 in 2004-05 to 2.6 in 2005-06.) Why the change? The 78th Legislature in 2003 mandated that TEA calculate dropout rates based on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definition. To learn more, see TEA's report "[Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools 2005-06](#)" and "Texas Education Agency – Reported Dropout Count Swells" an article by Roy Johnson, director of IDRA Support Services, online at www.idra.org.

Take action! For more tools and resources, visit IDRA's [School Holding Power action page](#), where you'll find [policy principles](#), strategies for individuals and communities, and [action steps for parents](#) (in English and [Spanish](#)).

Have a story of school-community partnership that's raising graduation rates? - Let us hear from you. You received this e-letter either because you've expressed interest in the topic or somebody who likes you forwarded it to you. To submit question or comment, send e-mail to gradforall@idra.org.

Tell a friend. Feel free to [forward Grad4All](#) to anyone who shares a passion for every student's success.

The [Intercultural Development Research Association](#) is an independent, private non-profit organization whose mission is to create schools that work for all children.

Thanks for reading!

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