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Transforming Education by Putting Kids First



IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Teaching Quality

In This Issue

Using Project-Based Learning and STEAM to Engage Students During the Pandemic
– Highlights of IDRA EAC-South Assistance to Metro Nashville Public Schools

Students Don't Need Old-Style Remediation – Accelerated Instruction Helps Students Both Reconnect and Excel

Principal Checklist to Reduce Bullying and Harassment – Supporting Safety and Learning for All

Texas is Not Financing College Readiness – IDRA Releases New Study on Inequitable Access to College Prep Math Courses

Recent News

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Using Project-Based Learning and STEAM to Engage Students During the Pandemic

Highlights of IDRA EAC-South Assistance to Metro Nashville Public Schools

by Paula N. Johnson, Ph.D.

Lucas Education Research found recently that project-based learning has been a powerful instructional model for re-engaging students during the pandemic. Last fall, Metro Nashville Public Schools asked the **IDRA EAC-South** to add to its assistance to the district a book study on project-based learning (PBL) for a small cohort of teachers to support their STEAM magnet school programs. Weekly sessions included pre-work activities, guided professional development, collaboration, reflection questions and research. The results were striking as elementary students presented their projects. There are now more teachers implementing PBL and a new cohort of teachers participating in a second book study.



“My students love doing projects and expanding their knowledge. Yes, kindergarteners can take ownership of their learning, and they show great pride in all their work.” – Mary J. Hollingsworth



“Being part of a professional cohort... inspired me to implement innovative learning experiences for my students that support key concepts and 21st century skills.” – Angela Phelps



“This journey has opened my eyes to all the connections that are already established within our school or even within our community. This is an opportunity that they may not have had if this PBL cohort had not been offered.” – Teneice Renee Kirby

Read: Using Project-Based Learning and STEAM



See how IDRA can work with your campus to design a PBL implementation plan and support it through professional development and coaching.

PBL resources, webinars, podcast & more

Students Don't Need Old-Style Remediation – Accelerated Instruction Helps Students Both Reconnect and Excel

by Hector Bojorquez

As students returned to school for this fall, teachers were universally worried about how much their students need to catch up. There is no frame of reference for the situation, nor has it been completely studied. But our emphasis should be on maintaining high academic expectations and avoiding remediation traps.



We recommend that teachers, grade-level professional learning communities (PLCs) and academic deans reflect on practices found in the Learning Policy Institute's Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Team of COVID and Beyond to include student engagement, socio-emotional learning and non-cognitive factors, interventions and practices for so-called "learning loss," and long-term skills planning.

Read: Students Don't Need Old-Style Remediation

See eBook: **Ready – Reopen – Reconnect! Proven Strategies for Re-engaging Students Who Need You the Most**



If you are interested in participating in IDRA's new community of practice on serving students following the COVID-19 disruption, fill out our form, and we will reach out to you.

Community of Practice Interest Form

IDRA Classnotes Podcast #213

Students Want Schools to Teach Inclusive Truth



Featuring
Autumn and Emaan
High School Students
with
Thomas Marshall III
IDRA Policy Communications
Strategist



<https://idra.news/Pod213>

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Concerned about the impact of the new classroom censorship bill in Texas, 88 public school students described their experiences with racial discrimination in school. Their stories show why diversity, equity and inclusion training are needed for teachers across Texas public schools and why Texas students need culturally-sustaining schools.

Just
out!

In this podcast episode, we feature two students who spoke at a recent press briefing held by IDRA and the TEACH Coalition. Thomas Marshall III, IDRA policy communications strategist, talks with high school senior, Autumn, and high school junior, Emaan, as they describe their experiences with discrimination and bias. They also discuss how classroom lessons in history and other courses already exclude people of color and other groups. Students' last names and schools are kept confidential.

[Hear Students Want Schools to Teach Inclusive Truth](#)

Principal Checklist to Reduce Bullying and Harassment – Supporting Safety and Learning for All

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

Developing a safe and healthy school climate requires taking steps to prevent bullying and harassment in the school community. Principals should focus on connected, coordinated efforts and programs to train staff and engage students in communities for bullying prevention. Anti-bullying policies should help normalize safety and positive



communication and describe the consequences of negative behavior and actions.

Additionally, school administrators should actively listen to and support students who have been targeted by bullying and harassment, signal that negative judgements and stigmatizing will not be supported or approved, accept the traditions and methods of expression of their students' religions and cultures, and create a learning environment that acknowledges and supports the assets each individual student brings and actively support cross-cultural acceptance and understanding.

Read: Principal Checklist to Reduce Bullying and Harassment

Texas is Not Financing College Readiness

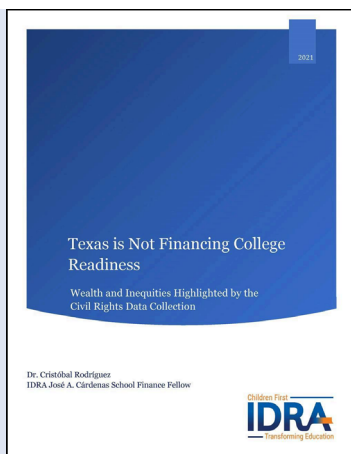
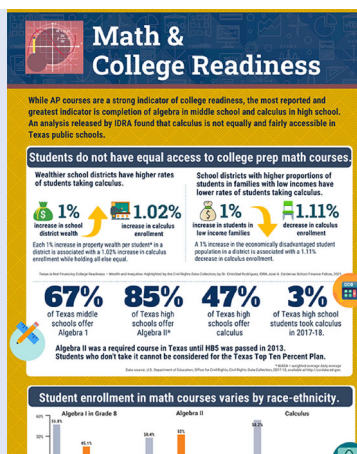
IDRA Releases New Study on Inequitable Access to College Prep Math Courses

This article highlights new research by Dr. Cristóbal Rodríguez, IDRA's José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow, on the relationship between school finance policy and students' college readiness in Texas. Texas policies and funding block students from graduating prepared for college, which includes accessing and taking higher math courses, like Algebra II and calculus. Research shows that these courses have the strongest link to college readiness. The current system provides funding unequally, and wealthier school districts have higher rates of students taking calculus in stark contrast to lower rates of students from families with low incomes.



IDRA's recommendations to improve education and college readiness for all students include providing all students with access to higher-level math courses, ensuring 8th graders take and succeed in Algebra I, addressing the teacher shortage in critical fields, providing all 8th to 12th grade students with college counselors, practicing two-way family engagement, tying college readiness standards to school outcomes, and abolishing the current endorsement system for graduation in favor of returning to the 4X4 plan that colleges prefer.

Read: Texas is Not Financing College Readiness


[See Report PDF](#)

[See Infographic](#)

[Watch Symposium](#)


Recent News

Recent Media Coverage

Leadership for ESL Teacher Recruitment and Retention, Kristin Grayson, Language Magazine, October 27, 2021

Backlash over books about race, gender hits Texas schools – Legislation targeting ‘critical race theory’ has inflamed debates at local school boards, experts say, Talia Richman and Emily Donaldson, Dallas Morning News, October 21, 2021

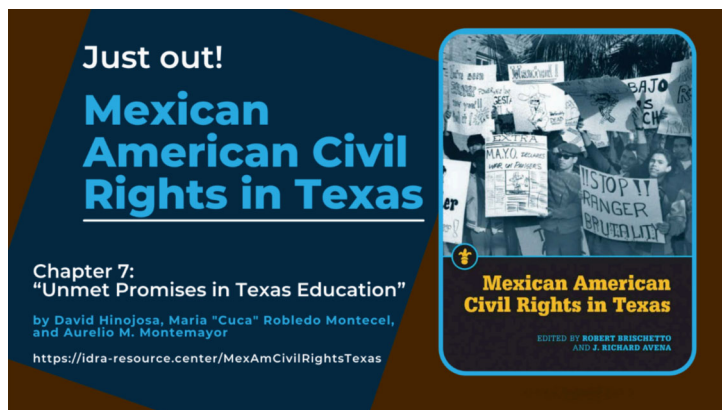
Opinion: Texas’ denial of systemic racism upholds white power, Kerry Sinanan, Austin American-Statesman, October 13, 2021

A Case for Changing How We Label “English Learners,” Highest Aspirations Podcast, Ellevation Education, featuring Araceli García, September 28, 2021

Student’s Research on Impact Covid Had on Peers, Making After School Cool Podcast, Case4Kids, Harris County Department of Education, featuring Ana Ramón & Christina Muñoz, September 29, 2021

Book Chapter

"Unmet Promises in Texas Education," Chapter by David Hinojosa, Maria “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, & Aurelio M. Montemayor. In Martínez, R., Brischetto, R., & Avena, J.R. (eds), *Mexican American Civil Rights in Texas: 1968 – 2018*, 2021. [Get details](#)



Other News

IDRA Stands in Solidarity with Transgender Youth – IDRA Statement of Support for Transgender Students after Callous Passage of Texas House Bill 25 • (Español), October 20, 2021

Knowledge is Power: We can and must talk about racism in classroom lessons; What parents and students want • (Español), October 13, 2021

Celebrating Latino Heritage Month • (Español), October 7, 2021

IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Redefining Discipline, September 30, 2021

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Reach Out To Us



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.

October 29, 2021