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## All Eyes Are On Our Schools: A Texas Legislative Wrap Up

May 31, 2023

The 88th Texas Legislative Session just wrapped up, and all eyes were on our schools. Public education was central to major legislative battles.

Since the beginning of the session, IDRA fought for fully funding public schools and supporting the teacher workforce in light of a historic budget surplus and a record number of teachers leaving the field. Several major reports about special education funding, teacher shortages and a new state strategic plan for emergent bilingual students presented opportunities for meaningful solutions. Instead, this session was marked by heightened attacks on students, teachers and our neighborhood public schools.



But we stood unified with communities across the state against these harmful proposals. Despite countless attempts by state leaders to ram through school vouchers, IDRA and our allies relentlessly fought off attempts to divert public funds from public schools: we brought forth key research, created a video campaign and rallied Texans to make thousands of calls to legislators. We supported families in Lubbock who came to the Capitol to demand dignity and advocate against racial bullying. We organized with students to fight higher

education censorship. And we helped push a proposed ban on corporal punishment in schools to the House floor, the furthest it progressed in years.

I am so grateful for our passionate and brilliant policy team who relentlessly pursued education justice: Morgan Craven, J.D., Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., and our intrepid [Texas Education Policy Fellows](#): Alisha "Tuff" Tuff, Diana Long and Steve Kemgang.

Through it all, their eyes stayed focused on IDRA's vision to center youth voices, build people power across Texas and strengthen public schools that nourish all students.

Stay tuned for our continued celebration of IDRA's 50th anniversary!



*Celina Moreno*

## New Policies for Strong Public Schools

A handful of good bills and budget measures passed that support strong public schools this legislative session.

### **Bilingual Education**

**HB 1**, the state budget includes increased funding and eligibility for tuition assistance for aspiring teachers seeking a bilingual, ESL or Spanish language teacher certificate. This will strengthen the teacher pipeline in an acute shortage area for over 30 years.

### School Safety

The CROWN Act, [HB 567](#), prohibits discrimination against people's hairstyle and texture in schools, employment and housing.



### College Readiness and Access

A major higher education funding bill, [HB 8](#), better funds community colleges and dual credit scholarships for students from low-income households.

The Governor has signed or is expected to sign each of these bills.

## Harmful Policies for Texas Students and Schools

Unfortunately, many bills passed that will be harmful to students and their schools.

### An Illusion of School Safety

[HB 3](#), the major "school safety" bill for the session, requires armed personnel on every campus and new measures for hardening school facilities. Those new requirements go against evidence-based practices for safe schools by putting more guns in schools and not offering substantive mental or behavioral health supports.



### K-12 Classroom Censorship

[HB 900](#) further censors school library books, particularly around content related to LGBTQ+ identities, topics and authors. [HB 1605](#) institutes a state-approved instructional materials list that adds incentives to comply with classroom censorship law.

### Higher Education Censorship

The legislature compromised students' academic and social experiences on college campuses and will make faculty less diverse and inclusive of different backgrounds and ideas. [SB 17](#) bans offices and trainings related to diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education while [SB 18](#) restricts faculty members' academic freedom through tenure and research.

Lawmakers missed opportunities to support public schools despite broad support to fully fund our public schools, create more opportunities to expand

bilingual education in the state and promote safe and welcoming school environments.

## Looking Ahead in the Legislature

Just three hours after the regular session ended, the Texas Governor called the first special session on school district property tax compression, which means the state could reduce the amount of funds local school districts can raise for their schools.

The Governor promised future special sessions this year to address other priorities, including private school vouchers that would take taxpayer dollars away from students in public schools.

In the face of the Legislature's inaction to fully fund public schools, IDRA won't back down in fighting for education equity during the special session. Stay updated through our eNews alerts and social media, and give to equity. You can help us extend our impact by making a donation today.

[Donate Today!](#)

To learn more about our policy agenda, contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., IDRA Deputy Director of Policy, at [chloe.sikes@idra.org](mailto:chloe.sikes@idra.org) or Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., Chief Legal Analyst, at [paige.duggins-clay@idra.org](mailto:paige.duggins-clay@idra.org).

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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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