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Across the country, elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools have closed as part of the effort to slow the spread of COVID-19 (the coronavirus). Each week, IDRA issues an update on the impact of COVID-19-related policies on schools, students and families.

More resources and trainings for teachers, school administrators, families and communities are on our [Learning Goes On website](#).

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We welcome donations to support education during this COVID-19 crisis.



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Regional Policy Update

Students in Southern States Face Short- and Long-Term COVID-19 Challenges

Federal, state, and local governments and agencies are working to address the public health, education and economic crises sparked by COVID-19. Many actions necessarily focus on the immediate needs of communities and mitigation of the spread and effects of the virus. Officials cite the need to balance public health with economic concerns such as layoffs and food and housing insecurity.

There also will be long-term changes that will come from this crisis. These changes will likely impact certain students and regions, like the U.S. South, more than others. Evidence indicates that COVID-19 will be more deadly among younger people in the South based on the levels of pre-existing poor health conditions and persistent poverty (Newkirk, 2020). And, recent history shows that the economic impacts will also be felt more in the South, particularly in schools.

Without targeted resources and equitable school funding policies, many traditionally-marginalized students - including English learners, students of color, students living in poverty and students in rural communities - will bear the brunt of a COVID-19-related economic crisis.

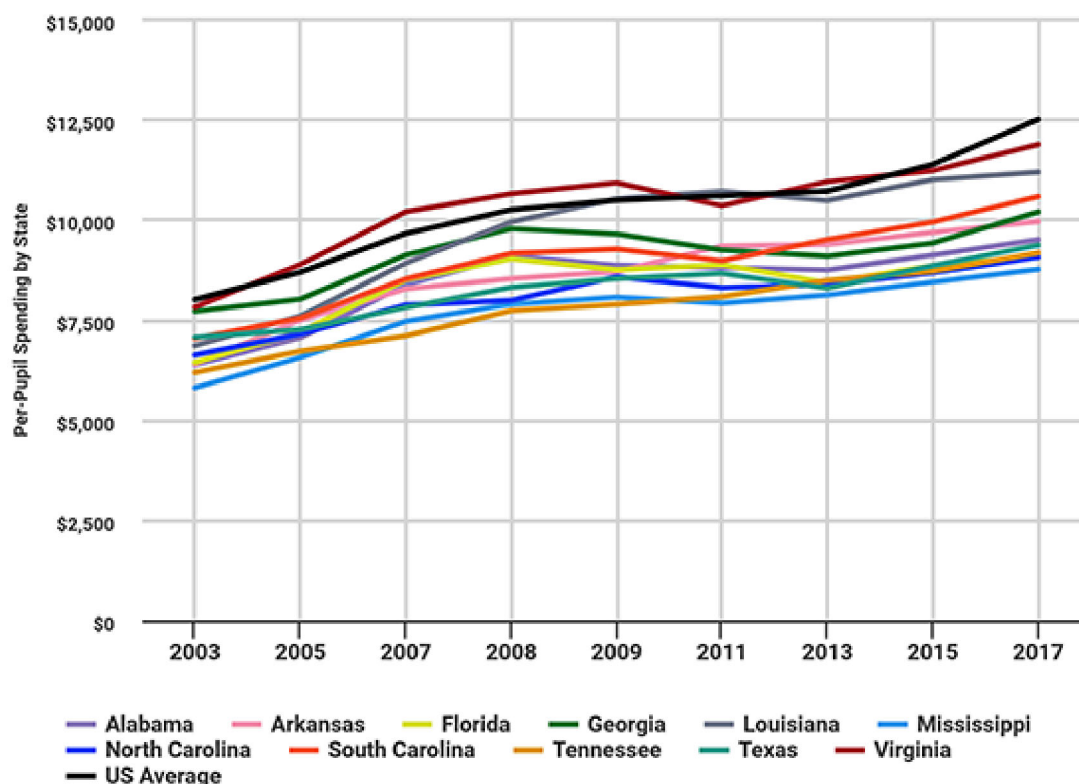
The Economy and School Funding in the South

Following the Great Recession in 2008, states across the country cut education resources, leaving school districts with massive funding gaps that many were unable to fill with local property taxes or other revenue sources. These funding gaps hit southern states particularly hard.

Nearly 10 years after the recession peaked, many states were still struggling to get back to pre-recession per-pupil spending levels. Of the 10 states with the most significant decreases in per-pupil spending between 2008 and 2015, six are in the South: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas (Leachman, Masterson, & Figueroa, 2017).

Even prior to the Great Recession, per-pupil spending levels in the South have lagged behind the rest of the country for years. As of 2017, all southern states were below the national average for per-pupil education spending.

Per-Pupil Spending Levels in the U.S. South Already Lag Behind the National Average



The Impact of COVID-19 on the South

Like the Great Recession, an economic downturn resulting from COVID-19 could have particularly dire effects for school districts in southern states, most of which already fail to provide enough resources to students, especially traditionally marginalized students.

- Children living in the South are more likely to live below the federal poverty line than in any other region. In every southern state but Virginia, more than 20% of children live in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2019).
- Students of color make up a majority of the pre-K to 12th grade population in the South. Black and Latino students each comprise approximately one in four students enrolled in public schools in the region (NCES, 2019).
- English learner student populations are increasing in the South. Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee saw their English learner populations more than double between 2000 and 2015 (Sugarman, 2016). Texas educates nearly 1 million English learners (Showalter, et al., 2019).
- Nationwide nearly one in five students (more than 9.3 million) attend a rural school (Showalter, et al., 2019). Forty-two percent of these students reside in the South (NCES, 2013). About 30% of rural Latino students and 36% of rural Black students attend a school in which more than three in four students is eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch, while just over 7% of White students do (NCES, 2014).

Schools serving these students often lack equitable educational resources, including safe and modern facilities, up-to-date technology and materials, well-qualified and experienced teachers, and sufficient funding (Duncombe, 2017; Levalley, 2018). Many students also do

not have access to the new at-home, online learning systems that school districts adopted in response to COVID-19 school closures and social distancing requirements.

An economic downturn resulting from COVID-19 could destabilize revenue sources, shrink state budgets and lead to education budget cuts, which would worsen deeply entrenched inequities in schools.

Over the next several months, states will prepare budgets that must respond to the ongoing COVID-19 challenges. Several southern states already appropriated money from their reserve funds to cope with the immediate COVID-19 threat, while others are forecasting revenue shortfalls based on the number of their residents out of work and not traveling or contributing to the states' economies (Loughead, et al., 2020).

Given this context, it is vitally important for states to protect education funding as much as possible to ensure educational quality. Any cuts must consider the particular challenges and needs of marginalized students.

Policy Recommendations

State and local policymakers should:

- Create budgetary processes responsive to the needs and input of families of color, English learner families, families with low incomes and rural families;
- Equitably distribute COVID-19 relief funds to school districts based on students' needs and the costs to ensure they have access to resources, services and supports;
- Use state emergency funds and identify stable revenue sources to ensure students have the resources they need in the near- and long-term;
- Limit education budget cuts and ensure that any cuts are made equitably and do not overly burden already under-funded low- and moderate-wealth schools; and
- Adopt measures and allocate funds to address resource gaps that result from the COVID-19-related shift to at-home learning. Funds should be distributed equitably to ensure all students have access to supports they need, including digital resources, social-emotional supports, targeted academic and learning assessment resources and summer learning opportunities.

[References available online.](#)

**For more information and policy news, see
IDRA's Learning Goes On web hub.**

VISIT LEARNING GOES ON WEB HUB

News Dashboard

IDRA's New COVID-19 Education News Dashboard

IDRA released a dashboard with news and social media streams related to COVID-19 and education along with key resources.



[VISIT OUR DASHBOARD](#)

State Education Agency COVID-19 Websites in the U.S. South*

[Alabama](#) * [Arkansas](#) * [Florida](#) * [Georgia](#) * [Louisiana](#) *
[Mississippi](#)

[North Carolina](#) * [South Carolina](#) * [Tennessee](#) * [Texas](#) * [Virginia](#)
[Washington, D.C.](#)

* These are the states served by the IDRA EAC- *South*, which is one of four federally-funded centers that provide technical assistance and training at the request of school districts and other responsible governmental agencies to build capacity of local educators to ensure a more equitable learning environment for all students.



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Free Webinar Series

Next Webinar: Facilitating Online Math Sessions

Get some tips you can use right away! Compare ways of supporting students in Google Classroom in shared spaces versus virtual learning environments. And see how to use Zoom Whiteboard, Explain Everything, and Google Classrooms and Training.

Join **Dr. Paula N. Johnson**, director of the IDRA EAC-South as she hosts a practical conversation with our guests:


* **Heather Aguilar**, elementary teacher, Judson ISD

* **Takiesha Martínez**, middle school math teacher, San Antonio ISD

* **Susan Hernández**, high school math teacher, Northside ISD

Tuesday, April 7, 2020 @ 1:00 pm (cst)

REGISTER NOW



Equitable Practices for Online Learning
free webinar series


Next Webinar
Tues, April 7, 2020
1:00 pm (cst)

Facilitating Online Math Sessions

See our library of recorded webinars:

- **Equitable Practices for Teaching Online**
- **Digital Divide: Connectivity, Infrastructure and Devices**
- **Tools & Tips to Alleviate the Homework Gap**

<https://idra.news/WebinarSeries>



Online Technical Assistance Academies for School Districts

Get help implementing equitable and effective online education!

As schools shut down and head for uncertain times, IDRA is offering multi-day online academies to assist districts in providing equitable and excellent education in online settings. The academies will be held using a web conference platform easily available to your teachers and will consist of one planning day with district and campus leaders and four professional development and technical assistance days with instructional coaches and teachers. The cost ranges from \$10,000 to \$50,000 depending on district size and needs. Contact IDRA for more information: contact@idra.org.

IDRA Anytime Teacher Academies

IDRA provides on-demand sessions designed to build educator capacity on such topics as...

- Online project-based learning across the curriculum for online delivery
- Delivering an equitable culturally-relevant science lesson using Google Apps
- Delivering an equitable culturally-relevant math lesson using the Explain Everything App
- Authentic student and family engagement in a COVID-19 reality
- Building a teacher website with Google Sites



Contact IDRA for pricing: contact@idra.org



IDRA Anytime Leadership Academies

IDRA provides on-demand sessions designed to build district and school leadership capacity on such topics as...

- Adjusting the school year and daily instruction
- Rethinking the school year to meet instructional goals
- How to prepare for the 2020-21 school year given the length of school closures
- Converting lessons for online platforms
- How teacher teams can collaborate online
- How teachers can ensure students are on track for the next school year
- How districts can support a parent or guardian who is tutoring their students
- Supporting teachers at home
- Ensuring digital inclusion with strategies like Wi-Fi busses, providing access to devices and hotspots, and campus courtyards

Contact IDRA for pricing: contact@idra.org

Children First
IDRA
Transforming Education

Virtual VOE

Free Webinars on Education for Immigrant Families

IDRA and the Consulate General of Mexico in San Antonio have been partnering to help Mexican and Mexican American families navigate the U.S. education system and learn about important educational opportunities in both countries.

But since the consulate is closed due to the COVID-19 crisis, IDRA's Ventanilla de Orientación Educativa (VOE) in San Antonio is launching a portal with bilingual materials and videos for families. Topics include:

- * Rights of Immigrant Students (PreK-12)
- * Navigating the U.S. K-12 Education System
- * College Financial Aid Opportunities for Immigrant Students
- * Adult & Community Education Opportunities in Spanish
- * Educational Opportunities in Mexico for Nationals Living in Both Countries



IDRA Ventanilla de Orientación Educativa in San Antonio
Program Connects Mexican Nationals & Immigrants with Educational Opportunities

About the San Antonio VOE
IDRA and the Consulate General of Mexico in San Antonio are partnering to help Mexican and Mexican American families navigate the U.S. education system and learn about important educational opportunities in both countries.

The program, called Ventanilla de Orientación Educativa (VOE), provides information on the civil rights of immigrant and English learner students, local educational services, and resources on how to access and succeed in college.

VOE also disseminates information on educational opportunities offered by the Mexican government for nationals abroad and develops various courses for immigrant parents.

Examples of VOE Services & Information

- How to approach U.S. K-12 and higher educational institutions
- How to apply for financial aid in the United States (including FAFSA & FAFSA)
- Information on resources for adult and community education in Spanish
- Opportunities to continue studying if you return to Mexico
- Online educational opportunities in Mexico for students in the United States
- The rights of immigrant students to attend public school
- The rights of English learners to an equal educational opportunity

RELACIONES EXTERIORES  **VOE**

IDRA
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Free! Webinars are welcome!

Location
Consulate General of Mexico in San Antonio
127 MacArthur Street
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Hours
Tuesday and Thursday
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
No appointment needed

Onsite Contact
Diana C. Alvarez
210.221.9846 ext. 300
diana.alvarez@idra.org

Contact for info
Immigration & Citizenship
Mexican Consulate in San Antonio
210.221.9846 ext. 300
www.consulmexsanantonio.gob.mx

The Virtual VOE portal will go live next week.

[Learn more about the IDRA VOE.](#)

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The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent private non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring educational opportunity for every child. 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.