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Transforming Education by Putting Kids First



IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Student Engagement

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Mental Health Implications of Virtual Learning on Student Engagement

by Christina Muñoz

With the prevalence of virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, students' home and school lives merged and so did their stressors. From the pressure to help siblings and family members to the lack of consistent broadband or personal space for schoolwork, students have been under incredible stress.

Preliminary findings from a ground-breaking participatory action-based research study covering San Antonio students show that more than 71% of survey respondents consider virtual and remote learning as contributing more stress than in-person school.

Students have struggled to keep up with their work and stay in touch with their peers, leading to a harsh reduction in student engagement. Limited social interaction impacts students' attention and interest in school in general. A Texas Education Agency (TEA) report found that 11% of the state student population (more than 600,000 public school students) were disengaged from their classwork or unresponsive to teacher and school outreach.

Schools and communities need viable solutions to address student mental health and wellness and the impact on academic engagement. IDRA advocates for legislation to bring these students relief and stability.



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Students of Color Deserve Culturally Responsive Instruction and Ethnic Studies

by Altheria Caldera, Ph.D., and Nino Rodriguez, Ph.D.

Traditionally schooling is often not responsive to the cultures of today's diverse student population. Marginalized young men and women are expected to embrace "whiteness as property," or that white culture is superior and Western European knowledge is factual.

Culturally responsive pedagogy counters the centralization of whiteness and redresses the mismatch between the school environment and growing student diversity. At a basic level, culturally responsive instruction acknowledges and affirms students' cultures in schools. It integrates students' cultural identities into the main curriculum.

Key IDRA recommendations include states and districts adopting policies to provide training on culturally responsive pedagogy and engaging in long-term efforts to include academic, state-approved ethnic studies curricula to all students.



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Strategies for Engaging Students in Today's Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms

by Stephanie García, Ph.D.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators turned to virtual learning resources out of necessity. Educators and researchers alike are now evaluating the usefulness of such resources and their impact on student outcomes. GoGuardian recently published findings from its qualitative research study on engagement, with an emphasis on online learning.

Students remain engaged when they are being challenged, can connect or relate to what they are learning, and have opportunities to engage with the content and collaborate with others. The GoGuardian report provides a set of recommendations to increase student engagement in any instructional setting.



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Classnotes Podcast Episodes on Student Engagement

STEM Students Describe Life in a COVID-19 World – Podcast Episode 201

They start calling my name (on being a Valued Youth program tutor) – Podcast Episode 135

Connecting Every Student to a Meaningful Future – Podcast Episode 85

Youth as Technology Bridges – Podcast Episode 69

Student Voices on Being Valued – Podcast Episode 54

What Students Need their School Counselors to Hear – Podcast Episode 45

Fostering Student Engagement English Language Learners – Podcast Episode 19

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Student Researchers Collect Insights from Peers about the Pandemic's Effects on Schooling

by Ana Ramón

During the summer and fall 2020 semester, four high school and college students led an IDRA research project to collect insights about the impact of COVID-19 on students and how the pandemic has worsened or changed the challenges these students face in their schools.

Key findings of the research show that students have grappled with mental wellness, dealt with new burdens at home and in accessing and completing schoolwork, and struggled to achieve academically while helping their families through the crisis. As the pandemic continues, student voices and concerns should be central in the education decision-making process.



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Digital Divide Directly Impacted Student-School Engagement During COVID-19

by Christina Muñoz

In May 2020, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) began to require schools to report on student engagement during the 2019-20 school year and through the 2020-21 school year. TEA reported more than 600,000 Texas public school students – over one in 10 – did not complete assignments or respond to teacher outreach during the spring 2020 semester.



IDRA's analysis shows that student engagement suffered as a direct result of the digital divide exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as schools turned to remote learning. Key findings show that access to broadband directly tied to engagement, urban and suburban districts had the highest rates of engagement, districts with the highest numbers of “unengaged” students had greater proportions of Latino students, and rural districts had disproportionately high incidents of students losing contact or having no contact.

IDRA will release the full study while encouraging Texas policymakers to establish a permanent broadband infrastructure that includes connecting high-speed internet to urban and rural communities.

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HAPPY *Birthday* April 1 is IDRA's birthday!
Here's to 48 years!



For 48 years, IDRA has brought together schools, communities and families to ensure student success.

idra.news/Donate.48thBirthday



Recent News

Weekly Texas Education Policy Update – Advocacy News:

- [March 29, 2021: English • Español](#)
- [March 22, 2021: English • Español](#)

[Learning Goes On – New IDRA eNews – A COVID-19 Resource for Education, March 19, 2021: English • Español](#)

[IDRA's Priority Bills for Education in Texas – Community Voices Matter English, March 18, 2021: English • Español](#)

[Got 15 Minutes? Take Action for Public Education! IDRA hosts bilingual office hours to help families and community members submit public comments on Texas education policy, March 12, 2021: English • Español](#)

[Texas Can Better Serve Emergent Bilingual Students – New Report on Creating a More Bilingual Texas, March 11, 2021](#)

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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.

March 31, 2021