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**At a Time When We Most Need Strength, Texas Education is At-Risk of Being Weakened
Statement by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO – May 28, 2009**

At no point in history has Texas had a pipeline that moves all or even most students from quality early childhood education to college graduation and beyond. Today, our public schools are losing tens of thousands of students every year. And we only have a 5 percent higher education participation rate. That rate is a mere 3.7 percent for Hispanic students.

This affects everyone. In order to survive and thrive, Texans must be educated. Not just a few. All Texans.

But rather than embracing the challenge, some state leaders seem intent on lowering expectations. Unfortunately the new "accountability" plans that seem headed for adoption in the current legislature do not result in – as claimed by proponents – the creation of schools that educate all students to a true level of college readiness. In fact, these measures will have a devastating effect on our state. Specifically, "accountability" policies currently under consideration:

- Bring back tracking of students into college and work (career/technical) tracks
- Lower standards for some students by decreasing performance standards required for graduation
- Give up on the idea that all students should be prepared for college by allowing schools to support only some students for college
- Provide no safe-guards preventing over-referral of minority students into non-college tracks
- Substitute one set of high-stakes assessments with other high-stakes measures
- Lower performance standards for schools and students by requiring demonstrated achievement in just two content areas
- Weaken content in math and science courses by allowing substitution of career and technical education "equivalent" courses in all content areas
- Do little to address the over-testing of students and over-reliance on test scores
- Remove whatever transparency exists in the state's accountability system by hopelessly complicating the process used to rate school and district performance
- Fail to provide any substantive funding to support the many changes required

In short, the plans do nothing to ensure that the state will produce the highly educated workforce needed to be competitive in a global economy.

Texas cannot afford to move backwards. We cannot lower the bar and then claim to have increased the success rate, using smoke and mirrors to create another "Texas miracle." While disguised as a move to address all the ills of prior reform efforts – including provisions in the increasingly unpopular NCLB – the changes represent a giant step backward for Texas education. Years of work will be needed to clean up the newly created quagmire.

A vital Texas must have educational parity for all Texans and not parcel out one set of opportunities for some and minimal expectations for others. Our current challenge of getting more of our schools and students to perform at high levels should not be met with a headlong effort to make it easier for everyone to look good. It is not time to run and hide. It is time to stand firm and defend what we

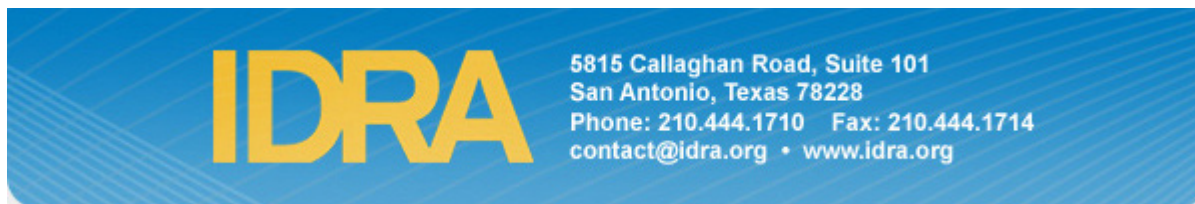
know is good for all students.

For more information on pressing issues in Texas education policy, visit www.idra.org/Education_Policy.htm/

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