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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes Intercultural Development Research Association analyses of attrition rates for high school students enrolled in Texas public high schools. Enrollment figures were examined for students who were in the 9th grade during the 1988-89 school year and students who were in the 12th grade during 1991-92, and results were compared to those of previous annual studies. Findings indicate that: (1) the rate of attrition (33 percent) has remained virtually constant over a 7-year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92, with Hispanics having the highest percentage of dropouts; (2) the annual number of students lost from public high school enrollment through attrition has remained virtually constant over the 7-year period; and (3) attrition rates were higher for ethnic minority students than for White non-Hispanic students and for males compared to females. These findings are consistent with the trends reported by the Texas Education Agency. Additional research should examine the effectiveness of dropout prevention initiatives, particularly as they relate to minority groups and males. In addition, school districts need to establish better record keeping with regard to reasons why students drop out of school and their status after they fail to attend school. A school district network should be established to keep track of student attrition. Attrition rates are listed by county and race. (LP)

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ATTRITION IN TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Roy Johnson, M.S.

IDRA Newsletter - October 1993

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# ATTRITION IN TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Roy Johnson, M.S.

The issue of students leaving school prior to graduation continues to be a major challenge to education here in Texas and across the United States. Despite the many initiatives designed to keep students in school, the dropout problem continues to persist as far too many students leave school before they complete high school. Results from the 1990 Census showed that over 135,000 Texas residents between the ages of 16 to 19 left school without completing grade 12. The most recent dropout data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) showed that 53,421 students in grades 7-12 dropped out of school during the 1991-92 school year. Attrition analyses conducted by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) show that about 90,000 students were lost from public high school enrollment between their ninth grade year in 1988-89 and their twelfth grade year in 1991-92.

In 1986 IDRA conducted the first comprehensive analysis of school dropouts in the state of Texas. This effort was conducted during the period of May 1986 and October 1986 under contract with the Texas Department of Community Affairs (now the Texas Department of Commerce) and the Texas Education Agency. It focused on the magnitude of the dropout problem, its economic impact, and the nature and effectiveness of dropout prevention programs in Texas.

IDRA's original study on the magnitude of the dropout problem in Texas utilized a three-fold methodological approach: (1) district self-reports to TEA, (2) analyses of census data on graduation levels, and (3) estimates of dropouts based on school enrollments and longitudinal attrition. Because of the many definitions and methodologies used by districts to establish their dropout rates, the component based on district self-reports was discontinued in the early stages of the 1986 study. The census data and attrition aspects of the study were continued and subsequently provided similar and mutually-validated research findings. These findings were published by IDRA in *Texas School Dropout Survey Project: A Summary of Findings*.

Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, IDRA has conduct-

ed annual longitudinal attrition analyses using a constant methodology in order to document and assess the magnitude of the school dropout problem in the state of Texas. This yearly study continues to provide invaluable data on dropout trends. In the aftermath of IDRA's 1986 study, TEA has conducted its own annual study beginning with the 1987-88 school year based on district self-reports in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

This article presents the results of the IDRA attrition analyses for the 1991-92 school year. The study looked at high school students enrolled in Texas public high schools at the ninth grade level in the 1988-89 school year and the twelfth grade enrolling in 1991-92. Results are presented for 252 of the 254 Texas counties; two counties (Kenedy and Loving) do not have high schools.

## IDRA's Attrition Model

IDRA has developed a technique for estimating the number of students lost from Texas public schools as a result of attrition. The formula for computing the longitudinal attrition rates consists of taking grade level enrollment for a base year and comparing these figures to grade level enrollment in a subsequent or end year, with the assumption that a decline in the number of students enrolled constitutes the attrition rate for the school or district and that the cohort attrition rate is closely related to the annual dropout rate. IDRA's longitudinal attrition analyses allow for increases and decreases in a district's enrollment figures.

Since school district enrollment may not be constant from school year to school year, differences in enrollment are adjusted by the increase or decrease in total high school enrollment. Specifically, IDRA's attrition methodology takes a school district's enrollment in the ninth grade of a specific school year and compares this enrollment with the adjusted twelfth grade enrollment three years later. Special school districts (military and special education) are not included since they are likely to have unstable enrollments and/or because they do not have a tax base in support of the school

program. Enrollment data used in the study are obtained from the Texas Education Agency's Fall Membership Survey.

The IDRA attrition model makes three additional assumptions. The first is that the number of students transferring in and out of school districts is fairly evenly divided among the various grades included in the longitudinal time span. The second assumption is that the majority of student transfers occur within the state and would therefore be accounted for in the state total. Third, the number of students retained at each grade level is fairly constant from one year to the next.

## LONGITUDINAL ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS 1985-86 TO 1991-92

RACE-ETHNICITY GROUP	1985-1986	1986-1987	1987-1988	1988-1989	1989-1990	1991-1992	% CHANGE FROM 1985-86 TO 1991-92
Native American	45	39	37	47	39	40	-11
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	30	28	23	22	21	-36
Black	34	38	39	37	38	39	+15
White	27	26	24	20	19	22	-19
Hispanic	45	46	49	48	48	48	+7
Total	33	34	33	31	31	34	+3

Figures calculated by IDRA from Texas Education Agency Fall Membership Survey data.

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**Major Findings of the Attrition Analyses**

The IDRA study of attrition rates for the 1991-92 school year analyzed enrollment figures for students who were in the ninth grade in 1988-89 and students who were in the twelfth grade in 1991-92. Enrollment data from TEA's Fall Membership

The major findings of the most recent attrition analyses are presented in the graph below. Many of these findings are validated by the TEA's 1991-92 dropout report, completed in May 1993, though some differences were noted. Where possible, these similarities and difference in the findings will be noted.

year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92. The number of students (in grades 9-12) lost from public school enrollment through attrition increased from about 86,000 in 1985-86 to about 90,000 in 1991-92. Minority students comprised about 48.8% of the high school student population in 1991-92, but accounted for 70.3% of the students lost through attrition. For the period between 1987-88 and 1991-92, there was a small reduction in the number of students lost through attrition from about 91,000 in 1987-88 to about 90,000 in 1991-92. The number of students leaving Texas public high schools in other years included 90,000 in 1986-87, 87,000 in 1988-89, and 84,000 in 1989-90.

By contrast, TEA found that the number of students (in grades 7-12) leaving the state's public education system declined consistently from 91,307 in 1987-88 to 53,421 in 1991-92. The number of dropouts reported by TEA: 82,325 in 1988-89, 70,040 in 1989-90, and 53,421 in 1990-91.

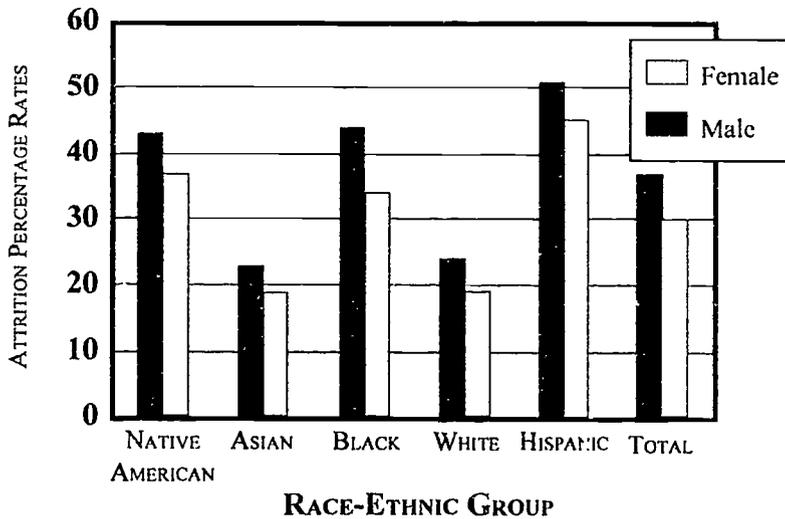
**Ethnic minority students were more likely to be lost from school enrollment than White, non-Hispanic students when adjusted for population size.** Hispanic students were 2.2 times more likely to be lost from public high school enrollment through attrition than White students, while Black students were 1.9 times and Native American students were 2.4 times more likely to be lost through attrition than White students. Asian American students were 1.0 times less likely to be lost from public high school enrollment through attrition than White students.

TEA found that Hispanics were 2.2 times more likely to drop out of school than White students; Blacks and Native Americans were 1.9 times more likely to drop out of school than White students; and Asian American students were 1.1 times more likely to drop out of school than White students.

**More males were lost from public high school enrollment through attrition than females.** Fifty-seven percent (57%) of students lost from public high school enrollment were male versus the 43% that were female. For each race-ethnic group, males were more likely to be lost from school enrollment due to attrition than females as shown in the graph above. The difference in the percent of males and females lost through attrition was particularly acute for Black students.

In TEA's study of 1991-92 dropout statistics, it was found that 54% of the

**ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY RACE-ETHNICITY AND GENDER, 1991-92**



Data compiled by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency's 1991 Fall Membership Survey.

Survey for the 1988-89 and 1991-92 school years were utilized for the study.

During the 1988-89 school year, there were 263,763 students enrolled in the ninth grade. Of these students, 469 (0.2%) were Native American, 4,833 (1.8%) were Asian American, 88,053 (33.4%) were Hispanic, 39,382 (14.9%) were Black, and 131,026 (49.7%) were White. Total high school enrollment (grades 9-12) during this year was 878,561. Of these, 1,495 (0.2%) were Native American, 17,891 (2.0%) were Asian American, 256,013 (29.1%) were Hispanic, 125,708 (14.3%) were Black, and 477,454 (54.3%) were White.

The twelfth grade enrollment during 1991-92 was comprised of 177,031 students. Of this number, 322 (0.2%) were Native American, 4,587 (2.6%) were Asian American, 51,258 (29.0%) were Hispanic, 23,220 (13.1%) were Black, and 97,644 (55.2%) were White. The total high school enrollment (grades 9-12) during this year totaled 888,003. Of these, 1,722 (0.2%) were Native American, 21,410 (2.4%) were Asian American, 288,417 (32.5%) were Hispanic, 122,040 (13.7%) were Black, and 454,414 (51.1%) were White.

**The rate of attrition has remained virtually constant over a seven-year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92.** The IDRA attrition study shows that the rate of attrition in public high school enrollment increased slightly from 33% in 1985-86 to 34% in 1991-92. This represents a three percent (3%) increase over the seven-year period. Over the seven-year period, attrition rates ranged from a low of 31% in 1988-89 and 1989-90 to a high of 34% in 1986-87 and 1991-92, as shown in the chart on page 6. The charts on pages 9 and 10 present the Texas school attrition rates by county for the 1991-92 school year.

TEA, however, reports that the annual dropout rate in the state's public education system declined consistently from 6.7% in 1987-88 to 3.8% in 1991-92. The annual dropout rates for other years included 6% in 1988-89, 5.1% in 1989-90, and 3.9% in 1990-91. TEA's longitudinal dropout rates included 34% in 1987-88, 31.3% in 1988-89, 27.2% in 1989-90, 21.4% in 1990-91 and 20.7% in 1991-92.

**The number of students lost from public high school enrollment has remained virtually constant over a seven-**

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*Attrition - continued from page 7*

dropouts were male while 46% of dropouts were female.

### **Conclusions**

The latest attrition analyses conducted by IDRA show that the number and percent of students lost from enrollment in Texas public schools has remained constant over a seven-year period from 1985-86 to 1991-92. The findings of the IDRA attrition analyses concerning the gender and race-ethnicity of dropouts are consistent with the trends reported by TEA; the major difference between the two studies appears in the number and rate of students reported lost from public high school enrollment.

Results of the latest dropout and attrition studies suggest that much still needs to be done toward solving Texas' dropout problem. Additional research must be conducted to examine the effectiveness of dropout prevention initiatives, particularly as they relate to minority group members and males. Greater attention should also be paid to the manner in which dropout statistics are collected and reported. To determine the accuracy of district self-reports, the state education agency should conduct periodic audits of district records to assess the reliability of the data reported through PEIMS.

Additionally, school districts should be required to keep better records on (1) the reasons students drop out of school, and (2)

students' status after they fail to attend their last known school of record. Further, districts should be required to track student transfers within and outside of the school district. A network system between school districts - particularly districts in a particular city, county or region - should be established and maintained to keep track of student attrition. Broader implementation of dropout prevention programs that have proven effective should be conducted. Lastly, legislative action must be undertaken to address and develop responses to the dropout problem.

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# ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS: BY RACE-ETHNICITY, 1991-92

COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES <sup>1</sup>				COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES <sup>1</sup>			
	BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL		BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
ANDERSON	38	28	59	32	DENTON	25	23	46	25
ANDREWS	**	22	39	28	DEWITT	11	24	45	30
ANGELINA	7	17	46	19	DICKENS	100	**	46	6
ARANSAS	**	33	39	32	DIMMIT	0	37	38	38
ARCHER	100	19	0	19	DONLEY	56	23	**	20
ARMSTRONG	.	23	**	16	DUVAL	100	**	18	12
ATASCOSA	38	16	36	28	EASTLAND	72	20	45	24
AUSTIN	20	18	52	22	ECTOR	39	31	51	40
BAILEY	51	**	45	28	EDWARDS	.	**	7	3
BANDERA	20	34	30	33	ELLIS	27	24	45	28
BASTROP	29	30	57	36	EL PASO	44	20	44	40
BAYLOR	**	16	42	13	ERATH	100	18	53	23
BEE	53	6	45	33	FALLS	17	27	19	23
BELL	30	16	28	20	FANNIN	**	17	42	16
BEXAR	37	17	45	35	FAYETTE	**	7	41	11
BLANCO	.	0	41	10	FISHER	**	2	22	10
BORDEN	.	12	**	8	FLOYD	30	28	39	35
BOSQUE	55	40	38	40	FOARD	38	17	8	16
BOWIE	27	18	24	20	FORT BEND	41	22	53	35
BRAZORIA	37	33	54	38	FRANKLIN	44	26	47	27
BRAZOS	36	18	59	29	FREESTONE	1	9	35	8
BREWSTER	.	3	17	13	FRIO	33	22	41	38
BRISCOE	56	12	100	40	GAINES	36	33	36	34
BROOKS	.	18	41	39	GALVESTON	45	23	52	31
BROWN	39	23	35	26	GARZA	24	10	41	24
BURLESON	5	29	35	25	GILLESPIE	.	7	36	13
BURNET	**	31	65	36	GLASSCOCK	.	35	22	33
CALDWELL	32	14	46	32	GOLIAD	100	**	14	8
CALHOUN	25	34	43	38	GONZALES	20	23	42	32
CALLAHAN	.	15	21	15	GRAY	23	17	70	24
CAMERON	55	28	48	47	GRAYSON	26	24	35	24
CAMP	15	25	71	25	GREGG	46	22	53	29
CARSON	0	18	70	21	GRIMES	44	15	64	32
CASS	19	21	8	20	GUADALUPE	37	24	43	32
CASTRO	49	11	38	27	HALE	27	19	47	36
CHAMBERS	**	25	52	23	HALL	2	23	44	28
CHEROKEE	33	27	70	31	HAMILTON	.	11	45	14
CHILDRESS	19	**	54	18	HANSFORD	.	9	17	11
CLAY	10	10	11	11	HARDEMAN	16	10	57	20
COCHRAN	9	40	48	43	HARDIN	24	26	**	25
COKE	.	27	33	29	HARRIS	47	26	62	41
COLEMAN	54	25	59	34	HARRISON	29	30	26	29
COLLIN	38	14	52	19	HARTLEY	.	**	25	**
COLLINGSWORTH	10	**	37	13	HASKELL	21	18	24	19
COLORADO	22	21	47	28	HAYS	29	22	35	28
COMAL	**	8	31	14	HEMPHILL	.	13	38	16
COMANCHE	.	11	35	17	HENDERSON	8	25	50	24
CONCHO	.	2	3	**	HIDALGO	49	17	47	45
COOKE	9	21	50	22	HILL	30	15	44	21
CORYELL	37	30	46	32	HOCKLEY	21	11	28	17
COTTLE	**	26	39	20	HOOD	81	27	66	29
CRANE	100	15	31	25	HOPKINS	**	18	68	18
CROCKETT	.	12	31	26	HOUSTON	27	28	81	29
CROSBY	**	17	26	21	HOWARD	16	21	50	31
CULBERSON	.	54	55	56	HUDSPETH	100	24	38	36
DALLAM	38	11	57	21	HUNT	44	26	51	30
DALLAS	47	22	65	39	HUTCHINSON	**	24	48	25
DAWSON	7	13	36	26	IRION	.	29	10	22
DEAF SMITH	12	**	40	25	JACK	50	23	82	26
DELTA	4	24	0	19	JACKSON	**	13	21	14

<sup>1</sup>Calculated by multiplying the 1988-89 ninth grade enrollment by the percent change in total ninth to twelfth grade enrollment from 1988-89 to 1991-92 and adding this sum to the 1988-89 ninth grade enrollment. The total may not equal the sum of the groups due to rounding; by subtracting the 1991-92 twelfth grade enrollment from the expected 1991-92 twelfth grade enrollment and then dividing the difference by the expected 1991-92 twelfth grade enrollment. The attrition rate results (percentage) are rounded to the nearest whole number.

\*\* = Attrition rate is less than 0.

. = The necessary data are unavailable to calculate the attrition rate.

# ATTRITION RATES IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS: BY RACE-ETHNICITY, 1991-92 (CONTINUED)

COUNTY NAME ↓	ATTRITION RATES <sup>1</sup>				COUNTY NAME ↓	ATTRITION RATES <sup>1</sup>			
	BLACK ↓	WHITE ↓	HISPANIC ↓	TOTAL ↓		BLACK ↓	WHITE ↓	HISPANIC ↓	TOTAL ↓
JASPER	8	19	35	17	Rains	12	23	**	21
JEFF DAVIS	100	52	14	51	Randall	**	14	34	16
JEFFERSON	32	17	37	25	Reagan	14	19	54	39
JIM HOGG	.	**	16	14	Real	.	**	**	**
JIM WELLS	65	9	24	22	Red River	9	20	49	18
JOHNSON	37	28	61	32	Reeves	18	31	44	42
JONES	0	17	24	19	Refugio	30	1	11	7
KARNES	5	**	23	12	Roberts	.	3	50	7
KAUFMAN	36	32	56	34	Roberston	38	15	40	26
KENDALL	.	4	45	13	Rockwall	33	18	60	21
KENT	.	38	20	36	Runnels	5	21	40	27
KERR	48	13	56	23	Rusk	14	19	49	19
KIMBLE	.	42	53	46	Sabine	7	13	25	12
KING	.	43	0	38	San Augustine	10	1	29	7
KINNEY	100	27	46	41	San Jacinto	34	32	76	34
KLEBERG	22	29	50	44	San Patricio	40	23	34	29
KNOX	47	8	43	23	San Saba	.	4	36	12
LAMAR	9	5	24	6	Schleicher	.	16	29	25
LAMB	32	17	44	32	Scurry	34	23	51	33
LAMPASAS	65	20	33	23	Shackelford	.	16	**	14
LA SALLE	.	28	50	46	Shelby	34	19	69	25
LAVACA	14	8	13	9	Sherman	.	**	40	4
LEE	41	18	60	27	Smith	21	25	70	28
LEON	**	26	**	18	Somervell	25	22	41	24
LIBERTY	21	33	51	32	Starr	**	76	48	48
LIMESTONE	15	25	59	25	Stephens	21	26	77	30
LIPSCOMB	.	7	18	8	Sterling	.	27	27	27
LIVE OAK	.	10	27	17	Stonewall	**	5	100	2
LLANO	.	24	22	23	Sutton	.	4	20	13
LUBBOCK	23	10	36	20	Swisher	9	18	33	25
LYNN	**	**	36	18	Tarrant	36	19	53	27
MADISON	33	23	36	26	Taylor	29	24	41	28
MARION	31	15	.	25	Terrell	.	21	41	34
MARTIN	**	4	43	23	Terry	36	28	40	36
MASON	.	9	29	14	Throckmorton	.	24	**	22
MATAGORDA	27	29	53	37	Titus	13	29	76	33
MAVERICK	.	15	37	36	Tom Green	44	17	38	26
McCULLOCH	**	30	3	18	Travis	51	26	61	42
McLENNAN	30	20	52	28	Trinity	9	37	73	32
McMULLEN	.	28	**	5	Tyler	22	21	**	20
MEDINA	17	17	37	28	Upshur	22	23	65	23
MENARD	.	45	**	24	Upton	**	14	23	18
MIDLAND	31	19	48	28	Uvalde	25	**	26	19
MILAM	29	21	44	26	Val Verde	44	31	35	34
MILLS	.	11	52	18	Van Zandt	33	26	63	28
MITCHELL	26	13	14	14	Victoria	7	22	52	35
MONTAGUE	.	12	46	13	Walker	42	29	79	40
MONTGOMERY	37	25	43	27	Waller	34	33	58	37
MOORE	**	22	42	29	Ward	37	5	40	23
MORRIS	19	26	**	23	Washington	31	**	49	10
MOTLEY	0	3	8	**	Webb	67	32	48	47
NACOGDOCHES	27	20	63	24	Wharton	24	13	45	25
NAVARRO	3	21	43	18	Wheeler	.	17	50	22
NEWTON	12	18	.	16	Wichita	21	13	35	17
NOLAN	1	16	23	18	Wilbarger	5	**	49	7
NUECES	33	18	31	27	Willacy	57	15	40	39
OCHILTREE	.	12	16	13	Williamson	33	22	42	25
OLDHAM	.	13	**	13	Wilson	100	14	30	22
ORANGE	38	24	15	25	Winkler	22	31	47	41
PALO PINTO	35	32	58	36	Wise	0	11	46	14
PANOLA	25	29	40	28	Wood	14	22	49	22
PARKER	35	35	67	37	Yoakum	25	13	52	32
PARMER	**	5	33	20	Young	53	24	54	26
PECOS	.	16	30	25	Zapata	.	71	31	34
POLK	32	39	57	38	Zavala	.	**	31	28
POTTER	45	19	53	27					
PRESIDIO	.	31	39	38	STATE TOTAL	39	22	48	34