



Focus: Data for Actionable Knowledge

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Office for Civil Rights Data Reveals Patterns of Inequity

by Bricio Vasquez, Ph.D.

Creating equitable access to educational opportunities is a calculated task often requiring specialized tools. One key tool is the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) dataset. The CRDC is a comprehensive dataset containing valuable information on the patterns of educational inequities within schools and school districts (OCR, 2018).

The CRDC data are administered by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) under the U.S. Department of Education. The data contain information from educational organizations that receive federal funding, including public school districts, charter schools, juvenile justice facilities, alternative schools and schools serving only students with disabilities.

The CRDC data have been collected from agencies every two years since 1968 with the most recent release containing data from the 2015-16 academic year. Prior to the 2011-12 collection year, the CRDC assembled a sample of about 7,000 districts and 72,000 schools. The most recent CRDC data (2015-16) contain information from all 17,337 districts and 96,360 schools nationwide.

The CRDC dataset is composed of 34 topical data files, each containing detailed metrics relating to educational equity and opportunity. The box on Page 2 lists the topics and data elements contained in each file. Most metrics are disaggregated by race-ethnicity, sex, limited English

proficiency (LEP), and students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Given the volume of different topics and data elements, it is possible for researchers to uncover subtle patterns in the data that illustrate discrimination in an educational setting based on any one of the protected categories.

These data are important for many reasons. The Civil Rights Data Collection serves as the main tool with which the OCR monitors patterns of discrimination across districts and schools. One important element is a marker indicating if a district is under a desegregation order or plan. According to the CRDC data definitions, a desegregation order or plan is ordered, submitted to, or entered with a state or federal court or agency. The desegregation order or plan is intended to remedy a school district’s violation of students’ civil rights under the U.S. Constitution.

According to the 2015-16 CRDC data, there are 334 districts that are under an active desegregation order or plan by either the U.S. Department of Justice, OCR, U.S. Department of Education or some other federal or state agency. The map on Page 2 shows districts that are currently under a desegregation order or plan.

The IDRA EAC-South is one of four federally-funded equity centers that provide technical assistance (cont. on Page 2)

“Real, lasting change in schools comes when people are engaged at all levels, from state capitols to board rooms, from classrooms to community centers and kitchen tables, and where people have the knowledge they need to take the right steps on behalf of all children.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President and CEO

(Office for Civil Rights Data Reveals Patterns of Inequity, continued from Page 1)

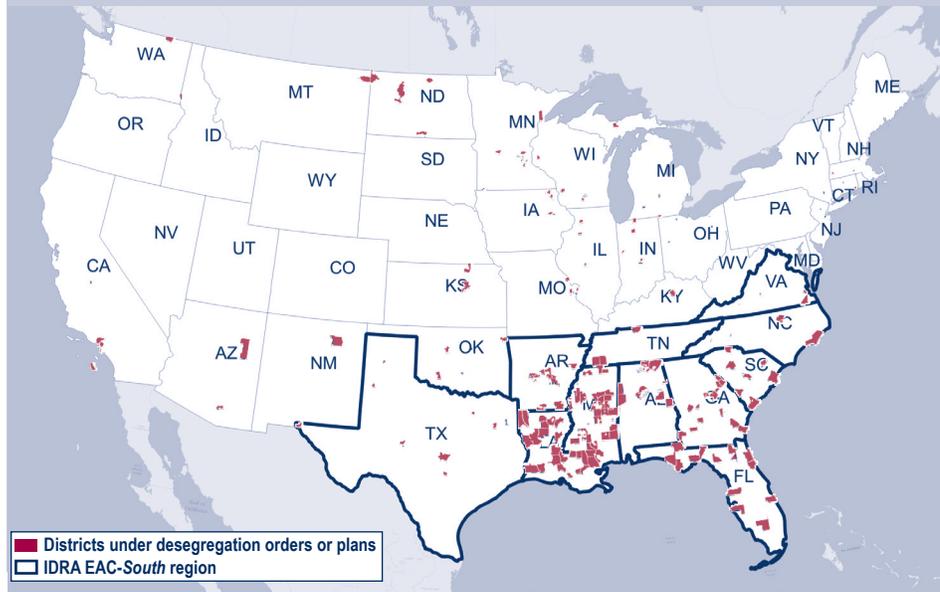
tance and professional development to schools and districts seeking to create a more equitable educational space for students and staff who are members of protected classes. Our center serves Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Most of the districts under desegregation orders or plans are located within the IDRA EAC-South's region. In effect, the data visualization below demonstrates the need for services by the IDRA EAC-South in this region.

The passing of the Civil Rights Act 1964 is one of the most important legislative acts in U.S. history. The act bans segregation and protects individu-

als from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Yet, discrimination and separation by race continues to be an issue today. Explicit racial discriminatory and segregation practices have been outlawed, however, in contemporary society, they often have morphed into new forms.

More specifically, discrimination and segregation are ushered into a contemporary educational context through "color blind racism" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), "implicit bias" (Johnson, 2016; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), and "silent racism" (Trepagnier, 2016). These new manifestations of racism continue to reproduce the legacy (cont. on Page 6)

Most of the School Districts Under Desegregation Orders or Plans are Located in the U.S. South



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CRDC Topical Datasets

| Topic | Number of Data Elements |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Advanced Mathematics | 20 |
| Advanced Placement | 150 |
| Algebra I | 116 |
| Algebra II | 20 |
| Biology | 20 |
| Calculus | 20 |
| Chemistry | 20 |
| Chronic Absenteeism | 20 |
| Corporal Punishment | 57 |
| Credit Recovery | 2 |
| Distance Education | 19 |
| Dual Enrollment | 19 |
| Enrollment | 103 |
| Expulsions | 120 |
| Geometry | 22 |
| Gifted and Talented | 19 |
| Harassment and Bullying | 125 |
| High School Equivalency (GED) | 37 |
| International Baccalaureate | 19 |
| Justice Facilities | 8 |
| LEA Characteristics | 44 |
| Offenses | 14 |
| Physics | 20 |
| Referrals and Arrests | 68 |
| Restraint and Seclusion | 111 |
| Retention | 273 |
| SAT and ACT Exams | 18 |
| School Characteristics | 24 |
| School Expenditures | 19 |
| School Support | 14 |
| Single-sex Athletics | 7 |
| Single-sex Classes | 11 |
| Suspensions | 163 |
| Transfers | 34 |

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Using Data to Uncover Facts for Strengthening Education

by *Bricio Vasquez, Ph.D., and Hector Bojorquez*

In education there are plenty of assumptions made about the children, families and communities. Making decisions and shaping policy based on “common knowledge” or assumptions that are not supported by the evidence can be a dangerous endeavor. Organizations are most effective when they are responsible stewards of data and make it easily accessible to those who need to use it. This article provides an example of how data can help expose myths about education as well as describe IDRA’s goals for data and analytics.

Prominent demographers regularly speak on the dangers of undereducation of the Hispanic populous and warn of the impending economic collapse that may result if nothing is done about it. But effective strategies can be blocked by mistaken claims that certain populations, such as Hispanic or low-income families, do not value education. Too many policymakers and school officials believe this myth in their attempts to explain away the relative underperformance of minority children in school.

But of course, all types of families value education (Bojorquez, 2014; Valencia & Black, 2002; Robledo Montecel, et al., 1993). One way this is clearly evidenced is by the increase in college enrollment over the past several decades.

In 2000, about 63 percent of high school graduates enrolled in college within one year of their high school graduation; by 2016 that figure had risen to 70 percent (NCES, 2015). Overall, more high school graduates enroll in post-secondary education than any other major transition category (i.e., military services or entering the workforce).

Taking a closer look at the college enrollment rates by race and ethnicity reveals more on the post-secondary landscape, especially among Hispanic students. The box on Page 4 presents data from the **National Center for Education Statistics**. In 2016, college enrollment rates were

71 percent for White students, 71 percent for Hispanic students, 87 percent for Asian American students, and 56 percent for Black students.

Notably, the increase in college enrollment rates for Hispanic students between 1990 and 2016 went from 53 percent to 71 percent. According to the data, Hispanic college enrollment is equivalent to that of non-Hispanic White college enrollment. For Hispanic youth, this was an increase of 18 percentage points within a 26-year period and the largest increase among all racial-ethnic categories during this time frame.

To illustrate the magnitude of this change in the Hispanic population, it took White youth 49 years to increase college enrollment from 54 percent in 1967 to 71 percent in 2016. These changes in the college enrollment rates are evidence of social and economic shifts across the country. Additional sources of school enrollment data can be found on the **U.S. Census Bureau website** (<https://www.census.gov/topics/education/school-enrollment.html>).

Factors including the shift to an information- and service-driven economy, globalization, technological advancements and changes in college access policies have made these increases possible not only for Hispanic students but for all race-ethnic groups.

The dramatic increases in Hispanic college enrollment demonstrate a connection to education that is in stark contrast with conventional perceptions of Hispanic students and their families.

There are some important caveats to the increase in college access for Hispanic youth. There are noted differences in the types of colleges youth enroll in by racial/ethnic category. Hispanic youth enroll at much higher rates in two-year colleges than four-year universities. Two-year colleges provide an important vehicle for educational attainment for minority youth, however, *(cont. on Page 4)*

IDRA has committed to expanding data access in the coming months to the broader education community in Texas and the rest of the nation. This will include easy-to-use yet powerful metrics and visualizations intended to help educators and families understand and act on areas in education that need focus.

(Using Data to Uncover Facts for Strengthening Education, continued from Page 5)

they are also magnets for underprepared students. Many students entering two-year colleges require developmental education prior to taking credit-bearing courses toward their field of study.

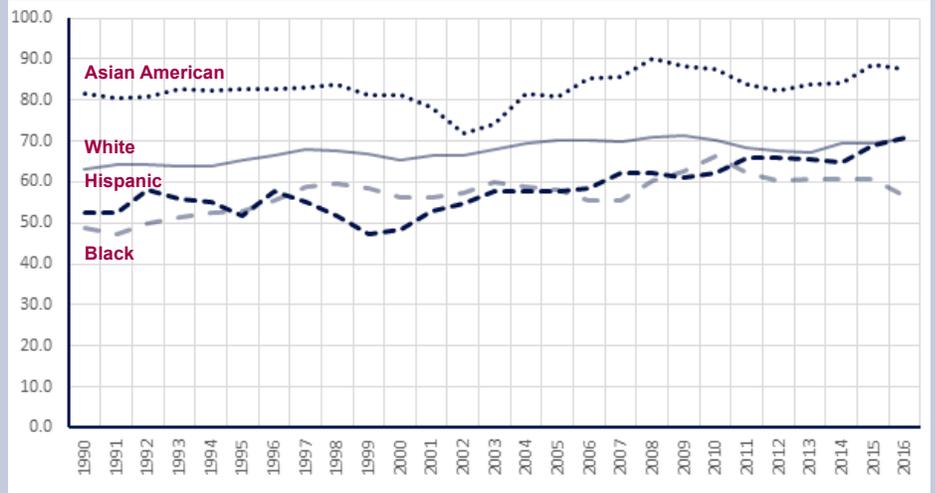
One barrier to accessing credit-bearing courses in college is access to Algebra II in high school. For example, as of 2014, Texas stopped requiring high school students to complete Algebra II to graduate. This leaves room for more students to enter college unprepared to succeed in rigorous academic coursework (Johnson, 2018a; Johnson, 2018b). In fact, IDRA research found that fewer Texas school districts are enrolling students in Algebra II, especially rural districts that experienced a 24 percent drop (IDRA, 2018).

Access to data on schools and their college preparedness capacity is important for students and parents. They are especially important for Hispanic students in making post-secondary decisions. IDRA developed the **OurSchool Data Portal** (<http://www.idra.org/OurSchool>), an interactive data tool that enables users to view college enrollment and preparedness metrics for all high schools in Texas. Students, parents, educators and community members can view data on school holding power, school success, college preparation, college success, college persistence, teaching quality, curriculum quality, parent and community engagement, and student engagement.

Educators also can leverage data to inform their teaching and learning practices. Doing so effectively means taking a guided and strategic approach to analyzing student-level data (Rouland, Shaffer & Schlanger, 2017). One resource to guide a data analysis strategy is the **Toolkit for Effective Data Use** (<https://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/toolkit-effective-data-use>). This toolkit was developed for schools as part of the Strategic Data Project initiative by the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University. The toolkit provides a comprehensive set of guides to analyze student level data, including pre-written statistical software code, visualization guides, data management guides, best practices, and example narratives for communicating analytic results.

At IDRA, our intent is to use data to understand truth about education and to combat myths about marginalized children and communities. We will examine where data has been misconstrued

Percentage of Recent High School Graduates Enrolling in College



Data source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). Fast Facts: Enrollment.

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as poor research questions can guarantee poor results and can be intentionally misused against equity. Since the mission of IDRA demands all children are seen as valuable, data and responsible analysis must be used to its fullest potential to realize that vision.

IDRA has committed to expanding data access in the coming months to the broader education community in Texas and the rest of the nation. This will include easy-to-use yet powerful metrics and visualizations intended to help educators and families understand and act on areas in education that need focus. Since its inception, IDRA has made a commitment to use empirical evidence to push forward the mission of equity in education. IDRA will continue to provide data in innovative ways to ensure that all children get a quality, public education.

Resources

- Bojorquez, H. (2014). *College Bound and Determined* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association).
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 Valencia, R.R., & Black, M.S. (2002). “Mexican Americans Don’t Value Education!” – On the Basis of the Myth, Mythmaking and Debunking, 1(2), 81-103.

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Family Leadership in Education Projects... and the Data that Drives Them

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

When working with families on education issues, it is critical to carefully assess which ones are most interesting and relevant to them. A key element of IDRA's Education CAFE model is that members choose a project for their group to focus on in order to affect education in their community's schools. Educators have access to very large amounts of information and can organize it in many, many ways. Yet, we know the importance of being attuned to what is happening and what is of concern to families – concerned to the point of them wanting to act, as a community, to change something, solve a problem or throw more light on an issue.

For example, in 2011 when the Texas legislature cut billions off the education budget, families were alarmed and began taking public action to pressure the state legislature to put the money back in the school coffers.

And when a bill was passed in 2017 that weakened the high school graduation requirements and removed critical requirements of all students, such as Algebra II, one large community requested specific training from IDRA on the issue. They then conducted a survey of more than 1,600 families, produced a report and still today holds yearly conferences to assess whether families are informed and know if their secondary students are on a college track (Cortez, 2015).

IDRA's family leadership approach, as seen in our Education CAFE work and our school change model, the Quality Schools Action Framework, gives actionable data and information a prominent role. Data are important but only to serve the interest and drive of the families to have excellent schools for all children.

Our experience with families and communities also informs our processes. We have seen countless attempts by school officials to dump data at parent meetings without first listening to what parents are most concerned about. To simply

present data, no matter how critical and important we might consider it, without being attentive to the participants' interests, is to misunderstand what being "data driven" means. In the vast information databases collected by federal and state agencies and others, we must mine for what is relevant and current.

The community project selected by the group is constructed as we bridge the data with families' concerns and interests. The data that drives

family leadership in education projects must resonate with the families and be a catalyst for action.

Resources

Cortez, J.D. (June-July 2015). "¿Y Ahora Qué? And Now What? – Community Groups in South Texas Work Together to Improve Education," *IDRA Newsletter*.

Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., is an IDRA senior education associate and directs IDRA Education CAFE work. Comments and questions may be directed to him via email at aurelio.montemayor@idra.org.

Learn more about IDRA's Education CAFE approach!

An Education CAFE is a parent group that is rooted in a community-based organization, rather than in a single school.

Its sole purpose is to collaborate with schools to improve the success of students in the community.

Three components are central to the Education CAFE:

- **Community-based, Distributive Leadership** – Education CAFEs are born in their communities.
- **School Partnerships** – Members come together and partner with schools in their neighborhood in order to ensure student success.
- **Education Projects** – Members carry out education projects using actionable data.

5 Steps To Start an IDRA Education CAFE

An IDRA Education CAFE (Community Action Forums for Excellence) is a parent group that is rooted in a community-based organization, rather than in a single school. Its sole purpose is to collaborate with schools to improve the success of students in the community.

- 1 Contact IDRA to get a start-up packet.**
Any parent, school official or interested person can take the first steps toward organizing an Education CAFE.
- 2 Identify individuals interested in forming an Education CAFE.**
This group should include families with children in public schools at any grade level. Set a time and place for a planning meeting.
- 3 Hold a planning meeting.**
Form a planning committee from among the attendees at the meeting. Select a temporary chairperson and secretary (until the tasks are volunteered for at the next meeting).
- 4 Hold an organizational meeting.**
 - ✓ Explain the purpose of the meeting and policies and purposes of Education CAFE.
 - ✓ Have participants share individually what their hopes and dreams are for the education of all children in your community.
 - ✓ Create a name for the working group.
 - ✓ Set up a meeting calendar, including time and place (The place doesn't have to be at a school. It can be at a community center or other central location.)
 - ✓ Create a list of volunteers for individual tasks, including who will set the agenda for the next meeting, who will conduct the meeting, and what the outreach and invitation goals for each person are between now and the next meeting.
- 5 Contact IDRA for follow-up assistance.**
It's time to build relationships in your school community and see what issues your members are concerned about by exploring school data. Then you can identify your Education CAFE's project to focus on.

Learn more about IDRA's Education CAFE model
<http://budurl.com/IDRAedCAFE>

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to advance equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to enter and succeed in college.

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IDRA's Education CAFE process is made possible with support from the O.K. Energy Foundation.

<https://idra.news/EdCAFew>

Annual IDRA La Semana del Niño Parent Institute™



Bilingual Parent Institute • April 5, 2019

Special event for families, community groups and educators

This annual institute offers families, school district personnel and community groups from across the country the opportunity to network, obtain resources and information, and receive training and bilingual materials on IDRA's nationally-recognized research based model for parent leadership in education.

Highlights

- Interactive and participatory sessions on key education topics
- Presentations led by parents with practical action steps
- Examples of successful family engagement
- Bilingual event (English-Spanish)
- Refreshments and lunch
- Exhibitors, including service providers, college and universities and non-profit agencies

“The fact that everybody was engaged, was participating; this is something I don't see in any other conference. [In other conferences], people just go and listen. Here people come to participate to be engaged – that was impressive!”

— previous participant

Get details:

<http://www.idra.org/events/la-semana-del-nino-parent-institute>

(Office for Civil Rights Data Reveals Patterns of Inequity, continued from Page 2)

of White supremacy and exclusion that has characterized most of U.S. history.

Too often, equity problems in education are woven tightly into the culture of institutional processes such that they cannot be easily identified by district leadership (Hinojosa, 2018). Public school districts can use the CRDC data to understand patterns of inequities within their own schools by making comparisons with other schools and disaggregating the data by key subpopulations.

For example, school districts can view their own patterns of disciplinary referrals by race/ethnicity and gender and see how they compare to other school districts across the country.

A second example might point to the pattern of disproportionate in-grade level retention among Black and Hispanic students (Johnson, 2018).

Ensuring equity in education requires an organically choreographed system of civil rights and community groups, knowledgeable public school staff, investigative reporting, civil rights attorneys, the IDRA EAC-South, state agencies and the federal government.

The CRDC data play a key role in monitoring civil injustices in a nation where some continue to resist the promise that all children are deserving of a free, appropriate, public education. IDRA is committed to using the CRDC data in ways that ensure the all children are valued and receive a quality education.

Resources

- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2018). *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (5th ed.). Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
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Bricio Vasquez, Ph.D., is IDRA's education data scientist. Comments and questions may be directed to him via email at bricio.vasquez@idra.org.

Corazón

for María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel

On the occasion of Dr. Robledo Montecel's retirement, the staff asked former staff member and comadre, Laurie Posner, to write a poem. She presented her artistry, Corazón, at a celebration event in December 2018.

There is heart at the root center of courage.

Looking back, it shouldn't surprise me that we met in a city,
a gathering-place at the edge and intersection,
where streets wailed with ambulances and taxis 15 floors below
and you told me what was possible for children.

Cuca, you ignite a room, a city, with possibility.

That first meeting, when I left saying, I have met my mentor, would be months before
joining you in Texas where bats tornado from night bridges knowing how
to compose, shift, unify – without seeing – to murmurate
like a starlight symphony.

You shared the story with us about geese. How sometimes
they tire mid-air, so it is never enough
just to fly, one has to know when to fall back, tend to the flock
and honk when it goes astray.

Again and again in this way, you gadflew –
with comadres y compadres –
against the tide

Fighting tirelessly for children,
You had a way of becoming a tide.

Strength comes from family, faith, community, you often said.
Travel. Stay curious. Be rooted

in places like the great plains of the Rio Grande, south of the Edwards Plateau stretching down
toward the river in a dress of grass and a cloak of oak and mesquite
in Milwaukee's western shores of Lake Michigan where winter rushes in
like a prize-fighter and, in San Antonio, where grackles gather in a pinking-shears sky
and once-lost-things are often found

How did you find this voice that rouses us? You once
told me that a fear of public speaking is overcome by having something that must
– damn it – has to be said.

And I learned so much more about embracing – we all did
when you came into a room, in essence saying
Bring everything

You call forth a stilling,
a settling in of the heart—beloved Friends, does this say it?
Cuca, you are a presence
in the way of great arcipeluvian groves
that carry hope of root and fruit
forward and, in turn, under their own great and generous shade
plant hope



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IDRA Policy Issues for Texas in 2019 Released

This month, the Texas Legislature opened for its 2019 session. IDRA issued a call for attention to seven key policy issues that are essential to the state providing an excellent and equitable education for all children in the state.

- ★ Fair Funding that Ensures Equity and Excellence for All Students
- ★ Fair Discipline that Keeps Children in Safe Schools
- ★ Policies that Keep the Public in Public Education
- ★ Effective Accountability that Puts Children First and Supports Schools
- ★ Testing that Doesn't Hurt Children
- ★ Instruction for English Learners that Ensures Success
- ★ Higher Education Access that Expands Opportunities



Get details, including research and key resources online at:
www.idra.org/education_policy/idra-policy-issues-texas

For questions, contact our National Director of Policy,
 Morgan Craven, J.D., at morgan.craven@idra.org.

*achieving equal educational opportunity for every child
 through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college*