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This month's focus: Education Policy



"Ensuring all students graduate prepared to succeed in college requires effective policymaking hand-in-hand with the people most impacted by our laws. They hold the policy solutions to improve their lives and effect generational change for themselves and our society. "

- Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA President &CEO

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Education Policy

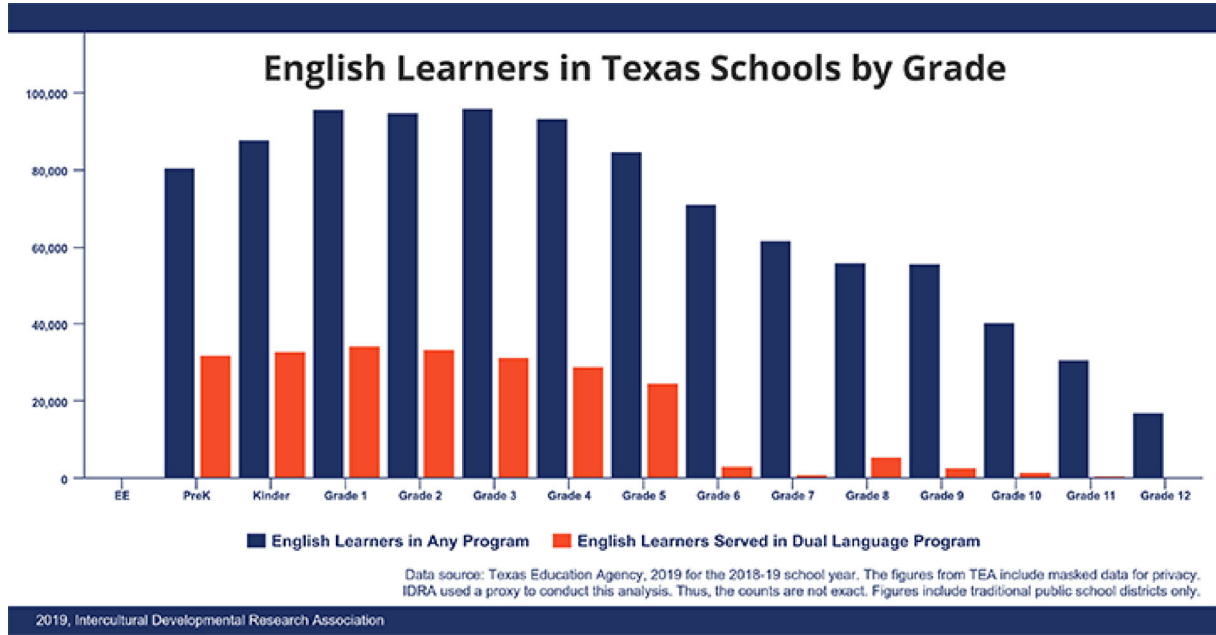
Texas Legislature Concentrates on School Funding

by Morgan Craven, J.D.

Texas' 86th legislative session saw some of the most significant changes to school funding in decades. Prior to the start of the legislative session, the Texas Commission on Public School Finance met to provide recommendations for how the state could achieve an equitable school finance system.



The commission issued its final report in late 2018 (CPSF, 2018). Many of its recommendations served as a basis for the major House and Senate school finance bills considered during the legislative session that opened in January. Following weeks of hearings and negotiations, the Texas Legislature approved House Bill 3, which impacts property taxes and funding for schools.



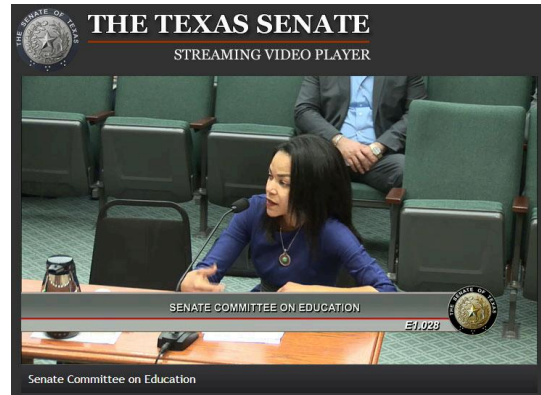
Schools serving the 80% of English learners in programs other than dual language will receive no additional funding from the new weight.

SEE ARTICLE

New Discipline and Safety Policies for Texas

by Morgan Craven, J.D.

To ensure all students succeed, schools must end policies and practices that create harmful school climates and push students into the school-to-prison pipeline through exclusionary discipline and criminalization. During the recent Texas legislative session, many policymakers focused on "school safety" in response to school shootings.



While some proposals focused on building positive school climates, others prioritized approaches that would make schools less safe for students, including making extreme changes to "harden" facilities, expanding harmful and punitive school discipline, and increasing the number of weapons on campuses.

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Accountability Measures Set to Respond to Public Pressure - Changes Made to STAAR - Individual Graduation Committees Extended

by Morgan Craven, J.D.

The core purpose of school accountability systems is to assess schools' effectiveness and identify areas that need strengthening. Sound, research-based systems must be in place to evaluate how effectively schools support students and how students perform academically.

As the Texas legislative session began in January, several reports revealed that the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading assessments did not test at appropriate grade levels (for more on the reported STAAR design flaws, see IDRA's statement: "Reported STAAR Design Flaws in Reading Show Why High-stakes Punishments Should be Removed from the STAAR"). Concerns about the report findings merged with ongoing concerns about testing with high-stakes consequences.

Temporary Texas Policy Relieves High-Stakes for 11,400 Students

Texas requires students to pass four out of five STAAR tests to graduate high school. With the temporary relief for students in grades 9-12, students who have completed all requirements can do not pass or fail at the end of the year-of-course exams and will graduate regardless of an individual graduation committee. The graduation exemption is valid for students in grades 9-12.

There were 11,400 individual graduation committees scheduled in 2023-24.

Students who are not required to take STAAR tests in 2023-24:

- Students who are in 9th grade and are not required to take STAAR tests in 2023-24.
- Students who are in 10th grade and are not required to take STAAR tests in 2023-24.
- Students who are in 11th grade and are not required to take STAAR tests in 2023-24.
- Students who are in 12th grade and are not required to take STAAR tests in 2023-24.

Some ways accountability systems hurt children:

- holding students back a year, even when they may have already needed help in one subject
- increasing children's stress and anxiety over testing -- the pressure can begin as early as kindergarten
- denying diplomas, even for those who passed all their classes
- disregarding what students do know and have learned
- distorting test scores for all or part of a school year to boost one test-taking skills
- punishing students for not knowing what they may not have been taught

It doesn't have to be this way

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Policymakers approved several bills that could change how districts approach assessments and measure college readiness.

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College Access Legislation Increases Transparency and Adds Funds to TEXAS Grant Program

by Morgan Craven, J.D.

Expanding access to college means ensuring that schools offer all students the courses and opportunities they need to enroll in the college of their choice. It also means that a college education remains affordable and that the path to graduation from college does not contain unnecessary roadblocks. The Texas Legislature passed several bills aiming to address these goals.

The Legislature approved House Bill 1, the budget for the 2020-2021 biennium. It includes \$866.4 million for the Toward EXcellence, Access and Success Grant Program (TEXAS Grant), which provides financial assistance for eligible students to be able to attend public colleges in Texas.

Top 10 Percent Plan Expands College Access Across Texas

The Texas Top Ten Percent Plan has opened the doors of Texas' public universities to more students, more communities and more geographic areas. It has also increased the number of students who are admitted to UT-Austin through the plan.

Expansive Access
 Expansion of the existing Freshman One-Step Program (formerly Admission at Risk, 2007-2010) to Texas State University.

Background
 The Texas Top Ten Percent Plan was established in 1997 to ensure that the state's public universities are accessible to all students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school classes. The plan has since been expanded to include more students and more geographic areas.

Impact
 The plan has opened the doors of Texas' public universities to more students, more communities and more geographic areas. It has also increased the number of students who are admitted to UT-Austin through the plan.

The Top Ten Percent Plan accounts for 84% of admitted rural students at UT-Austin

Students Admitted to UT-Austin through the Top Ten Percent Plan are More Diverse
 Most students of color at UT-Austin are admitted through the Top Ten Percent Plan.

- 54% of Latino students
- 55% of Black students
- 75% of Asian students

Latino students are about twice as likely to be admitted through the Top Ten Percent Plan than to outside the plan.

Black students are about twice as likely to be admitted through the Top Ten Percent Plan than to outside the plan.

Total number of students admitted: 13,888

The Top Ten Percent Plan has opened the doors of Texas' flagship universities to students of color, students from rural communities, and students from families with limited means – all groups that have historically been denied access.

The Top Ten Percent Plan is the Best Chance for Students in Families with Limited Means and with Less Formal Education to Get into UT-Austin

While the admission rate of students with limited means and less formal education to UT-Austin is low, the Top Ten Percent Plan provides a pathway for these students to gain admission to UT-Austin.

For more information see <https://idra.news/TTP19>

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A HISTORY OF IDRA POLICY WORK HIGHLIGHTS TO SECURE EXCELLENT AND EQUITABLE SCHOOLING FOR ALL CHILDREN

Intercultural Development Research Association

Early Childhood

Timeline of IDRA's work from 1973 to 2019:

- 1973: IDRA is founded
- 1974: Texas 100%
- 1975: IDRA's first policy work
- 1976: IDRA's first policy work
- 1977: IDRA's first policy work
- 1978: IDRA's first policy work
- 1979: IDRA's first policy work
- 1980: IDRA's first policy work
- 1981: IDRA's first policy work
- 1982: IDRA's first policy work
- 1983: IDRA's first policy work
- 1984: IDRA's first policy work
- 1985: IDRA's first policy work
- 1986: IDRA's first policy work
- 1987: IDRA's first policy work
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- 2013: IDRA's first policy work
- 2014: IDRA's first policy work
- 2015: IDRA's first policy work
- 2016: IDRA's first policy work
- 2017: IDRA's first policy work
- 2018: IDRA's first policy work
- 2019: IDRA's first policy work

See IDRA's updated dynamic online timeline of our policy work from 1973 to 2019

SEE TIMELINE

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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.