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IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus:
Family Engagement

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Solving the Digital Divide Requires Authentic Family Engagement

by Thomas Marshall

The digital divide negatively impacts millions of Texas households without reliable access to broadband, and the COVID-19 pandemic only increased the barriers that many families faced to communicating with teachers and school leaders.

This article details the initiatives, reports and partnerships that IDRA has forged with families, communities and Texas leaders to assess the digital divide in the state and provide recommendations for how to engage with families, invest in broadband across the state, and approach the issue of making up for lost instruction time over the past two years. Family engagement must be at the forefront of solving the digital divide and allowing all students to thrive.

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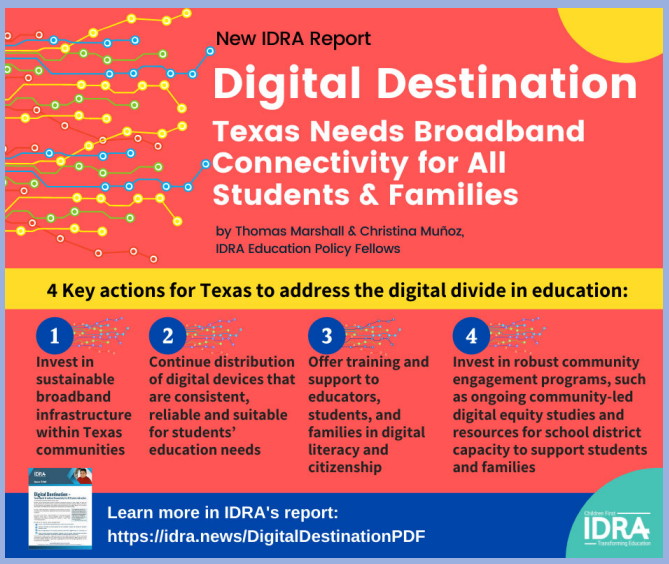

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Education CAFE Families Provide Insight on State-Level Education Policies

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

The Texas Legislature is hearing from a new contingent of families through IDRA's Education CAFE network. One group started preparations in the fall of 2020 with the leadership of ARISE Adelante, which supports leadership in education through the work of community centers located in colonías (unincorporated communities with scare public services).

They held their Mesa Comunitaria online in the fall of 2020 and identified major issues including, inequitable school funding, college preparation and access, the digital divide exacerbated by COVID-19, isolation, effective dual language programs in their schools, and mental health and wellness issues aggravated by the pandemic.

IDRA provided several training and support sessions to help families better understand the legislative process and how to submit their comments and testimony to the legislature. These networks realize the power of IDRA's Family Leadership in Education framework because they enable communities to receive the training and data they need to advocate for and impact school policy and practice.

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Education CAFE Brochure

Family Engagement Tools

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The Case for Alternate Assessments and Community Oversight

by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., Hector Bojorquez, & Morgan Craven, J.D.

COVID-19 has made it extremely challenging for many schools across the country to properly administer state assessments. Districts must balance both the physical and emotional health and safety of all stakeholders – from students and their families to educators as they struggle with the feasibility of virtual testing during a pandemic.

Short-term strategies to provide student support while assessing their mastery of academic content include using diagnostic assessments, expanding the use of formative assessments that measure student progress over time, and collecting data complementary to diagnostic assessments to help determine how successfully schools are educating their students.

Long-term solutions include a comprehensive look at testing and researching the impacts of assessment on teaching and learning over time. As states evaluate, they can also look to well-established research on avoiding harmful impacts of testing systems that hurt students and adopt strategies to accurately measure achievement.

Family engagement should be a vital component of this process and could help schools identify the culturally-sustaining practices and assessment tools that would best help students connect to their schools and engage in their coursework.

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School districts across the country are working through unprecedented educational challenges as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Your donation of **ANY** will help IDRA to **continue supporting policies** that expand **college access** and **affordability** for **all** students.

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- Education Associate – with experience in emergent bilingual (English learner) education
- IDRA EAC-*South* Consultants
- Grant Writer Consultant
- Policy Communications Strategist
- IDRA Summer 2021 Internship Program

Weekly Texas Education Policy Update – Advocacy News

- **April 26, 2021: English** • **Español**
- **April 19, 2021: English** • **Español**
- **April 12, 2021: English** • **Español**
- **April 5, 2021: English** • **Español**

Plus!

IDRA testimony and public comments on 22 bills in the Texas Legislature in April

Other News

Learning Goes On – New IDRA eNews – A COVID-19 Resource for Education (English) • **(Español)**, April 16, 2021

Texas Plan Must Address Digital Divide in Education – IDRA Releases New Report, Launches Video Campaign Addressing Digital Divide, April 21, 2021

Texas Schools Need Federal Relief Funds Now! Students pay the price as Texas leaders sit on federal funds, IDRA Statement (English) • **(Español),** April 19, 2021

New Coalition Formed to End Pasco County's Predictive Policing Program, April 26, 2021

TEA Announces Release of $11.2 billion in Federal Relief for Schools, April 28, 2021

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5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101
San Antonio, Texas 78228
Phone: 210-444-1710

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Children First IDRA Transforming Education

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. 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.

April 30, 2021