A Call to Community Action for Equitable School Funding

Morgan Craven, J.D.
Joanna Sanchez, Ph.D.
Diana Long
How does school funding work in Texas today?
### Snapshot of Public Education in Texas (2021-2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Bilingual (English Learner)</td>
<td>1,175,333</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>3,289,420</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>2,860,754</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>694,302</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,427,241</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>635,097</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Texas schools are funded by:
- Local funds
- State funds
- Federal funds

School districts generate funds through local property taxes, then the state provides additional funding if necessary to meet a pre-determined per-pupil funding amount.

- Texas Basic Allotment (basic per-pupil funding level): $6,160

Plus:
- Bilingual weight: 10%
- Dual language weight: 5%
- Weight for students in poverty: 22.5%-27.5%
- Special education: varies
- Dyslexia weight: 10%
School districts with high property wealth (because of a history of segregation and government investment) are able to easily out-raise districts with low property wealth.

While those high-wealth districts must send some money to the state to distribute to other districts (called “recapture”), they are able to keep some of those funds within their district to pay for extracurriculars, specialized programs, more staff and equipment, or whatever else they decide.

This system ensures our public schools remain inequitably funded …
...while many students’ basic needs are not being met.

Texas state funding for public schools has fallen below 50% and does not account for inflation or actual costs of education.
Texas ranks 40th in the nation in per-student funding levels ($12,649)

40th

Making the Grade 2022 report by the Education Law Center.
What does this look like in Texas school districts …
Top 100 High Wealth and Bottom 100 Low Wealth Districts
Texas Share of School Funding

Go to the interactive map:
https://idra.news/TxMapSchoolFundingShare
Texas Bilingual Education Funding

Go to the interactive map:
https://idra.news/TxMapSchoolFundingBE
Texas Special Education Funding

Go to the interactive map: https://idra.news/TxMapSchoolFundingSPED
Current Challenges for Excellent and Equitable School Funding
The state school funding system should be based on actual costs to provide an equitable, excellent education to students, including students of color, students from families with limited incomes, and students who require additional programs, supports and services.

Yet, the state continues to underfund schools, support inequitable funding systems, and promote schemes that would divest from our public school system.
State leaders seem determined to pass voucher programs that take public funds from public schools with no reporting, oversight, or public accountability.

- Senate Bill 8
- Senate Bill 176
- Senate Bill 2354
- Senate Bill 2483

https://idra.news/TxRevenueGap
Current Challenges

School funding formulae are not based on the real costs of educating Texas students and rely heavily on property taxes, continuing a long history of underfunding schools that serve students of color and students from communities with limited wealth and incomes.

The state must invest in the basic allotment to raise per pupil funding for all students and for special student weights. This increase should be adjusted for inflation.
Current Challenges

Texas is failing to invest in educators, contributing to teacher shortages that harm students.

The state must make meaningful investments in teacher recruitment, preparation and retention to address workforce shortages, especially in high-need fields, such as bilingual education, special education and STEM.
School districts must ensure transparency in spending decisions, including through robust family engagement programs that allow all families to participate in policy and practice decisions.
Time to Act:
How to be engaged on school funding issues today
Call to Action: Know What’s Happening

★ Sign up for updates and follow organizations and panelists on social media!
- IDRA eNews and Advocacy Alerts, available in English and Spanish
- Trinity University - Center for Educational Leadership
- Edgewood ISD
- The National Coalition on School Diversity
- Every Texan
- The San Antonio Alliance
- MALDEF

★ Use IDRA’s data resources, including interactive maps, to understand school funding in your community.
Call to Action: Continue to Organize

★ Continue to build intergenerational coalitions focused on pursuing fair school funding
  ○ IDRA Education CAFEs can help community-based groups push for change locally

★ Follow and join coalitions!
  ○ Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC)

★ Let us know how we can support your local work
Call to Action: Engage in Change

★ Engage with your state and local elected officials! Have your voice heard.

- Find your representatives and contact them
- Testify at hearings at the state capitol or in your local school district
- Support young people who are interested in being more involved in what is happening in their schools
Achiving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.