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“Tracking, Endorsements and Differentiated Diplomas – When ‘Different’ Really is Less” – Updated IDRA Policy Brief Reflects Recent Policy Changes

Message from Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO

October 10, 2013 – IDRA today is releasing its updated policy note, **“Tracking, Endorsements and Differentiated Diplomas – When ‘Different’ Really is Less.”** The policy note presents an overview of the recent policy changes for curriculum, tracking and graduation plans for Texas schools.

Certain interests have succeeded in convincing the majority of Texas policymakers that schools should not be required to provide a high quality education to all students. While Texas returned to tracking policies in recent years, the legislature made it much worse this year. The curriculum no longer requires the 4-by-4 (16 high quality core curriculum courses – four years in English, math, science and social studies). Reducing the 4-by-4 requirements will result in students not being prepared for college, and many more students will need remediation when they enroll in college after taking these watered-down courses.



Couched in the language of *giving students choices and helping struggling students at least get a minimum diploma*, the new system weakens high school curriculum and further institutes tracking of students. The system encourages placing students in different paths toward graduation, some college bound and some bound for labor. This is bad educational policy and practice. Our state legislature appears to firmly believe that all children can learn – except for those “other ones.”

But our state must take responsibility for the academic success of all students, including those “other ones.” Latino and poor students are now the majority of students in Texas schools. A vital state must have educational parity for all students and not parcel out one set of opportunities for some and minimal expectations for others. The state’s drift toward connect-the-dot, diluted science and mathematics instead of rigorous courses moves us even further away from ensuring economic competitiveness and universally high expectations for all students.

The research and decades of experience behind IDRA’s **Quality School Action Framework™** show that a high-quality curriculum is essential to success for all students for them to reach a true level of college readiness.

Children have shown that they will rise to the level of expectation that is set for them and to the level of challenge and support that is provided for them. Schools have shown that they can be highly successful by embracing high expectations for all rather than sorting some students into college and others into job training.

Policymakers and schools should not make pre-college decisions on behalf of students or track them into low-level courses that limit career options. To create true opportunities for all of our children, we must commit to high quality curriculum for all students and full, equitable funding of all our schools, especially those neighborhood public schools in our neediest communities. It's time for Texas to step up, not step back.

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To Learn More

[Policy Note: Tracking, Endorsements and Differentiated Diplomas – When “Different” Really is Less – A Post Session Update \(pdf\)](#)

[Bilingual Factsheet: Expecting Less is Not Better – Texas' New Graduation Tracks Push Students Away from College \(pdf\)](#)

[Podcast: Tracking vs. High Quality Education for All Students – Episode 124](#)

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.

The logo for IDRA, consisting of the letters 'IDRA' in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font.

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