

# Texas Should Make Comprehensive Investments in School Funding to Serve the Most Students

IDRA Testimony on CSHB 2, Submitted by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., to the Texas Senate Education K-16 Committee, May 15, 2025

Dear Chair Creighton and Honorable Members of the Committee:

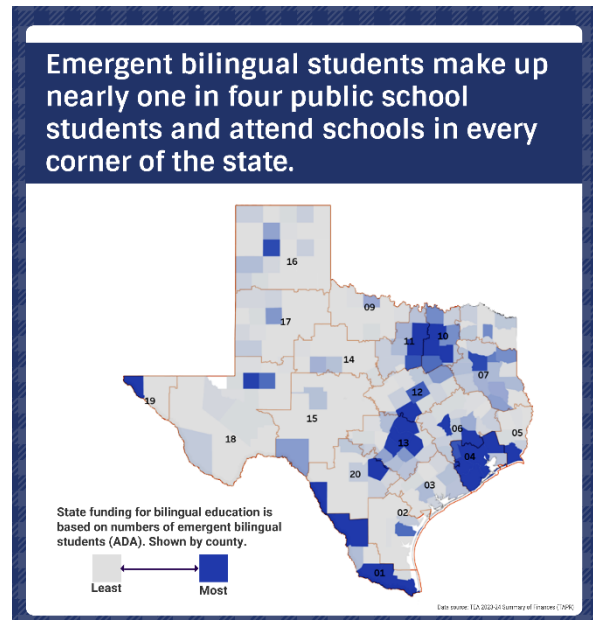
My name is Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., and I am deputy director of policy at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

House Bill 2 as engrossed by the House offers an important foundation for considering key investments in our public schools and students. The committee substitute (CSHB 2) contains some important improvements in teacher preparation, compensation and special education funding, but it **lacks the comprehensive investments that HB 2 (engrossed) included through the greater increase in the basic allotment and targeted student-based weighted allotments, especially the bilingual education allotment and compensatory education allotment.** Without these comprehensive investments, we risk leaving many students out of school funding reforms.

## Increasing the Bilingual Education Allotment and the Dual Language Allotment is a Strategy for Early Literacy and College and Career Readiness

The Texas bilingual education allotment is set at 10% of additional funding, one of the lowest weights in the country compared to similar state systems. Many states average closer to 20% above base funding for bilingual programs (ECS, 2024). Texas serves the greatest proportion of emergent bilingual students in the country, also called nationally *English language learners* (NCES, 2024), and they account for over 23% of public school students.

Funding from the bilingual education allotment goes to supporting bilingual programs in schools, including for classroom materials, books, supplements for staff salaries, and district efforts to integrate teaching and learning in multiple languages across educational programs. This includes professional development, training and family engagement programs.



Quality bilingual programs that are sustained across elementary school and into upper grades lead to stronger achievement (Rand, 2017) and support students graduating bilingual and biliterate, which are critical college and workforce skills (ACTFL, 2019; Latham Sikes & Piñón, 2024). **Still, only about 22% of emergent bilingual students are in dual language immersion programs** (IDRA, 2025).

HB 2's increase to the bilingual education allotment by 0.02 (12% additional funding) would greatly support the expansion of high-quality programs that facilitate students' early literacy, high school completion and college and career skills.

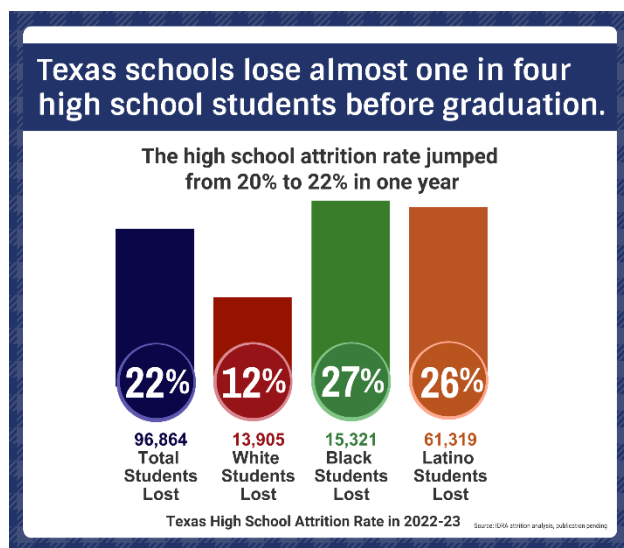
### Investing in the Compensatory Education Allotment Matters for Student Success

The state compensatory education allotment is generated by the number of students who are considered economically disadvantaged, who account for 62% of students. It is meant to address disparities in student performance and completion rates. For over 36 years, IDRA has conducted an annual attrition study to examine how students across all groups are supported toward high school graduation. The most recent study for 2022-23 captured the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' high school completion since this group began the ninth grade in 2019-20. **Astonishingly, nearly one in four students who were freshman in 2019-20 did not complete high school four years later.**

An analysis of student data by racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and other special population subgroups reveals deeper gaps. Texas high schools lose Black and Latino students at least at **twice the rate** of white students. Economically disadvantaged students are more than **three times** more likely to drop out of high school before graduation than non-economically disadvantaged peers (Quintanilla-Muñoz & Sánchez, 2024).

Since the federal ESSER funding that has dried up was distributed to schools based on their Title I status – or the number of economically disadvantaged students they served – we can reason that these gaps will grow without new targeted investments from the state (Craven, 2024).

Fortunately, we have years of evidence showing which policies and strategies keep students engaged in school or even bring them back to school after having dropped out. Investing in students who are economically disadvantaged is key among them. This funding supports programs that prepare students considered at-risk of dropping out for graduation and college and career opportunities.



HB 2's increases to the compensatory allotment would enable districts to direct more funds toward evidence-based programs that can help bring students back to school, keep them there, and graduate them with their sights set on college and career opportunities.

## Recommendations

IDRA respectfully asks that this committee consider the following recommendations.

- **Restore** the bilingual education allotment increase to a 0.02 weight (12% additional funding).
- **Restore** the increases to the compensatory education allotment. These increases will help schools support economically disadvantaged students and can offset the ESSER funding cliff and other financial challenges that school districts are facing. Many Texas school districts spent ESSER funds on necessary staff, tutoring, academic instruction resources and summer programs that are still needed. Without these programs, we risk greater gaps in achievement for economically disadvantaged students and for school success generally.
- **Raise** the basic allotment to account for inflation since 2019 and include a mechanism to adjust for inflation annually. This benefits all students and educators, and it elevates the investments made through increased weights for targeted allotments.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. For more information, please contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., IDRA deputy director of policy, at [chloe.sikes@idra.org](mailto:chloe.sikes@idra.org).

## Resources

- ACTFL. (2019). Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand among U.S. Employers. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. [https://www.languageconnectsfoundation.org/uploads/files/general/MakingLanguagesOurBusiness\\_ExecSummary.pdf](https://www.languageconnectsfoundation.org/uploads/files/general/MakingLanguagesOurBusiness_ExecSummary.pdf)
- Craven, M. (2024). What You Need to Know About the ESSER Funding Cliff – How Schools Will Be Impacted by the End of Federal COVID-19 Relief Funding. IDRA. <https://idra.news/ESSERcliffPDF>
- ECS. (March 2024). 50 State Comparison: K-12 Funding 2024, English Learner Funding. Education Commission of the States. <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/k-12-funding-2024-05>
- IDRA. (2025). Texas Bilingual Education Funding (2023-24) – IDRA Map. <https://idra.news/TxMapSchoolFundingBE>
- Latham Sikes, C., & Piñón, L. (2024). The Path to a Stronger State Seal of Biliteracy – Advancing Texas Student Success through Bilingualism and Biliteracy. IDRA. <https://idra.news/BiliteracySealBrief>
- Latham Sikes, C., & Villanueva, C. (2021). Creating a More Bilingual Texas. IDRA and Every Texan, <https://www.idra.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Creating-a-More-Bilingual-Texas-2021.pdf>
- NCES. (2024). English Learners in Public Schools. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>
- Quintanilla-Muñoz, C., & Sánchez, J. (November 2024). Pandemic-Legacy High School Attrition Rate Increases Two Points; Black-White Gap Widens to 15 Points. Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2022-23. IDRA. <https://idra.news/Attrition23>
- RAND Corporation. (2017). Dual-Language Immersion Programs Raise Student Achievement in English. Research Brief. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_briefs/RB9903.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9903.html).

*IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. 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.*