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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

Friday May 13, 2016



In its ruling today on school funding, the Texas Supreme Court failed to ensure the constitutional right to a quality education for school children in the state of Texas. The court issued its decision in the Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition vs. Michael Williams, et al., case. Previously, the Texas District Court ruled that the current funding system is “constitutionally inadequate, unsuitable and financially inefficient.”

The Texas Supreme Court stated however, “Despite the imperfections of the current school funding regime, it meets minimum constitutional requirements.”

“The record overwhelmingly shows that, while our children are capable of so much, many are not being provided equitable opportunity to succeed in the classroom,” stated Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President.

“In particular, the Texas Supreme Court trivialized the lack of achievement and opportunity for low-income students and English learners,” added David Hinojosa, J.D., IDRA National Director of Policy, who served as MALDEF’s lead counsel in the case at the district court level.

IDRA released a study last year finding that Texas is significantly underfunding ELL education, with supplemental funding of only 10 percent despite research indicating weights of 40 percent, 50 percent or higher are needed. No secondary schools in Texas are consistently exceeding academic benchmarks with ELLs. The schools with highest ELL achievement expend significantly more general funds than other schools. The study also showed that, though increasing ELL weighted funding is important, the funding weight alone is not sufficient without also increasing funding for the base program for all students.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) represented a sub-group of low wealth school districts and parents in the case, and IDRA conducted several research studies of the Texas school finance system in conjunction with the case. IDRA research found that the system is inequitable and fails to provide adequate levels of resources and opportunities for educating English learners and low-income students.

As it has done for the last four decades, IDRA provided key testimony in the trial on the funding inequities in the Texas public school finance system. IDRA also presented analyses at trial revealing that funding cuts to special programs disproportionately impact students in low wealth and major urban school districts.

Texas' richest school districts have roughly \$800,000 more per school to spend on teachers, curriculum, books, technology tools and supplies when compared to the poorest districts. And while all students are expected to achieve the same standards and graduate college and career ready, funding levels do not reflect what research shows is needed to achieve those outcomes.

In March, the Education Law Center and Rutgers University released the [National Report Card](#) reporting that the Texas funding of public education earns the lowest marks in the nation. The state's low level of funding, unfair distribution of those resources, and failure to use a reasonable amount of its economic capacity to support its public schools earns Texas its status as the worst state in the United States.

Dr. Robledo Montecel stated: "While the Texas Supreme Court has put its stamp of approval on low expectations for education in the state, Texans do not. In the context of global competition, we need excellent schools for all students rather than good schools for a few and mediocre schools for the rest. To give all students a fair chance to succeed and meet state education standards, the state must ensure equity and excellence for all."

This ruling does not mean the Texas Legislature cannot make things right. Justice Guzman said in her concurring opinion: "Constitutionality is a minimum standard – a guarantee – not a cap on our expectations or our potential." State legislators should immediately take action to provide equitable funding for all Texas children and reduce funding gaps across the state.

IDRA will continue to work with leaders, families, community members, and advocates who want more – not less – equity; who want more – not less – excellence; who want more – not less – fairness in our schools.

This affects everyone. In order to survive and thrive, Texans must be educated. Not just a few. All Texans. We will not stop until Texas truly has a strong public school system that provides an excellent education for all children. #AllMeansAll.

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Resources on Texas School Funding

[Texas Supreme Court ruling on May 13, 2016](#)

[Texas school finance news dashboard](#) with the latest news stories, live tweets, images, etc.

New Classnotes Podcast episode, "[Key Issues in the Texas School Funding Trial](#)," with David Hinojosa, J.D., IDRA National Director of Policy

Slideshare: [Why Fair Funding of Schools Matters for Every Child and What You Can Do About It](#), April 2016

[Texas School Funding Equity Gap](#) – Infographic showing how some children are considered more valuable than others in Texas

[IDRA Factsheet Fair Funding](#) (bilingual English-Spanish)

[Court Rules Again: Texas School Funding Must Serve All Students Equitably](#) IDRA Statement on the Texas District Court Ruling on Texas School Finance System, August 28, 2014

[Court Rules: Texas School Funding Must Serve All Students Equitably](#), IDRA Statement, February 5, 2013

[The Latest Texas School Finance Equity and Adequacy Court Case – Round Six Texas Taxpayers and Student Fairness Coalition et al vs. Williams](#), Article, February 2014

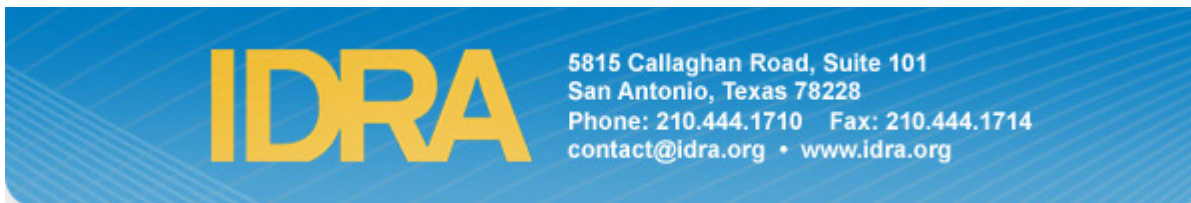
[Principles for Fair Funding for the Common Good](#)



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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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