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## Can't Wait to Celebrate 100% Graduation in Texas

### Statement by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA President and CEO, on TEA's Latest Dropout Study

San Antonio (August 10, 2012) – The Texas Education Agency has released its [annual report](#) of dropout and graduation rates in Texas high schools, finding that graduation rates have reached an all-time high of 85.9 percent. IDRA's [study released in November 2011](#) also found a trend of gradual improvement in high school attrition rates in Texas. TEA reports an attrition rate of 24.9 percent, while IDRA's study for the same period found a rate of 27 percent.

But the disparity in dropout rates and attrition rates has not improved between racial-ethnic groups. The racial-ethnic gaps are dramatically higher than 26 years ago, based on IDRA's annual studies. For example, the gap between the attrition rates of White students and Black students has increased from 7 percentage points to 16.

While it is certainly encouraging to see graduation rates improve, IDRA's analysis shows that, at the current rate of attrition, Texas will not reach universal high school education for another quarter of a century in 2037. It is far too soon to celebrate. And we at IDRA will not celebrate until all students enrolled in Texas are graduating from high school with a college-ready high school diploma in four years.

We have witnessed some exciting initiatives by schools and entire districts that are producing results that are clearly paying off. Their investment into dropout prevention programs and college readiness initiatives is beginning to show some sign of promise.

However the state has taken steps to impede this progress by returning to [student tracking](#) and cutting funding for, and in some cases eliminating, programs designed to increase graduation rates. While all school districts suffered from special program cuts, the state's lowest property wealth districts [suffered the most](#).

Even more detrimental, the state's resistance to providing equitable funding across the state has restricted low wealth and medium wealth school districts from providing quality educational programs, including reading, math and science. These districts have higher concentrations of low-income and minority students. These are the students who are more likely to be in under-resourced schools with limited access to quality teaching and curriculum. IDRA's analyses have found that simple attrition rates vary dramatically when comparing the lowest property wealth and the highest property wealth groupings of districts.

We cannot meet our goals of educating Texas youngsters to compete in a global economy without closing the racial-ethnic gaps in high school graduation and college completion rates. At IDRA, we have brought together what is known about how to do this in our [Quality Schools Action Framework](#)<sup>™</sup>. The framework focuses change on the system indicators that research and experience say matters, including fair funding and high quality curriculum that prepares students for 21st century opportunities.

Schools are not underperforming because children in them are poor or black or brown. Rather, it is poor policies, poor practices and inadequate investments that hold our children back.

It doesn't have to be this way. Our state can do better than 85.9 percent. Texas must move from its low expectation that only some of our state's students can successfully graduate to a expecting and supporting all of our students to graduate college-ready. Then, we'll have reason to celebrate.

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IDRA is an independent, private non-profit organization, directed by María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., dedicated to strengthening public schools to work for all children. As a vanguard leadership development and research team for more than three decades, IDRA has worked with people to create self-renewing schools that value and empower all children, families and communities. IDRA conducts research and development activities, creates, implements and administers innovative education programs and provides teacher, administrator, and parent training and technical assistance.

Each fall, IDRA releases its independent attrition study. IDRA was commissioned to conduct Texas' first-ever comprehensive statewide study of high school dropouts using a high school attrition formula to estimate the number and percent of students who leave school prior to graduation. That study in 1986 was the state's first major effort to assess the school holding power of Texas public schools and resulted in state-level policy reforms for the state education agency to count and report dropout data. IDRA is the only organization that has examined Texas attrition rates consistently, with the same methodology, for 26 years.

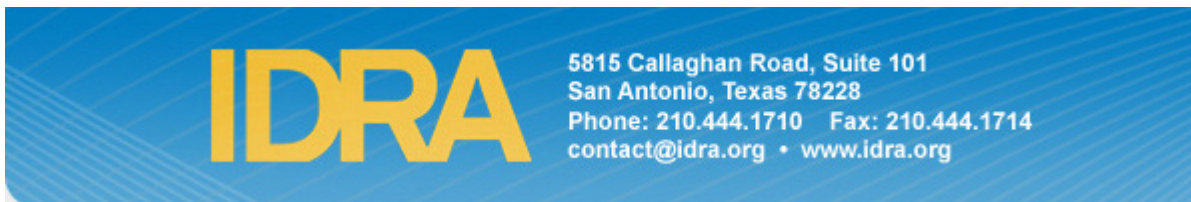
For more information, see IDRA's latest [Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2009-10](#) and our [Fair Funding Now! Initiative](#).

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The **Intercultural Development Research Association** is an independent private non-profit organization dedicated to realizing the right of every child to a quality education. 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.

We are a small organization with a powerful mission: to create schools that work for *all* children.



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