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By Putting Kids First**

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## Texas Policy Priorities

Decisions made by state-level officials have a profound impact on the quality of education the state provides to its students. Key policies involve how education is funded, the curriculum teachers use, the types of instructional programs schools must offer and much more. Many policies and practices have led to inequitable educational opportunities for students. Since its founding almost 50 years ago, IDRA has provided analysis and guidance to policymakers nationally while engaging with communities, educators and students on policy issues to ensure all students have access to equitable and excellent education.

As Texas Legislature prepares to convene in January, IDRA is releasing a series of stories on our policy priorities. The first edition focused on [Effective School Assessments and Accountability that Does Not Hurt Students](#). Stay tuned for future updates and see additional recommendations, research and resources at [IDRA's Policy, Advocacy, and Community Engagement website](#).

See [Spanish-language version](#) of this edition.

# Texas Must Fulfill its Funding Promises to Public Schools

December 17, 2020

Estimates indicate that funding for this year's Texas budget fell short by \$4.6 billion. When lawmakers convene in January, they will have to decide how to address that shortfall and at the same time how to fund the state's education system and other public services for the next two years.

Funding for public schools and colleges makes up over half of the state budget at about 55%. That makes it a target for cuts when the economy takes a downturn. But we know that cutting education only hurts us. That is why IDRA supports the state [maintaining equitable investments](#) in school funding this legislative session.



## Where We Stand for the Upcoming Texas Legislative Session

Texas lawmakers must maintain equity in the education budget and school finance system. This means the following.

**Fund public schools based on the promises of House Bill 3** made during the last session.

**Avoid cuts to education by leveraging** existing and new sources of state revenue.

Work with the federal government for **additional, supplemental stimulus money** to go to schools.

**Prioritize funds for the education programs that serve students most impacted by the pandemic and historically marginalized in schools:** emergent bilingual students (English learners), students receiving special education services, and students from low-income households.

## Why We Need to Maintain Equity in the School Funding System

Most students in public schools come from low-income households (60%). Latino students make up the majority of public school students (53%), and over one in five students is an emergent bilingual student. More than half a million students receive special education services.

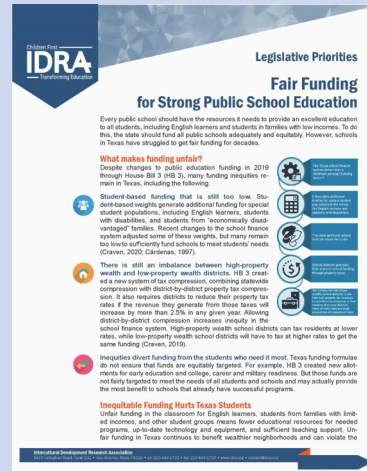
School programs that focus on these students have suffered cuts before. This creates inequitable outcomes for students in academic achievement, [high school dropout and graduation rates](#), and college-going rates. State funding for education really does mean investing in our students' future – and our state's future.

If Texas policymakers choose to cut or divert funds from education and not maintain equity in school funding, we will face widening learning gaps among students of color, emergent bilinguals, and low-income students due to COVID-19, more severe teacher shortages in critical subject areas and others, and declining college enrollment and graduation rates.

Texas cannot afford to place our economic troubles on the backs of school students for the next decade like we did in 2011. Maintaining equity will protect funding for students from families with limited incomes, emergent bilingual students, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, and others who most need resources in their schools.



[Learn more at IDRA's Education Policy website on Ensuring Fair School Funding for All Students](#)



[See IDRA's Legislative Priorities Factsheet: Fair Funding for Strong Public School Education \(in English & Spanish\)](#)

## Join Our Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network

IDRA's family leadership in education process, [Education CAFE™](#), supports parents and caregivers to understand and influence public school policy and practice. This January, families in Texas will have various opportunities to inform legislators and staff about their priorities, needs and hopes for the education of their children, from birth through college graduation.

Due to COVID-19, there likely will be a drastic change in how the general public will be able to interact with policymakers during the Texas legislative session. Now more than ever, policymakers need to hear from the very people their decisions will impact. IDRA is launching a family and community advocacy network focusing on education issues in the Texas legislative session. We invite families and community advocates to join in.

Start by signing up to receive our new email alerts, which will be available in English and Spanish.



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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.