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## Transforming Education by Putting Kids First



### IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Fair & Effective Education Policy

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### What Students Need from the Biden Administration – IDRA Recommendations for Federal Education Policy Changes

*by Morgan Craven, J.D.*

Federal agencies are preparing for new leadership, staff and policy priorities of the Biden-Harris administration. IDRA urges incoming policymakers to adopt a number of federal education reforms listed below that will benefit historically-marginalized communities, including students of color, those from families with limited incomes, emergent bilingual students, those who face gender-based discrimination, and immigrant students.



This article presents highlights from IDRA's letter to the administration with recommendations in the following areas:

- Ensure an Equitable Educational Response to COVID-19
- Provide Federal Resources Equitably and Incentivize Fair School Funding
- Foster Safe and Culturally-Sustaining Schools that Do Not Rely on Harmful Discipline and Policing
- Ensure Excellent Educational Opportunities for Emergent Bilingual Students
- Center Students and Families in Educational Leadership

See IDRA's letter for more details on these and other policy recommendations and news at our [Federal Education Advocacy website](#).

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# Five Things to Know about Texas School Finance

by Bricio Vasquez, Ph.D., & Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D.

Texas' school finance system is a complex series of formulae that determine how much local and state funding goes to public schools. Since IDRA's founding in 1973, IDRA has worked to make public school funding transparent and accessible.



In addition to launching our new school finance data dashboards (see below), IDRA is available to provide school finance data analysis at the state or district-level to help communities and lawmakers understand how different policy proposals will impact their districts.

The data reflect key elements of the Texas school finance system, five of which are described in this article.

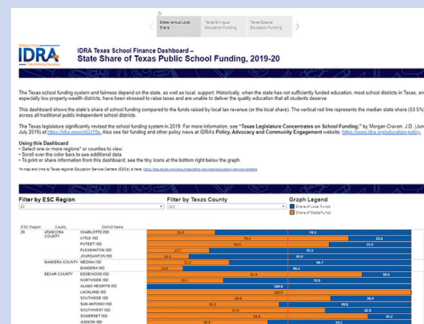
1. School funding is based on student attendance.
2. School funding is still a matter of where you live.
3. Only one in five emergent bilingual (English learner) students is served in a dual language bilingual education program.
4. Over 10% of Texas students receive special education services.
5. Public schools remain underfunded.

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## See IDRA's New Texas School Finance Dashboards

IDRA launched in January 2021 our first Texas School Finance Dashboards, featuring the following.

- The **State versus Local Share Dashboard**, which compares the portion of state versus local funding to school districts.



- The **Texas Bilingual Education Funding Dashboard**, which shows the amount of bilingual education dollars from the state, including the new dual language allotment, going to school districts.
- The **Texas Special Education Funding Dashboard**, which shows special education funding from the state for each Texas school district.

[See Dashboards](#)

## IDRA's Top Policy Priorities for the Texas Legislative Session

by *Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D.*

The Texas legislative session that opened in January is filled with hearings on hundreds of bills in a race to make new laws, revise old ones and defeat harmful ones before the session's clock runs out in May. However, this year, the state's leaders announced they will narrow the bills they consider for a vote.



IDRA will focus on seven policy priorities summarized in this article.

- Support a State Strategic Plan for Bilingual Education
- Increase Student Engagement During the Pandemic and Address the Digital Divide
- Uphold School Funding Promises Made in House Bill 3 in 2019
- Create Equitable Access and Support in College
- End Harmful Discipline and Promote Better Data Practices to Measure Discipline
- Use Substantive Assessments for Interim Options and Pause Punitive Accountability Ratings
- Defend Against Charter and Voucher Expansion

Visit IDRA's [education policy website](#) to see IDRA's full recommendation letter to the Biden administration and other resources.

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## IDRA and Partners Release Policy Roadmap to Ensure Emergent Bilinguals Are Strong Readers



## by Third Grade

A number of organizations in the **Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative**, including IDRA, released a policy roadmap with recommendations for ways the state legislature, state agencies, school districts and child care centers can support English learner (or “emergent bilingual”) students. The initiative’s goals are to ensure emergent bilinguals...



- become strong readers by third grade,
- become fluent and literate in both English and their home language, and
- learn in settings where educators and parents have the tools to support them during this precious period of childhood.

The initiative is led by a steering committee composed of Texans Care for Children; IDRA; Philanthropy Advocates, a collaboration with Educate Texas; Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TAEYC); and Dr. Dina Castro of the University of North Texas (UNT) at Denton.

For more information on the Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative and to see the policy roadmap, visit [bilingualtexas.org](http://bilingualtexas.org).

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Family & community advocacy network  
focusing on education issues in the Texas legislative session

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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.

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