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Transforming Education by Putting Kids First



IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Education Policy

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Recent News

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Note: The Texas governor called a second special session that opened Saturday, August 7. Look for bilingual email updates to our [Texas Education CAFE Advocacy Network](#) and [Twitter](#) for news.

Exciting Advances for Emergent Bilingual Students in Texas

by Araceli García

Despite the difficult circumstances of Texas' 2021 legislative session, IDRA helped ensure passage of four major bills benefiting emergent bilingual students. Several of these bills were part of the Texas Early Childhood English Learner Initiative, a collaborative project to discuss challenges and opportunities for emergent bilingual students and provide a policy roadmap.



- Senate Bill 560, by Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr., creates a statewide strategic plan for educating the over 1 million emergent bilingual students in Texas.
- House Bill 2256, by Rep. Bobby Guerra, creates a bilingual special education certification to help ensure that students' needs are appropriately met.
- SB 2081, by Sen. José Menéndez, sets critical ratios and classroom caps for pre-K classes offered by public schools.
- Finally, SB 2066, championed by Sen. Menéndez, aims to empower students by adopting the term emergent bilingual and recognizes the unique potential for bilingualism embodied by these students.

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"Don't label me for what people say I lack."

It's time to focus on students' unique potential for bilingualism and biliteracy!

Limited English Proficient-English Learner-

Emergent Bilingual

See IDRA Testimony: <https://idra.news/TestimonySB2066>

IDRA
The Institute for Democracy, Education and Human Rights

Report!

Creating a More Bilingual Texas

See how Texas can do better to serve emergent bilingual students

A CLOSER LOOK AT BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN THE LONE STAR STATE

<https://idra.news/BilingualTx>

EVERY TEXAN
Partnership Center for Public Policy Innovation

IDRA
The Institute for Democracy, Education and Human Rights

Politicizing Education Hurts Texas Students

by Ana Ramón

While the 87th Texas legislative session began during the COVID-19 pandemic and the historic response to racial injustice following the murder of George Floyd, the legislature squandered its opportunity to develop serious policy solutions to improve education for all Texas students in favor of injecting partisan ideology into policy decisions.



Important bills that failed to pass in the session include a measure that would have ensured accurate and accessible data on school discipline and the CROWN act that would have prohibited discrimination against students based on their hairstyles.

One of the most horrifying examples of the legislature's harmful focus was HB 3979, by Rep. Steve Toth, that will impede how teachers and students are able to discuss current events, history, and discrimination in Texas classrooms, particularly as they relate to the nation's history of racism and sexism. ([See IDRA's resources on HB 3979, SB 3 and similar measures.](#))

Our students deserve much better.

Keep Reading

See our video gallery of students testifying against

Students testify against the classroom censorship bill (SB 3)

"Our Cultures Should Not be Forgotten"

"Every Student Deserves to be Part of Texas History"

"Repressed Knowledge Does Not Empower Texas Students"

See Videos

<https://idra.news/StTestimonySB3>

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classroom
censorship

See Video
Gallery

Federal Education Policy News – What Educators Need to Know

by Morgan Craven, J.D.

This article provides an update on federal court decisions and legislative policies that will impact schools across the nation.

Federal court decisions include confirmation that schools can regulate some off-campus student speech if it constitutes harassment or disruption to the school environment, allowing a lower court decision to stand stating that forcing students to use the bathroom matching the gender assigned at birth violates federal law, and a ruling on DACA that allows it to remain in place for current recipients.



The U.S. Department of Education issued a number of **guidance documents** to instruct education agencies and schools on how to use federal relief funds to support students.

And several bills were reintroduced in the U.S. Congress that IDRA supports as they relate to school discipline, particularly prohibiting the use of corporal punishment and creating a grant program that would support the hiring and training of counselors, social workers, and other important school staff.

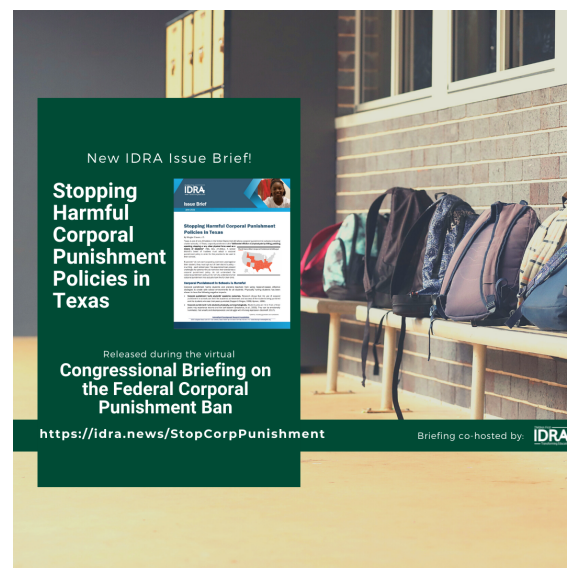
New IDRA Issue Brief!

Stopping Harmful Corporal Punishment Policies in Texas

Released during the virtual
Congressional Briefing on the Federal Corporal Punishment Ban

<https://idra.news/StopCorpPunishment>

Briefing co-hosted by IDRA



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Texas Legislature Takes Some Steps Toward Addressing the Digital Divide

by Thomas Marshall

Student success depends on the quality of their educational resources, and this includes access to reliable Internet service, devices like computers, and the knowledge of how to use relevant devices, programs and services.

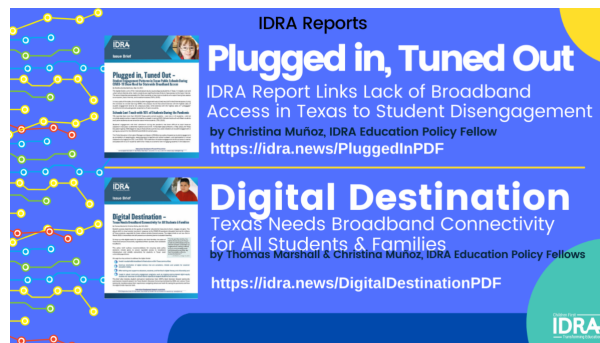


The Texas Legislature passed an important bill addressing the digital divide during the 2021 session. House Bill 5, the state broadband bill led by Rep. Trent Ashby, includes key provisions for a statewide broadband office, a statewide broadband plan, and a grant program so that schools and other entities can apply for federal broadband dollars distributed by the FCC.

Keep Reading

Plugged in, Tuned Out

Digital Destination



Student Health and Engagement Response to COVID-19 in Texas

by Christina Quintanilla-Muñoz, M.Ed.

Some of the bills passed during the 2021 Texas legislative session, including those related to access to student mental health resources, represent a step in the right direction for Texas students.



SB 179, by Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr., is a long-overdue win for student mental health advocates that will expand school counselors' capacity to deliver critical counseling services to students.

HB 2287, by Rep. Senfronia Thompson, et al., will help the Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services to monitor and maintain mental health resources.

Missed opportunities include bills that would have uplifted student and community voices.

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Proven Strategies for Re-engaging Students Who Need You the Most

[See eBook](#)

Family and Student Advocacy Persisted During the Texas Legislative Session Despite Structural Barriers

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

IDRA was proud to work with students and families across the state, from Dallas, Houston and San Antonio to the lower Rio Grande Valley, who demanded education justice even as the pandemic and some members of the legislature limited public participation.

IDRA helped by coordinating advocacy training sessions, weekly virtual “office hours,” a student summit, a “train the trainer program” to help women of color in the lower Rio Grande Valley, engagement with student advocates, weekly meetings of the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC), regional virtual roundtables, and a “Save Civics Town Hall” and press conference.

Important community-based policy and implementation work is still happening, and IDRA is supporting a student advocacy council to focus on student-led policy work across the state.



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Most Opportunities Missed to Expand College Preparation and Access in Texas

by Altheria Caldera, Ph.D.

Though many expected the Texas 2021 Legislative session to focus on higher education, COVID-19 and other issues dominated legislators' time and attention, leaving important issues related to robust college preparation and expanded access unaddressed. These bills included a requirement that would have restored Algebra 2 to the foundational program to ensure Texas students would be ready for college, a bill that would have required college readiness counselors to undergo implicit bias training, and a bill that would have permitted students to relieve social studies credit for ethnic studies courses.



One bright spot that was passed was SB 1277, by Sen. Royce West, requiring that school districts designate an academic advisor specifically to assist students enrolled in dual credit courses.

Additionally, the legislature passed HB 1603, by Rep. Dan Huberty and Rep. David Spiller, making individual graduation committees permanent.

HB 999, by Rep. Diego Bernal, provides critical protection for many students whose education was disrupted by the pandemic by allowing them to graduate without having to pass an end-of-course assessment.

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Recent News

Media Coverage in June and July

[‘Anti-critical race theory’ bill heads to Senate after teachers assail it as ‘censorship,’](#) by Emily Donaldson, Dallas Morning-News, July 15 2021

[4 takeaways from Texas’ top education lawmakers,](#) Emily Donaldson, Dallas Morning News, July 14, 2021

[Texas Senate bill seeks to strip required lessons on people of color and women from ‘critical race theory’ law,](#) by Isabella Zou, Texas Tribune, July 9, 2021

[New SAISD, TAMU-SA digital help desk aims to become national model,](#) by Brooke Crum, San Antonio Report, July 7, 2021

[Consent decree lifted from county schools,](#) The Randolph Leader, July 7, 2021

[Texas Students of Color Returned to In-Person Learning at Below-Average Rates. Experts Say the Reasons Are Nuanced](#), by Allyson Waller, Texas Tribune, July 6, 2021

[Juneteenth, Texas Gov. Gregg Abbot and HB 3979. Is it an Attempt to Whitewash History? Democrats cry foul as Gov. Abbott signs HB 3979 into law](#), Robert Turner (blog), Medium, June 21, 2021

[‘Critical race theory’ is latest lightning rod in Texas](#), Bill Whitaker, commentary, Waco Tribune-Herald, June 19, 2021

[Juneteenth is a federal holiday. Can it be taught after Texas limited teaching on race?](#), by Eleanor Dearman, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, June 18, 2021

[Words Matter – The Case for Shifting to “Emergent Bilingual,”](#) by Araceli García (IDRA Newsletter), Language Magazine, June 17, 2021

[SSD grapples with discrimination, equity](#), by T. Lee Brown, The Nugget Newspaper (Oregon), June 8, 2021

[Legislature Passed 4 Bills from Tx Early Childhood English Learner Initiative’s Policy Roadmap](#), by David Feigen, Texans Care for Children, June 2, 2021

Plus!

[IDRA testimony and public comments on bills in the Texas Legislature in June and July](#)

Other News

[Today’s DACA Ruling Reaffirms Urgency for Congress to Pave Pathway for Citizenship – IDRA Statement on DACA Ruling](#), July 16, 2021

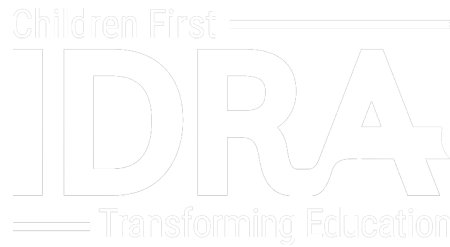
[Congressional Briefing Stresses Need to End Corporal Punishment of Students – IDRA releases report: Stopping Harmful Corporal Punishment Policies in Texas](#), July 2, 2021

[Texas Gov Signs Harmful Texas Social Studies Bill into Law \(English\) • \(Español\)](#), June 15, 2021

[As Schools Plan to Reopen Safely, IDRA Valued Youth Partnership Re-engages Struggling Students](#), June 11, 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.

August 9, 2021