



Texas High Schools Lost 1 in 5 Students Last Year It Has Taken Over 3 Decades to Improve by Just 11 Points 33rd Annual Texas Public School Attrition Study Released by IDRA

San Antonio (December 6, 2018) – The Texas high school attrition rate has declined from 24 percent last year to 22 percent in 2017-18 – the lowest rate in over three decades. In 1985-86, when IDRA conducted the state’s first attrition study, the rate was 33 percent and grew as high as 43 percent in later years. It has taken over three decades to improve by 11 percentage points. At this pace, Texas will not reach universal high school education for another two decades and stands to lose over 2.3 million more students.

The Intercultural Development Research Association [released detailed findings today](#) from its latest study – which examines time series data. Key findings show:

- Texas is failing to graduate one **out of every five students** – which translates to losing 11 students per hour. The statewide attrition rate is 22 percent.
- Texas high schools **lost 94,767 students** in 2017-18.
- At this rate, Texas will not reach universal high school education for **another two decades in 2038**.
- Black students and Hispanic students are about **two times more likely** to leave school without graduating with a diploma than White students.
- In the last 33 years, Texas schools have lost a **cumulative total of more than 3.8 million students** from public high school enrollment prior to graduation.
- **136 counties had improved attrition rates** since last year, 85 counties had higher attrition rates and 10 counties remained the same.

“Clearly, some school districts are taking steps to improve their school holding power, and their investment in dropout prevention programs and college readiness initiatives is paying off,” added [Dr. Robledo Montecel](#).

“But much of our state leadership has shown a willingness to neglect many of our students and their families by weakening curriculum and graduation requirements and by withholding fair funding that would pay for vital teachers and programs,” she said.

IDRA released a report, [College Bound and Determined](#), in February 2014 showing how one south Texas school district transformed itself from low achievement and low expectations to planning for all students to graduate from high school and college. The result was a school district that **doubled its number of high school graduates, cut dropout rates in half and**

increased college-going rates. Half of the district's students are earning college credit while still in high school.

"Given the demographics in our public schools, Texas cannot afford to educate some students and not others," said Dr. Robledo Montecel. "We cannot continue funding gaps; we cannot put our children in over-crowded classes; we cannot dumb down the curriculum and track our kids into vocational classes; we cannot cut college financial aid; and we cannot release schools from their responsibility to provide an excellent education for every child."

"Since this problem is systemic, the solutions must address schools as systems," 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 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.

Each fall, IDRA releases its attrition study. The latest study became [available today](#). 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 was commissioned to conduct Texas' first-ever comprehensive statewide 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. That 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 is the only organization that has examined Texas attrition rates consistently, with the same methodology, for 33 years.

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](#). The study includes detailed findings, a **supplemental analysis for reaching a rate of zero** and graphics showing different types of dropout data.

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