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# IDRA's Priority Bills for Education in Texas

## Community Voices Matter

March 18, 2021

All students deserve equitable educational opportunities that prepare them to access and succeed in college and beyond. The Texas Legislature is in a mad-dash through May, and IDRA has put forward bills in several of our core [policy priority areas](#) to ensure equity in public education. Below are the bills that our team at IDRA authored or created through collaborations with partner groups, based on our research, experience in schools, and discussions with students and families.

### Ending Harmful Discipline Practices with Good Data and Safe School Climates

[House Bill \(HB\) 3485](#) and [HB 4399](#) by Rep. Vikki

Goodwin: These bills would require school districts and charter schools to report additional student discipline and school policing data by race, gender and other important demographics. Schools already report major disciplinary incidents to the state, but the bill proposals provide more information about suspensions, expulsions and discretionary referrals for things like dress code violations. HB 3485, written by MEASURE Austin, would make this data publicly accessible to parents and families as well.



[Senate Bill \(SB\) 1595](#) by Sen. Eddie Lucio: This bill would make a simple change in the state's corporal punishment law and have parents opt-in to their student being subject to corporal punishment, instead of having to opt-out.

[SB 1596](#) by Sen. Eddie Lucio and [HB 2010](#) by Rep. James Talarico: This bill refines the major school safety bill passed in 2019 (SB 11). It prioritizes educators, parents, and trained mental and behavioral health personnel to assess concerning student behavior and allows schools to use designated funds to promote positive, safe school climates.

## Preparing All Students to Succeed in College with Better Data, Better Counseling and Equitable Representation

[SB 1702](#) and [SB 1703](#) by Sen. Cesar Blanco: These two bills would improve course and counseling requirements from HB 5 passed in 2013. SB 1702 would promote students' math coursework by reinstating Algebra 2 in high school requirements. Algebra 2 is a critical gateway course for college readiness. The bill would also allow better data collection on students' high school endorsement choices and graduation outcomes. SB 1703 promotes continued training for school counselors so they can better advise students as they select their college and career options (primarily while in middle school).



[SB 1709](#) by Sen. Cesar Blanco: This bill establishes a standard for colleges and universities to create racially equitable hiring and promotion plans for faculty of color. Representation matters in classrooms – including in higher education. More Black, Latino, Asian American, Native American and other

faculty members of color benefits all students' college success and their future prospects as scholars.

## Ensuring Excellent Educational Opportunities for Emergent Bilingual Students

[SB 2065](#) and [SB 2066](#) by Sen. José Menéndez: These bills support an asset-based perspective and investments in emergent bilingual students' education by changing out-of-date terms like "limited English proficient" student and "English learner" to "emergent bilingual" students. SB 2065 also restores the minimum amount of the bilingual education allotment that should go directly to those programs to its initial percentage. Together, they support investments in the bilingualism and biliteracy of Texas students.



**The next two major bills from the [Early Childhood English Learner Initiative](#), that IDRA is a part of, would help create a more bilingual state.**

[HB 2256](#) by Rep. Bobby Guerra and [SB 1101](#) by Sen. Brandon Creighton: These bills would create a new teacher certification in bilingual special education. During stakeholder meetings through the Early Childhood English Learner Initiative, educators said this was missing from Texas schools. Teachers who want to be able to screen, diagnose, instruct and support linguistically diverse students who also should receive special education services would be specially trained and certified to meet students' needs.

[HB 2258](#) by Rep. Bobby Guerra and [SB 560](#) by Sen. Eddie Lucio: These bills would set clear benchmarks to increase the number of bilingually certified teachers, the number of students who graduate bilingual or multilingual, and the availability of high-quality dual language immersion classes in pre-K through 12th grade. To reach state goals for academic outcomes and postsecondary success, emergent bilingual student education should be part of a strategic plan. This plan supports the goals, the workforce and the education opportunities to ensure excellent education for emergent bilingual students, and all students.

# Promoting Equitable Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Digital Inclusion

[HB 4273](#) by Rep. Gina Hinojosa: Families, educators and state officials are still struggling to understand the magnitude of the pandemic's impact on students' educational opportunities. This bill would put a reporting process in place during any disaster so that we understand which students learn from home, in-person or through other distance-learning when typical school days are disrupted.

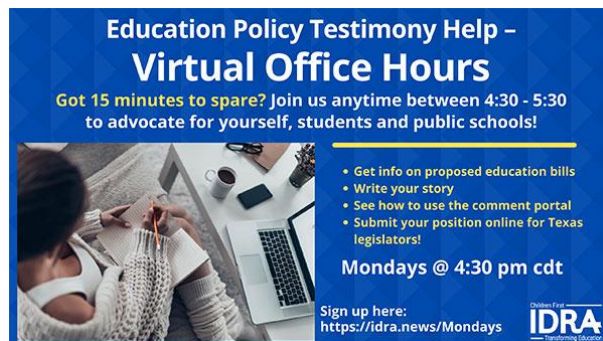


[HB 4391](#) by Rep. James Talarico: This bill would have school districts create student and family engagement plans. Students and families are often overlooked in major district decisions about educational opportunities and options. By creating student and family engagement plans, schools can make sure student and family voices are at the forefront. This is especially urgent as districts continue to make decisions about schooling during the pandemic, how to address the digital divide and take steps to make up for learning disruptions over the past two school years.

## Want to make sure your voice is heard? We can help!

Legislative hearings started last week and will continue to early May. This year, committees will hear a very limited number of bills due to the pandemic and the winter storms.

Join us for our [weekly office hours](#) to find out what bills will be heard by lawmakers that week and submit your comments online. Our Virtual Office Hours are open each Monday at 4:30-5:30. [Sign up to get the log-in link.](#)



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[How to testify in the #txlege Twitter thread](#) by the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC)

### [How to Testify before the Texas Legislature, Infographic](#)

To learn more about our policy agenda and how to make your voice heard this session, please contact Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes, IDRA Deputy Director of Policy, at [chloe.sikes@idra.org](mailto:chloe.sikes@idra.org) or Ana Ramón, Deputy Director of Advocacy, at [ana.ramon@idra.org](mailto:ana.ramon@idra.org).

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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.