



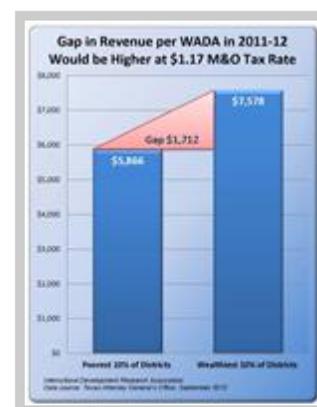
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IDRA Director of Policy, Dr. Albert Cortez, Testifies in School Finance Case

Analysis Shows Wide Funding Disparities – Educational Opportunity in Texas Depends on Where You Live

San Antonio (December 5, 2012) – Dr. Albert Cortez, IDRA director of policy, presented expert testimony this week based on IDRA's analysis of school funding equity across the state. More than half of the school districts in Texas – representing three-fourths of the students – have sued the state for its failure to provide sufficient and equitable funding to ensure all students graduate prepared for college and career.

“Based on IDRA's most recent analysis of data on school district revenues, we found that the Texas system of school finance is still inequitable, inadequate, arbitrary and inefficient,” summarized Dr. Cortez.



He reported that re-introduction of unequalized funding has expanded funding disparities between wealthy and poor school districts. If all school districts taxed at the maximum rate of \$1.17, the revenue gap per student (weighted) between the poorest and wealthiest decile of school districts in 2009-10 would be \$1,806 – a difference of 31 percent. This translates to a total disparity of \$36,120 for a classroom of 20 students.

He also reported that low wealth school districts would need higher tax efforts to generate the same yields as high wealth districts. And those higher tax rates are above the current ceiling allowed.

Dr. Cortez testified that the disparities across school districts are exacerbated by the underfunding of education for special population students – in this case students served in bilingual education/ESL programs and those eligible for free and reduced-price lunch-based compensatory education programs. He presented research showing that English learner education and compensatory education each costs an average of 40 percent of a school district's regular program costs. But since the adoption in Texas of the 10 percent add-on weight for bilingual and ESL programs and the 20 percent add-on weight for state compensatory education programs in 1984, no change in those original weights has been adopted.

Disparities in funding per student impact school districts' ability to hold on to students until graduation. High school attrition rates vary dramatically between the lowest property wealth district grouping (35 percent) and the highest property wealth district grouping (15 percent) in Texas.

And while all school districts suffered from special program cuts, the state's lowest property wealth districts experienced on average larger cuts per student at \$253 per student and accounted for 13 percent of special program cuts suffered by all public school districts.

“All of these results suggest that Texas still has a long way to go to achieve the objective of providing equal educational opportunity for all of students,” stated Dr. Cortez. “Low-income and minority students in Texas are more likely to be in under-resourced schools with limited access to quality teaching and curriculum. In Texas, the quality of schooling still seems to be markedly affected by the neighborhood in which you happen to reside.”

“This testimony continues IDRA’s 40 years of serving at the forefront of school finance reform efforts in Texas and other states,” said Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President. “We must ensure that Texas provides equitable access to excellent education – to high quality curricula, good teaching, support services and facilities – for all students in all school districts. Texas can’t compete in the global marketplace if we do not get serious about creating top quality schooling for all students.”

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IDRA has created a dashboard to collect news about the school finance trial for easy access for parents, school folk & communities that provides the latest news stories, live tweets, images, and related websites. Visit: [Texas School Finance Trial Dashboard](#).

Call for Fair Funding Now!

Following the Texas legislature’s recent adoption of substantial cuts to public education using inequitable mechanisms that have increased funding disparities across Texas school districts, IDRA has launched an initiative to help communities across the state as they take action to make sure that schools are equipped to guarantee that all children graduate ready for college and career. More information about Fair Funding Now! Excellent Schools for All Texas Students including sample resolutions, Powerpoint presentations, infographics and litigation news is online at [IDRA Fair Funding Now!](#)

The **Intercultural Development Research Association** is an independent private non-profit organization dedicated to realizing the right of every child to a quality education. 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.

IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.

We are a small organization with a powerful mission: to create schools that work for *all* children.



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