

February 29, 2024



Transforming Education by Putting Children First

Our Website



IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus:

# Education Research

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## Mexican American Studies – A Deep Look by High School Students

by Marcela Hernández, Jonas Lokensgard & Hannah Rosales

In this article, student leaders reflect on their experiences with their "MAS for Our Schools" research project. IDRA selected these three students from a San Antonio high school for a project-based learning effort organized by the National Center for Youth Law.

The student team decided to determine the status of Mexican American Studies (MAS) in their district and how to help it grow. In this article, the students describe their reasons for participating in the project, the challenges they faced, lessons learned, advice to future student leaders, and a message to adults.



IDRA provided the student researchers training in the basics of survey research, delving specifically into community-based research, basic data collection, and quantitative and qualitative research methods. The youth leaders also expressed how they valued their experiences and hope that their work will serve as a foundation for future similar research projects. IDRA will publish their final report in March.

Keep reading student researcher reflection article



### Resources for Ethnic Studies

Ethnic studies courses benefit all students. Culturally-sustaining curriculum has a positive impact on students' academic and community engagement. IDRA has a number of resources and provides training and customized technical assistance that supports educators in offering ethnic studies courses in public schools.

- [Infographic: 5 Tips for Organizing a High School Student-Led Ethnic Studies Advocacy Group](#)
- [IDRA's Resources for Cultural and Ethnic Studies](#)
- [IDRA's free Ethnic Studies Online Technical Assistance Toolkit](#)

## Embedding Social-Emotional Learning into Student-Serving Programs

by Stephanie Garcia, Ph.D.

IDRA's [VisionCoders](#) program anchors social-emotional learning at its core, centering an asset-based and valuing philosophy that IDRA has been known for since its founding. VisionCoders is an eighth-grade computer science course developed by IDRA in partnership with eight schools and three districts in San Antonio.

Through VisionCoders, eighth-grade students learn coding skills by programming math and reading games for their elementary school buddies, using a cross-age mentorship approach. This project this field-initiated, research-based program funded by the U.S. Department of Education.



This fall, IDRA will expand the program to 12 schools, serving almost 600 eighth-grade students in at-risk situations from school districts where fewer than 1% of students take a computer science class. If you or someone you know in Bexar County, Texas, is interested in bringing the program to your school (at no cost) please share this article and contact [stephanie.garcia@idra.org](mailto:stephanie.garcia@idra.org).

Keep reading VisionCoders article



In October 2023, IDRA held a site visit for policymakers to see our VisionCoders and Valued Youth Partnership programs in action and to visit with students. Guests included Texas Sen. José Menéndez and Texas Rep. Josey García along with their chiefs of staff, Pearl Cruz and Staff Pharaoh Clark, respectively. In addition, San Antonio District Director for U.S. Rep. Greg Casar, Irene Chavez Galvan joined us.



## IDRA Youth Advisory Board Members Study Culturally Responsive Teaching and School Discipline

by Christina Quintanilla-Muñoz, M.Ed.

Four high school student researchers and alumni of IDRA's inaugural Youth Advisory Board led a research project examining the intersections of culturally responsive education and school discipline in Texas public schools.

The young leaders assessed student peers' perspectives through a survey and focus group interviews at high schools in central and north Texas, with IDRA staff serving as mentors to support their work.

Their study yielded valuable insights on themes of academic and social alienation, racial profiling, discriminatory discipline practices, and other harmful experiences students have faced in their schools.



The students presented highlights during a research symposium held by IDRA in May 2023. [The event video is online.](#) IDRA will publish the final report in March.

[Keep reading youth research overview article](#)

## The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership Turns 40!

[See How VYP Improves Attendance & Socio-Emotional Learning](#)



The IDRA [Valued Youth Partnership](#) is a research-based, internationally-recognized dropout prevention and student leadership program that has kept 98% of its tutors in school. This program transforms student socio-emotional learning and relationships with school. It directly addresses socio-emotional factors that are essential to reconnecting and re-engaging with students.



The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership is backed by research on socio-emotional factors and learning. The Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness & evaluation data show:

**61%** of VYP tutors improved sense of self oriented toward the future

**59%** of VYP tutors improved their sense of involvement in & caring for their families

**54%** of VYP tutors improved their sense of being productive at their school work, enjoying school more & feeling successful at school

**66%** of VYP tutors improved reading test scores

**57%** of VYP tutors improved math scores



[Learn More!](#)

- **Website:** See how the program operates, its research base and awards.
- **Webinar:** Learn how to bring the Valued Youth Partnership to your school.
- **Student Essays:** Read what students say about their life-changing experience.

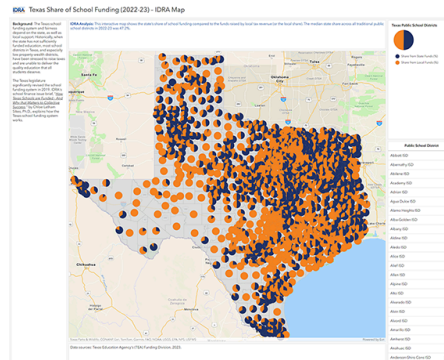
## New Texas School Finance Data Maps

The Texas Constitution requires the State to provide education for all students. But the state is under-funding public education. IDRA works to make school funding information accessible to communities and relevant to state policymakers.

We are available to provide school finance data analysis at the state or district-level to help communities and lawmakers understand how different policy proposals will impact their districts. IDRA launched in January 2021 our first Texas School Finance Dashboards.

We have added new maps for 2022-23, featuring:

- Texas Share of School Funding
- Texas Bilingual Education Funding
- Texas Special Education Funding



[State Share Map](#)

[Bilingual Ed Map](#)

[Special Ed Map](#)

[Index to All Dashboards & Maps](#)

## Recent News

### Media Coverage

**Pharr Native Publishes Award-Winning Book of Short Stories**, Texas Board Business, February 28, 2024

**Gold Dome Report – Legislative Day 23 (2024)**, by Stanley S. Jones, Jr., Helen L. Sloat, George S. Ray, National Law Review, February 20, 2024

**Afrofuturism and the Law Symposium’ imagines the future of the Black legal field**, by Caroline McConnico, The Daily Texan, February 12, 2024

**Eliminating Hair Discrimination in Texas Schools, Native American Rights Fund**, February 12, 2024

**State of Language Rights and Bilingual Education 50 years After Lau vs. Nichols**, by Leslie Villegas, New America, February 6, 2024

**Twelve Civil Rights Organizations Send Letter to Texas Education Agencies Calling for Proper Enforcement of CROWN Act**, Legal Defense Fund, January 30, 2024

**Advocating for Honest History Education: A Resource for Parents and Caregivers**, Learning for Justice, January 29, 2024

**IDRA Study Highlights Ongoing Struggles Faced by Middle School Counselors**, Planning Ahead, Texas AFT, January 15, 2024

**How a South Texas Educator Transformed the Chicano Movement, Jan. 14th**, Texas Border Business, January 11, 2024

**CGU to Host Webinar on Jan 22 Celebrating 50th Anniversary of U.S. Supreme Court Case Lau vs. Nichols**, Claremont Graduate University, January 8, 2024

[See these news stories and other recent media coverage with links on our website](#)

### Other IDRA News

February 27, 2024 – **Black History Month – Beautiful history, A Policy Agenda to Support Black Students, Afrofuturistic education, Lesson plans, Books for your classroom**

February 12, 2024 – **Knowledge is Power: Texas State Board of Ed Sets Censorship Rules, Punts AINS Ethnic Studies** (English) • (Español)

February 6, 2024 – **Southern Education Policy Update – Previewing Legislative Sessions Happening in the South**

January 31, 2024 – **January Issue of the IDRA Newsletter – Focus: College Readiness and Success**

January 22, 2024 – **J. Toufic Chahín Named 2024 IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow**

January 9, 2024 – **Events for You: Lau v. Nichols webinar 1/22, Alamo STEM Ecosystem Educator Conference 2/3**

[See these eNews with links on our website.](#)



IDRA 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.

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