

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 372 901

RC 019 737

AUTHOR Montecel, Maria Robledo, Ed.; Supik, Josie Danini, Ed.

TITLE School Choice. IDRA Focus.

INSTITUTION Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, Tex.

REPORT NO ISSN-1069-5672

PUB DATE Aug 94

NOTE 17p.; Photographs may not reproduce adequately.

AVAILABLE FROM Intercultural Development Research Association, 5835 Callaghan Rd., Suite 350, San Antonio, TX 78228 (free).

PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022)

JOURNAL CIT IDRA Newsletter; v21 n7 Aug 1994

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; \*Disadvantaged; Educational Quality; Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; \*Equal Education; Hispanic Americans; Mexican American Education; \*Minority Groups; Private School Aid; \*Public Schools; \*School Choice

IDENTIFIERS \*Texas

## ABSTRACT

This newsletter contains five articles on the implications of school choice for minority and disadvantaged students. "School Choice: Choices for Whom? Promises and Panaceas," by Maria Robledo Montecel, discusses some major problems related to school choice and vouchers, particularly who would have the choice (families or schools), who would pay for transportation, and what would "choice" mean for special needs students. "Ethnicity and School Performance in Bexar County," by Maria Robledo Montecel and Jose A. Cardenas, examines 1993 results of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in one Texas county and finds that school district performance had very strong negative relationships to percentage of Hispanic students and percentage of economically disadvantaged students. From these groups' perspective, there were no high performing districts and therefore, little justification for initiating school choice plans. "Rio Grande City: A Case Study in TAAS Performance," by Maria Robledo Montecel, Mercedes G. Ramos, and Jose A. Cardenas, describes educational strategies leading to dramatic improvements in TAAS scores in a border school district whose students are predominantly Mexican American, economically disadvantaged, and limited-English-proficient. "In Search of a Label: A Commentary on School Choice," by Bradley Scott, suggests that "self-initiated public school site selection" or some other label replace the confusing term "school choice" to designate strategies that promote public school improvement through equitable and empowering choice mechanisms for all students. "School Choice: Limited Choices for Minority and the Poor," by Roy Lee Johnson, reflects on arguments for and against school choice. (SV)

6 This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it.

□ Minor changes have been made to improve  
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-  
ment do not necessarily represent official  
OERI position or policy.



## IDRA Newsletter

ISSN 1069-5672 Volume XXI, No. 7 Aug. 1995

ED 372 901

IDRA is an independent  
nonprofit advocacy organization  
dedicated to improving educational  
opportunity. Through research,  
materials development, training,  
technical assistance, evaluation,  
and information dissemination,  
we're helping to create schools  
that work for all children.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

F. Garza

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



## SCHOOL CHOICE: CHOICES FOR WHOM? PROMISES AND PANACEAS

María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.

As legislative sessions draw near, debates get louder. In Texas, the 74th Session of the Legislature convenes in January 1995. School facilities funding will be a major topic due to a court deadline to develop an equitable plan by September 1995. In addition to facilities funding, school choice will most likely surface as one of the major and certainly one of the most controversial topics. What is school choice? Why is choice emerging as a serious alternative to the state's long-standing approach to public education? What are the assumptions and expectations that underlie people's perceptions about choice programs? And most importantly, can choice deliver what many assume or propose it can in improved student performance and school accountability?

Proponents tout school choice as the panacea for the ills that currently plague our public schools: the apparent inability to provide excellent education, the lack of responsiveness to parental concerns, and the seeming impossibility of changing schools from within or from the outside. They offer school choice — particularly the re-allocation of public education funding from local schools to privately funded schools — as the way to excellent and responsive education.

Led by John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, choice advocates argue that all schools can be made more effective if they are subjected to "marketplace forces" of competition. They argue that if schools, like businesses, are forced to compete, free market forces will automatically weed out the poor performing schools, and the new com-

petition will raise all schools' levels of performance. Choice proponents also state that when parents can "choose" their children's school, parental interest in education will increase. A common thread in proponents' public relations spin is the proposition that economically disadvantaged and minority students would be among the major beneficiaries of choice, as new options which are currently beyond their reach would be made available to them. To further cement their argument, choice proponents underlay their argument with an explicit or implicit notion that providing public funding to private schools is a zero cost option, as money is simply shifted from one depository — the local public school fund — to the parents. They in turn simply transfer funds to another school setting of their choice.

It is a beguiling notion: all American students in competitive and excellent schools that are responsive to parents who can vote on their feet by using vouchers to select any public or private school of their choice. At best, however, school choice is myopic. At worst, school choice is a deliberate and cynical attempt to create a two-tiered system of education — one for the wealthy and one for the rest, with scarce public monies being siphoned as subsidies for private education. From research and experiences to date, the following scenario is likely: schools will have a choice of students while families and communities will have fewer choices. Left with fewer choices will be families without transportation, without knowledge of how schools work, with different language needs, without money to supplement a minimum

*Promises and Panaceas - continued on page 13*

019737

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 4** RIO GRANDE CITY: A CASE STUDY IN TAAS PERFORMANCE
- 6** IN SEARCH OF A LABEL: A COMMENTARY
- 8** REFLECTIONS & COMMENTARY: IDRA EDITORIAL PAGES
- 14** RESOURCES ON SCHOOL CHOICE
- 15** SCHEDULE OF IDRA TRAINING AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity. The IDRA Newsletter (ISSN 1069-5672, copyright © 1994) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

Publication offices:  
5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350  
San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190  
Tel. 210/684-8180  
Fax 210/684-5389

**María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.**  
IDRA Executive Director  
Newsletter Executive Editor

**Josie Danini Supik**  
IDRA Research & Evaluation Director  
Newsletter Production Editor

**Sarah H. Aleman**  
IDRA Graphics Specialist  
Newsletter Typesetter

Permission to reproduce material contained herein is granted provided the article or item is reprinted in its entirety and proper credit is given to IDRA and the author. It is requested that a copy of the material in its reprinted form be sent to the IDRA Newsletter production offices. Editorial submissions, news releases, subscription requests, and change-of-address data should be submitted in writing to the Newsletter Production Editor. The Newsletter staff welcomes your comments on editorial material.

Popularized in the early 1970s by author Thomas Kuhn, "paradigms" are our models or patterns of reality, shaped by our understanding and experience into a system of rules and assumptions about the world around us. The call for restructuring in education, emerging from a profound sense that education is not working for all children, requires a transformation in how we see schools, students, and their families. If we are to find a new and equitable vision of what education can and should be, new lenses are required to change the way we look at schools and the populations in them - as demonstrated by our "Then" and "Now" thinkers below.

## THAT IS THEN... THIS IS NOW..

*"Schools must be able to define their own missions...and they cannot do this if their student populations are thrust upon them by outsiders. They must be free to admit as many or as few students as they want, based on whatever criteria they think relevant."*

- R. Lowe quoting John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, leading proponents of school choice on choice proponents position on who the schools would be required to admit. "The Hollow Promise of School Vouchers," False Choices: Why School Vouchers Threaten Our Children's Future. A Special Issue of Rethinking Schools, September 1992

*"The virtue of the voucher-funded schools that he proposes, Chubb asserts, is that, like private schools today, they would be attractive to the kinds of kids whose parents are 'informed', 'supportive' and 'encourage education.'"*

- Jonathan Kozol quoting John E. Chubb. "Whittle and the Privateers." in The Nation, September 1992

*"Our guiding principle in the design of a choice system is this: public authority must be put to use in creating a system that is almost entirely beyond the reach of public authority.."*

- David Levine, Robert Lowe, Bob Peterson, and Rita Tenorio eds. "The School Choice Debate." Rethinking Schools, Spring 1993

*"If voucher supporters really wanted to promote equity, then they would give \$10,000 to each child to attend the school of their choice. And they would force private schools to accept all students who apply, based on a lottery system."*

- David Levine, Robert Lowe, Bob Peterson, and Rita Tenorio eds. "The School Choice Debate." Rethinking Schools, Spring 1993

*"What this nation should be discussing is how best to build on this record of success and accelerate reform - not how to dismantle public education."*

- Bill Honig. "School Vouchers: Dangerous Claptrap." New York Times, June 29, 1990

*"It is no coincidence that funding for public education is receding as our school districts become more populated by children of color...It is clear that vouchers and choice will be a vehicle for those who have the mobility and the additional dollars to go to the private sector...As a result, those who are left behind, those with special needs, special challenges, different languages, those whom we've been failing for generations, will be relegated to the back seat of society for the rest of their lives."*

- Warren Furutani, "A Battle for the Soul of Public Education," False Choices: Why School Vouchers Threaten Our Children's Future. A Special Issue of Rethinking Schools, September 1992

# ETHNICITY AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN BEXAR COUNTY

María "Cúca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D.

## School Performance

How well are our schools doing their job? That question today is more important than it has ever been. The investment of billions of dollars into education, which constitutes the biggest business in the country, demands accurate information on the performance of schools.

Evaluating schools is an important part of the educational process. Through the years educators have used various indicators for measuring school performance. At different times school evaluation has focused on different aspects of education. At one time, evaluation was predominantly concerned with the quality of inputs into an educational system. Such inputs commonly included the preparation and experience of school staff, course offerings, instructional resources and even the levels of school expenditures. At other times, the emphasis has been on the quality of the educational process, e.g., the relationship between teacher and student. In recent years, the emphasis has moved to output measures. Based on the premise that the "proof of the pudding is in the eating," student performance has become the primary indicator of the quality of schooling.

The growing number of students enrolled in each level of education has resulted in the use of more objective indicators of student performance such as standardized tests. It is estimated that approximately 5 million standardized tests were administered in American schools in 1930 and over 100 million in 1960. Haney, Madaus and Lyons (1993) estimate the number of standardized tests administered in schools during the late 1980s to be between 150 and 400 million per year. Currently, it is likely that more than 500 million standardized tests are being administered each year in American schools.

## Minimum Competency Testing

One type of test that has become very popular is the minimum competency test. Central education agencies have developed such tests of student performance based on the curricular content considered most important and mandated by the state. Following a national trend, the Texas Legislature

instituted a minimum competency test in 1979, the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS). The name was changed in 1985 to the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS). In 1990 the TEAMS test was changed to the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Included in this last change was the phase-in of measurement in an expanded number of curricular areas beyond the language, writing and math areas of the original minimum competency tests. The TAAS also includes higher order thinking skills in each curricular area.

The TAAS is now administered in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 (exit level). Since minimum scores are a part of Texas graduation requirements, the TAAS tenth grade test is re-administered at the eleventh and twelfth grade levels for those students who fail one or more subjects areas of the test.

## District Score Reports

Performance in the TAAS is reported by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in a variety of ways. Reports include the percentages of students passing (meeting minimum criteria established by the State Board of Education) in each of the grade levels as well as composites of all grade levels for each school campus and district in the State. TEA reports commonly present separate data for various ethnic and socio-economic groups.

These disaggregated data, broken down by campus and student classifications, usually provide a much different picture of school performance than composite data. Average student performance data for an entire school or district are frequently interpreted as evidence of successful or unsuccessful performance on the basis of a single number, without consideration of the variation in student performance included in that single score. The disaggregating of the data may show that certain students, or certain types of students, may be performing at a high level, while other students, or types of students, may be performing deplorably.

## Ethnicity and District Performance

For many years the authors of this paper have contended that children from

ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged homes have been poorly served by the educational system. This contention has been substantiated by recent information available from TEA.

Texas has a long history of irresponsibility in the funding of its educational system. For several decades, the State has ranked between 35th and 40th nationally in expenditures per pupil. In recent years, the Legislature has failed to provide full funding for the state educational program, resulting in severe shortfalls for districts enrolling large numbers of students in at-risk categories. The twenty-five year history of financial disparities and the unavailability of funds in low wealth districts have perpetuated the practice of providing the least program funds for the students who need them the most. Currently, the Texas Education Agency is involved in litigation, adamantly defending its long tradition of elitist education, providing adequate programs mostly for privileged students in privileged school districts.

While funding questions are debated, the lack of equity and adequacy of funding is exacerbated by an increase in the number of students from atypical populations. White students now comprise only 48% of the school population in Texas (Snapshot '93). According to recently released information from TEA, an estimated 48% (1,077,417 students) are now participating in the free/reduced price lunch program during the current school year (*Texas Education News*, March 14, 1994)

A recently released five-year study by TEA documents the inadequacies of school programs for those students whom the system has had the most difficulty in teaching. This evaluation (*Impact of Educational Reform on Students At Risk In Texas*, TEA, 1994) cites a number of findings which question the desire and/or ability of school systems to provide adequate educational opportunities for students in at-risk situations. The following contribute to the poor performance of minority and poor students in Texas schools:

- *Blaming the victim* - School systems and school personnel still perceive

*Ethnicity and School* - continued on page 10



# RIO GRANDE CITY:

## A CASE STUDY IN TAAS PERFORMANCE

*María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., Mercedes G. Ramos, M.A., and José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D.*

The results of minimum competency testing in Texas have been more than disappointing. More than a year ago, in the Spring 1993 administration of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, only 46.3% of all Texas students met the state minimum performance standards. The disaggregation of these data presents an even more dismal picture. Only 24.8% of African American students, 29.8% of Hispanic students and 28.2% of economically disadvantaged students met the minimum requirements measured by the TAAS.

At that time, the Rio Grande City school district's performance in the spring 1993 administration of the TAAS was consistent with state findings. Less than 20% (19.5%) of the students met the minimum standards. Since almost all of the district's students are Hispanic, the percentage of Hispanics passing the TAAS (19.3%) was almost identical to the percentage passing for all students.

Rio Grande City is located in Starr County on the Mexican border. Its school district is not small by Texas standards, with 7,516 students enrolled. It has a four-year high school, three middle schools, four elementary schools and an early childhood

center. The student population has two salient characteristics: over 99% of the student body is Mexican American with limited English language proficiency, and most of the students come from economically disadvantaged homes (85%).

Superintendent Ruben Sáenz was just as disappointed in the student performance as any other Texas educator. However, rather than rationalizing the poor performance on the great number of students in the district who are deemed most difficult to teach, i.e. minorities, limited-English-proficient, and economically disadvantaged, he initiated a program of instructional activities to adapt to the characteristics of the district's students. Since so many of the students were limited-English-proficient, he focused on the improvement of the district's Bilingual Education Program. The extensive number and proportion of economically disadvantaged students demanded extensive enrichment experiences for these students.

Superintendent Sáenz mobilized the school district and called upon school district personnel as well as external agencies to join in the effort. Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) was

called upon to provide district-wide assistance for all eleven campuses, including early childhood, elementary, middle school and high school.

IDRA assistance at the high school level focused on the teaching of reading at the tenth grade level. With help from the central office and the campus administration, IDRA consultants formed a task force which developed a strategy with four major components for reading improvement:

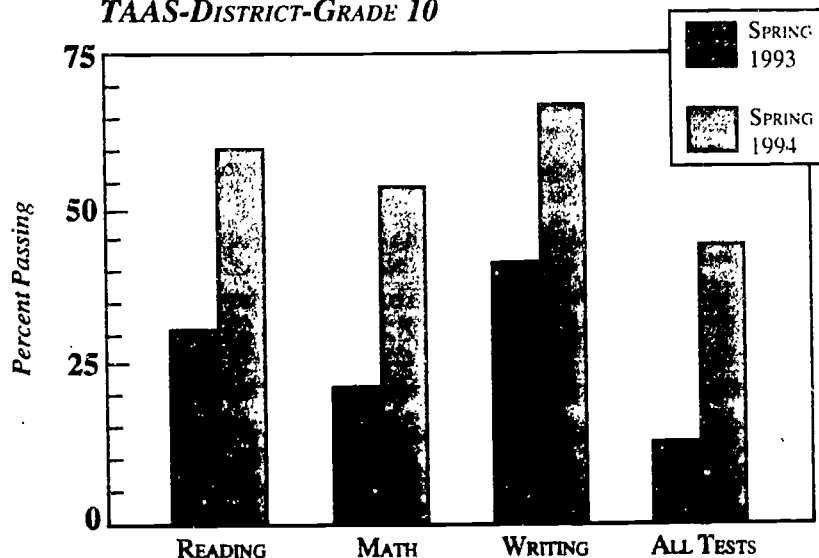
- **Component One** – Training of both new and experienced staff in new ways of teaching reading at the tenth grade level.
- **Component Two** – Development and implementation of an extensive monitoring and evaluation procedure for determining the implementation of the innovative program and changes in student performance.
- **Component Three** – Continued focus on the role of the task force in the development and implementation of strategies and the involvement of teachers from other disciplines in the program.
- **Component Four** – Development of a resource guide to be used by Rio Grande City school staff in the enhancement of reading skills.

High school principal Roel Smith, his faculty and students made an extraordinary commitment to their "Ingredients for Success" effort. The six ingredients pursued during the school year consisted of the following:

1. Project TAAS Workshops: Identification of students in need of assistance, a concerted effort by their teachers and the use of field and practice tests.
2. Reading is Success (RIS) Strategies: Ways to acquire meaning from text and develop a love for reading.
3. Project Pathways: Lessons and techniques developed for the Texas Education Agency (TEA) by

*Rio Grande City - continued on page 5*

**FIGURE 1:**  
**RIO GRANDE CITY CISD**  
**TAAS-DISTRICT-GRADE 10**



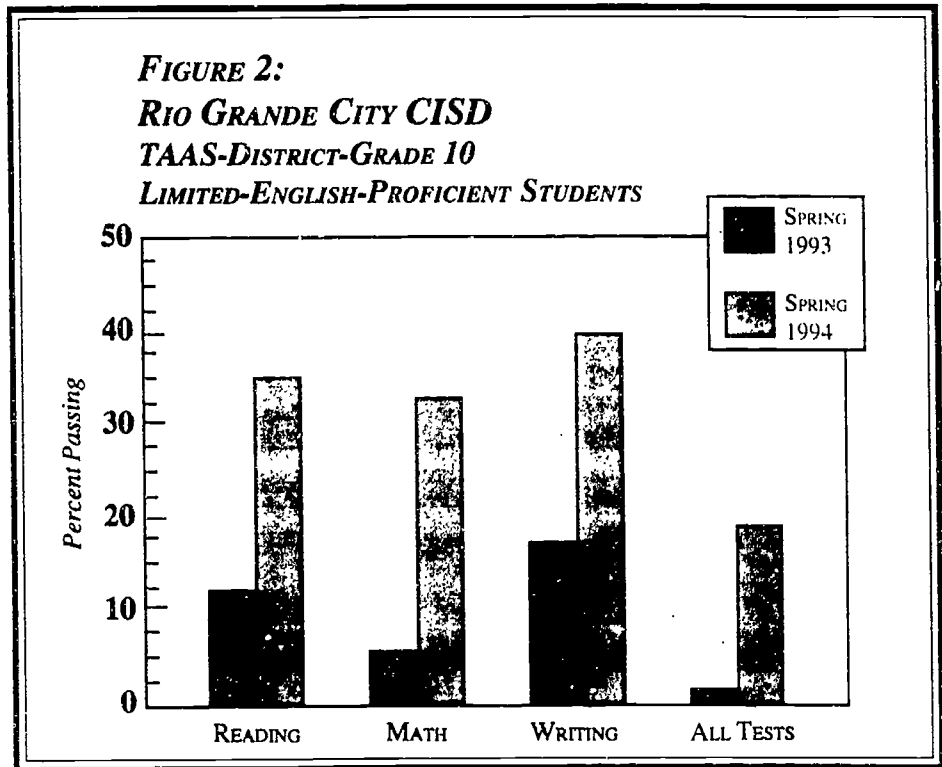
IDRA and implemented by a consortium of professional organizations.

4. Schedule Reorganization: The use of an eight period framework with a 2-hour English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) block and built-in math tutorials.
5. Other efforts: Prescriptive writing, time on task organization, TAAS test awareness, and special incentives for students.
6. The Four Cs: A strong effort characterized by cooperation, collaboration, commitment and credibility.

This intensive effort for the improvement of instruction and learning at the tenth grade level paid huge dividends as evidenced by TAAS performance. Figure 1 on page 4 shows the number of students meeting TAAS standards jumped from 31% of the tenth graders in Spring 1993 to 60% in Spring 1994.

The improvement in reading performance was matched by similar dramatic improvements in other areas of the TAAS; Mathematics increased from 21% to 54%; Writing from 41% to 68%.

The percentage of students meeting the minimum requirements in all subtests of the TAAS increased threefold, from 13% of the tenth graders to 42%.



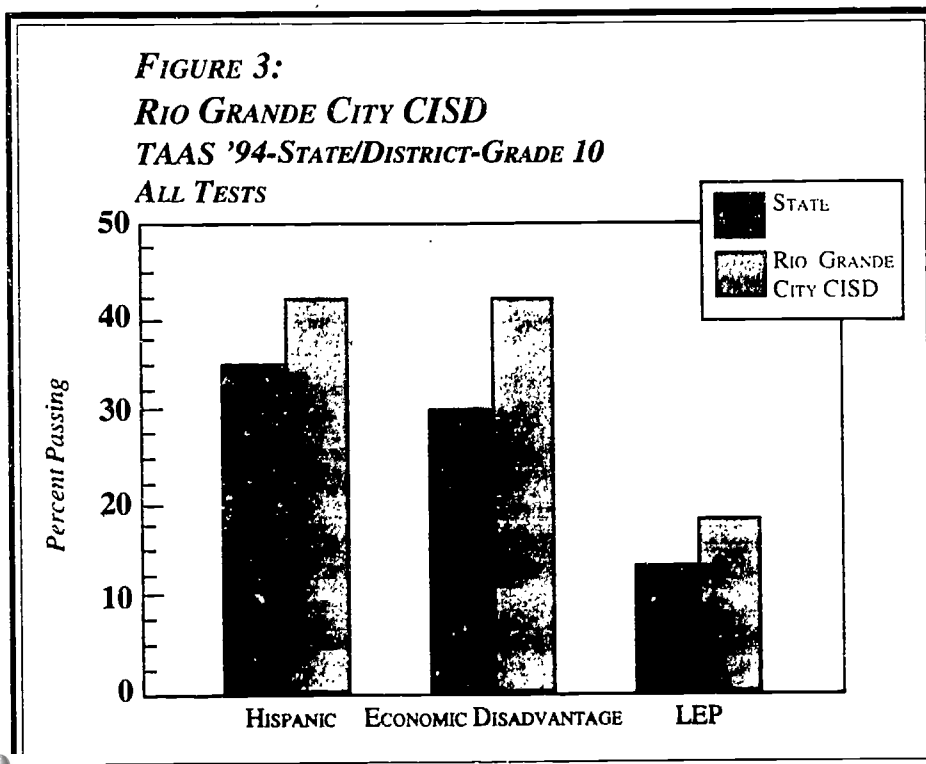
TAAS performance in Figure 2 showed a similar increase for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students as a result of the pilot program. In the one-year period, the percentage passing Reading increased from 12% to 35%; Mathematics from 6% to 33%; Writing from 17% to 40%. The percentage of LEP tenth grade students passing all three of the tests increased from 2% in 1993 to 19% in 1994.

The performance of Rio Grande City students compares favorably with state data for similar populations in the Spring 1994 administration of the TAAS. Figure 3 compares the performance of Rio Grande City tenth graders with the performance of all Hispanic tenth graders in the state; Rio Grande City tenth graders with all economically disadvantaged in the state; and Rio Grande City LEP tenth graders with all LEP tenth graders in the state.

Although the percentage of the students still not performing satisfactorily on the TAAS indicates that there is still much to be accomplished, a concerted effort characterized by enthusiasm and innovation can produce a proportionate improvement in school performance.

Equally important is the finding that affirms that all students can learn through appropriate instruction. The students of Rio Grande City schools, who are predominantly Mexican American, limited-English proficient and economically disadvantaged have succeeded because of administrative leadership, school effort and the belief that they can – and will – learn.

*Marta Robledo Montecel is Executive Director of IDRA. Mercedes G. Ramos is an Education Associate in the IDRA Division of Training and Technical Assistance. José A. Cárdenas is the founder and Director Emeritus of IDRA.*



# IN SEARCH OF A LABEL:

## A COMMENTARY ON SCHOOL CHOICE

Bradley Scott, M.A.

There is no doubt that our public schools are in a great state of flux and change. The forces and factors which affect public schools almost seem to take on a life of their own. On every hand and at every turn we are perplexed to know what to do to make schools better and to cause them to work better for all children regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, and/or economic circumstance. Many suggestions, solutions and recommendations have been proffered. In recent years, few, if any, have received more attention and public debate than the issue of school choice. What is it? Is it working? Can it work? Is it good? Is it bad? Is it the magic bullet? Is it fair? Is it a "smoke-screen?" Is it legal? Is it equitable? The debate and dialogue go on.

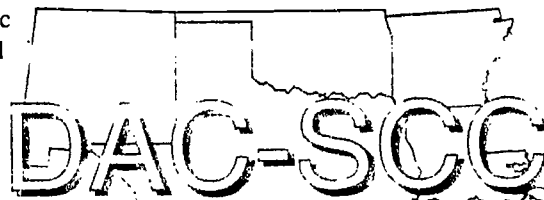
The issue of school choice has become multi-faceted, complex, and, for many, generally confusing. My attempt here is not to add to the confusion, but to offer a way of identifying and separating "school choice" from everything that is being called "school choice," then calling it something else.

The notion of school choice is not new. Ruth Randall, former Commissioner of Education for the State of Minnesota, commented in 1989:

*Choice existed already. "People have to go school, but people with money do not have to go to any particular school or district. People have always had a choice if they had money..."*

Similarly, choice for those families who do not have money is not a new concept, nor is it new in its efforts to desegregate schools or to make schools more responsive to different learners. Mary Anne Raywid (Estes, 1990) noted:

*In the past there have been some systematic differences between [alternative schools and magnet schools as] types of schools of choice. Alternatives, for example, began in the 1960s, almost entirely as single programs within a district established for the purpose of responding to the interests and needs of a particular group of students, teachers, and parents. Magnets began in the 1970s (a) to provide several schools of choice within*



*districts, to establish a voluntary school tion." and (b) means for desegregation."*

She also notes that, "...increasingly, however, the terms Alternative Schools and Magnet Schools, have been used interchangeably, and the two types of programs have come increasingly to borrow from one another." Well, that's not the half of it. The term "school choice" has evolved and has come to stand for any and everything from soup to nuts.

According to Ruth Randall and Keith Geiger (1991), choice programs come in many shapes and sizes. There are alternative programs which are aimed at, and designed to help, students for whom traditional educational approaches just do not seem to work. There are districts implementing school desegregation plans which have as a part of what they offer, "controlled choice" or limited open enrollment plans. There are districts which have teacher-initiated schools, or "schools within schools" which are designed by teachers and offer a choice to parents and students. There are states which have implemented open enrollment plans to allow parents and students unrestricted movement between school districts rather than simply within districts. Even though it should not be the case, in some desegregated settings, choice has become a way of creating predominantly White school settings in predominantly minority districts. Choice has also created White flight as White students choose to attend certain schools leaving a higher concentration of minority students in the sending schools.

Beyond these efforts, recent educational history (starting with the early 1980s) saw the term "choice" being used to couch the push for tuition tax credits and vouchers. The goal and design of these was to shift tax

dollars to private schools at the expense of public education. Randall and Geiger (1991) also point out that some political leaders have used choice as a way of telling schools that they needed to do more with less. By touting choice as the desirable goal, these politicians can deny revenues for the maintenance of some schools (presumably less effective schools) while other schools get more revenues because of their increased student populations (students want to go to the more effective schools). Fewer, but more effective schools will save money – or so the thinking goes – by doing what they do for more students in fewer schools in more efficient ways. This latter point also applies to those instances where states have implemented choice plans as a way of indirectly consolidating rural districts by not providing funding to enhance the quality of school programs in schools losing students to other districts, or providing transportation for students wishing to transfer to other districts.

Additionally, according to Randall and Geiger (1991), "no state choice legislation now in place authorizes funds to ensure the creation and maintenance of parent information. Without such centers, how can parents be expected to make intelligent choices?" In truth, without knowledge and access to information about what is available, even though "choice" opportunities may exist, how much choice is there really, if parents and students do not know what is available and to what they have access?

It seems as though choice has come to mean everything and anything that people and their special interests want to do for, in and to public schools and the children who attend them. It is time to stand and take stock of what real school choice is, and then find another label for it so that it won't continue to be mixed up with and misidentified as something it clearly is not.

Magnet schools are and have been an effective strategy to bring about some degree of voluntary desegregation in those districts involved in meeting such requirements. There is also some merit in the method of desegregation generally referred to as "controlled choice." It is unfortunate

*In Search for a Label - continued on page 7*

that this method is so called, since it can easily be confused with everything else that is referred to as choice.

In "controlled choice" as a method of desegregation, the determining criterion for admittance includes a parent's and a student's decision to seek admittance to a particular school or program so long as the student's presence in that school or program does not upset the racial balance and space. This method also has as accompanying pieces such important elements as transportation, funding of various kinds to support the student's presence in the school or program, and ways of involving parents in their child's life in that school or program. These types of schools or programs have been comparatively successful within districts, and also in some instances where metropolitan plans involving several districts are concerned. It is not known whether such a strategy can be effective at a statewide level.

Minnesota is the one state which has enough of a history in open enrollment to report findings on majority and minority students under such a system. A study presented to the Minnesota House of Representatives revealed that African American and Asian students "...have disproportionately low participation in the open enrollment program" (Malone, Mike et al., 1993). That same study suggests that open enrollment is even encouraging White flight in Minnesota's metropolitan areas. Because these findings run counter to the goals of desegregation, it is very doubtful that statewide choice is a viable option as a strategy to support desegregation and school equity.

We need a new term for "controlled choice" so that when the strategy is applied the results will not be confused with alternative schools, open enrollment, tuition tax credits, vouchers and the like. We are searching for a new term, an appropriate label that will capture that for which magnet schools and other desegregation strategies allow. An awkward, but useful term for our purposes here will be "self-initiated school site selection." Whatever the term finally comes to be, it will probably also embrace the criteria which the National Education Association created for developing and implementing "choice" plans. These self-initiated public school site selection strategies will need to:

- be clear in their purpose and intended outcomes before they are undertaken;
- be designed to improve the quality of instructional and educational pro-

grams in the schools implementing such strategies:

- promote equal educational opportunity and equity for all students, and operate in ways that facilitate better racial, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic balance in schools;
- be legal, constitutional, and in full compliance with court decisions and with federal, state, and local mandates;
- provide adequate resources to ensure quality education programs for every student;
- strengthen decentralization and local control, as well as public accountability over schools;
- in no way lead to the privatization of the public schools;
- strengthen collaboration and cooperative efforts within and among the participating schools;
- be based upon the needs and inputs of students, parents, the school staff, and the community at large;
- provide adequate financial assistance to enable all students to have transportation access to the site they select;
- provide the resources and information necessary to ensure that every parent understands and is able to gain access to the options available;
- truly empower parents, educators, and others in the community in the quest for improved community-based schools and the possibilities of equitable educational opportunity and comparable outcomes for all children regardless of race, sex, national origin, or economic circumstance; and
- carefully spell out the roles and responsibilities of officials, parents,

educators and the community in the development, implementation, and evaluation of any self-initiated site selection strategy.

We are in search of such a term. Given the foregoing discussion, we do not believe that "choice" is an appropriate concept or term; it carries too much unnecessary baggage and misguided thinking. While the term "controlled choice" captures an appropriate concept for school desegregation, we feel its similarity to the former places it in jeopardy of being misunderstood, becoming political, and generally weighed down by association. We would welcome any suggestions from you.

#### *Resources*

- Clinchy, Evans. (1989) *Planning for Schools of Choice: Achieving Equity and Excellence*. The New England Center for Equity Assistance. The Network, Inc. Andover, MA.
- Estes, Nolan, Daniel Levine & Donald Waldrip eds. (1990). *Magnet Schools: Recent Developments and Perspectives*. Morgan Printing and Publishing, Inc. Austin, TX.
- Malone, Mike, Joe Nathan, & Darryl Sedio. (1993). *Facts, Figures, and Faces: A Look at Minnesota's School Choice Programs*. University of Minnesota, Center for School Change, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Minneapolis, MN.
- Randall, Ruth & Keith Geiger. (1991). *School Choice: Issues and Answers*. National Educational Service. Bloomington, IN.

*Bradley Scott is a Senior Associate with IDRA and serves as coordinator for training and technical Assistance for the Desegregation Assistance Center - South Central Collaborative.*

**“‘CHOICE’ IS NOT A REFORM – IT IS AN ABANDONMENT OF AMERICAN CHILDREN AND TEACHERS WHO RELY ON OUR PUBLIC SYSTEMS FOR EDUCATION AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES. CONTRARY TO CLAIMS, THE SCHOOL CHOICE PROPOSAL WILL BE DEVASTATING FOR URBAN, MINORITY, AND POOR STUDENTS WHO DESPERATELY NEED QUALITY EDUCATION.”**

*- Maxine Walters*

*“The School Choice Debate.”  
Rethinking Schools, Spring 1993*





Roy Lee Johnson, M.S.

## SCHOOL CHOICE: LIMITED CHOICES FOR MINORITY AND THE POOR

In September 1958, I entered the first grade of a segregated elementary school in a small rural town in the southwest corner of Arkansas. The area in which I resided was aptly called the "Ark-La-Tex" because of its proximity to both the state boundaries of Louisiana and Texas. Born in 1952 as the twelfth child of hard working and loving parents of African-American descent, I entered school with little or no knowledge that I was supposed to have a choice of schools in which to attend. Actually, due to circumstances beyond my control, I had no choice of schools—my race, the income level of my parents, the geographic location in which I lived were some factors which determined which school I would attend. More importantly, the defiance of state and local educational systems to issues of equal access and opportunity, and other social factors served to limit, if not nullify, any alternative to choosing a school other than the one designated.

Nearly 36 years later, I wonder whether parents and children from minority and low-income backgrounds have a "real" choice of school in spite of all the attention surrounding the concept of school choice. My impression is that not much has really changed.

Just two years after my birth, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) declared that the doctrine of "separate but equal" access to educational facilities and opportunities was unconstitutional. The overturn of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case (1896) which had earlier established the doctrine of separate but equal education paved the way for the choice-based desegregation of schools to achieve racial balance. In 1955 the U.S. Supreme Court, commenting upon the initial *Brown v. Board of Education* case, declared that equal access and equal opportunity for education should be carried out with all deliberate speed. Despite the court case, schools in the South, and in Arkansas where I lived, remained segregated for many more years. One year before I was to enter school for the first time, in September, 1957, the governor of Arkansas challenged the right of African-American parents to enroll their children in the school of their choice (Little Rock Central High School) by calling out the state national guard. Only after intervention from the President of the United States were the small number of African-American students allowed to attend the school of choice, and not without a further array of obstacles.

Not until after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was there any effort or movement in the desegregation of schools in the South, particularly in my hometown. Not long after the passage of the Civil Rights Act (approximately during the 1964-65 school year), an African-American activist-preacher in my hometown enrolled his two sons in a previous all-White school as an exercise of his right to choose a school for his children. Needless to say, the school that I attended remained segregated as no White parent chose to send their child to our school. With the graduation of the minister's youngest son in May 1969, the previously desegregated school returned to a segregated all-White school.

Personally, my own opportunity to choose the school of my choice did not come until my senior year in the 1969-70 school year. During my sophomore and junior years in high school, I, along with a small number of other African-American students, had attended selected advanced classes at the desegregated school; however, I really didn't have much to do with the decision. One week prior to the beginning of school, I, along with other African-American males who had practiced football during the heat of the summer, were faced with deciding to (1) attend the White school and play football or (2) return to our segregated school and forfeit football. For those of us who were seniors, the decision was to return to our segregated school to become the last graduating class. Beginning the 1970-71 school year, the town's schools were desegregated.

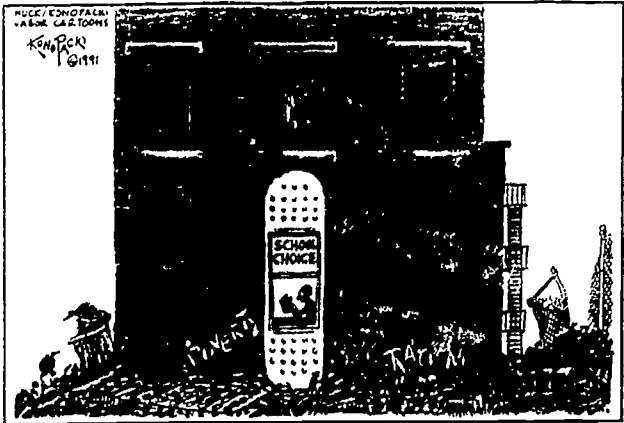
My most recent experiences with choosing a school of attendance involves the schooling of my own children. As any parent, I would like to believe that my wife and I have the right to send our children to the school or schools of our choice. But again we are faced with some of the same old obstacles that I faced so long ago. Decisions about where my children will attend school are again tempered by such issues as the neighborhood where we live, our income level, and a number of other issues.

As I look at the reality of school choice today, I see little difference in the real opportunities for parents and students of poor and minority backgrounds to select a school of choice. School choice or the right of parents to select the schools that their children attend are not a new phenomenon, particularly when the cost of schooling is at the parents' expense. It would be downright un-American to say or believe that we do not have the freedom of choice for anything. But in the final analysis, school choice plans continue to provide choices for more affluent parents and students.

The rationale for public policies supporting school choice are vast. Traditionally, the rationale for the public support of school choice has included: (1) to allow parents to send their children to schools which reflect their religious beliefs, (2) to desegregate schools to achieve racial balance, (3) to allow parents to select schools based on quality and effectiveness, and (4) to preserve unique and distinct elements of various cultural and linguistic groups.

With growing concerns about the quality of public school education and the need to restructure schools, the issue of school choice,

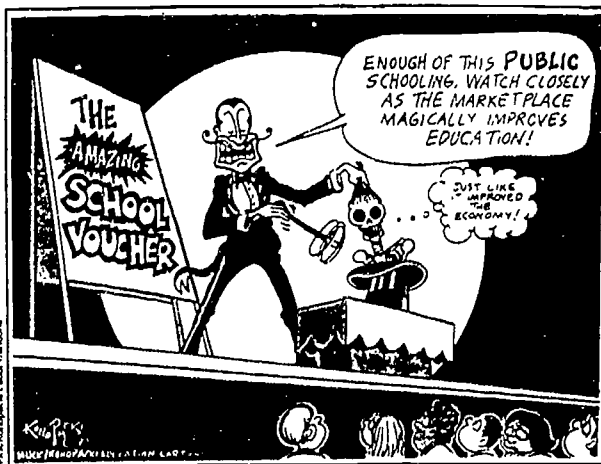
*Limited Choices - continued on page 9*



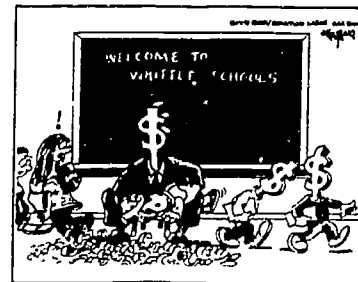
© 1991 Huck/Konopacki Labor Cartoons; Reprinted with permission.



Source: Grossman, Robert. (1992). The Nation. Reprinted with permission.



© 1992 Huck/Konopacki Labor Cartoons. Reprinted with permission.



© 1991 Huck/Konopacki Labor Cartoons. Reprinted with permission.

### Limited Choices - continued from page 8

though controversial, has gained momentum as a strategy for school reform. More recently, however, there has been a growing demand that alternatives to public schools be supported partially or fully with public funds. Proponents of school choice argue that: (a) parents will be able to choose which schools their children will attend and what services their children will receive; (b) competitive principles of the free market will increase the quality of schools by weeding out ineffective schools; (c) low-income and minority families will be able to attend better schools of their choice; and (d) parent involvement in their child's education will increase. Opponents of school choice have argued that: (a) only children of more affluent parents will benefit while children of low-income and minority students will not benefit; (b) claims that market forces will improve the quality of education are unfounded; (c) issues of distance and transportation will be barriers to low-income and minority students; and (d) choice programs discriminate against low-income and minority parents who may be less informed about how the educational system works.

As I look back and see how little things have changed over the years, I cannot help but wonder whether school choice in its many forms is the panacea its advocates claim it to be for improving the quality of educational systems for our children. There is little or no disagreement with the general concept that parents should be able to select the school of choice for their children; however, there is much disagreement as to whether public funds should be utilized to pay for private schooling. Additionally, there are several questions regarding school choice that remain unanswered: What are the effects of school choice? Do parents and students really have a choice of schools? Will school choice benefit parents and students, particularly those who are poor and minority? What support mechanisms (i.e. transportation, etc.) have been established to facilitate the implementation of choice plans? These questions are as relevant today as when they were first posed 30 years ago with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

minority and economically disadvantaged students in negative terms. The evaluation report noted that in determining risk status, educators focus on the characteristics of the students, rather than on inadequacies of the educational system.

- *Not enough assistance offered* – Previously enacted educational reform legislation, such as House Bill 72 in 1984, proved to be counterproductive for students in at-risk situations. Exclusion of poor performing students from co-curricular activities, establishing minimum number of days of school attendance and the denial of driver licenses to school dropouts turned out to be at best dysfunctional, at worst, counterproductive. The study concluded that raising student performance standards without providing additional and better assistance for students to meet those standards resulted only in more frustration and failure.

- *Missing the target on assistance* – Analyses of available student assistance in meeting higher standards revealed the following: 1) no information was available on the need for or provision of assistance for half of the students dropping out of school; 2) for the half of the students dropping out of school where information was available, 65% had received no support services prior to dropping out of school; 3) where assistance was provided, usually at the twelfth grade when the student was unable to meet the required TAAS score for graduation, it proved to be too little, too late. It is therefore not surprising that the study concluded that students in need of help did not profit from school assistance.
- *Missing the target on identification* – the TEA research report concludes that Texas schools are doing a poor job in the identification of at-risk students and are not providing the support services that might prevent them from

dropping out. (*Texas Education News*, February 21, 1994)

- *Making assignment errors* – The study points out that school systems refuse to assign their best staff to students whose performance indicate the need for most assistance.

**Data Analysis**

TAAS data collected by TEA provide an opportunity to determine the effect of educational inadequacies for ethnic minorities on a district by district basis.

The following analyses are based on data provided by TEA in its publications, *Snapshot '93: 1992-93 School District Profiles* and *Special Supplement, Snapshot '93: 1992-93 School District Profiles*. Enrollment and test information are for comparable end-of-year periods in Spring, 1993.

Disaggregated data are provided for the following groups: White – students reported as White, non-Hispanic; African American – students reported as African American; Hispanic – students reported as

*Ethnicity and School - continued on page 11*

**TABLE 1:**  
**BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS-ALL GRADES**  
**% PASSING-SPRING 1993 TAAS ADMINISTRATION**

DISTRICT	TOTAL	WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC	OTHER	ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE
ALAMO HTS	70.5	81.7	22.2	38.6	NA	37.9
EAST CENTRAL	41.9	47.2	31.7	37.2	22.2	30.5
EDGEWOOD	21.2	35.3	12.7	21.2	20.0	20.7
FT. SAM HOUSTON	44.6	59.6	26.4	36.1	40.0	44.1
HARLANDALE	22.4	33.5	26.7	21.3	16.7	19.6
JUDSON	52.8	63.4	33.9	43.0	61.3	36.6
LACKLAND AFB	64.2	71.3	38.7	63.2	85.7	58.8
NORTH EAST	56.8	67.2	32.1	40.0	60.5	34.1
NORTHSIDE	48.9	63.7	33.6	36.8	64.4	32.2
RANDOLPH AFB	66.0	69.8	60.0	41.7	76.9	57.6
SAN ANTONIO	21.4	38.3	16.5	20.9	27.8	19.5
SOMERSET	26.7	37.8	NA	21.8	NA	19.2
SOUTH SAN ANTONIO	27.7	56.8	33.3	26.1	40.0	25.1
SOUTHSIDE	27.6	40.5	NA	24.7	NA	26.2
SOUTHWEST	25.3	51.2	24.3	20.3	40.0	18.4
TEXAS TOTALS	46.3	61.8	24.8	29.8	61.4	28.2

NA = less than 5 students

Some of the 15 districts enroll students in year-round programs

Hispanic; Other - students reported as Asian and Native American; Economically Disadvantaged - students eligible for participation in the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program or other public assistance.

**Bexar County Analysis**

Bexar County contains 15 independent school districts which include three military districts and 12 other districts ranging in wealth from one of the poorest to one of the richest in the State. The three military districts are extremely small (although not necessarily by Texas standards), four of the districts are close to the optimum size of 15,000 students, and three of the districts are among the 15 largest in the State. Minority student enrollments range from a low of 28% in one district to a high of 98% in another. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students varies from 21.5% in one district to 90.5% in another. The percentage of students passing the TAAS test in the 1993 administration varies from 21.4% of all students in one district to 70.5% in another.

Ethnicity and economic class are not independent of each other. The percentage of Hispanic students in the 15 school districts (Hispanic is by far the largest ethnic group in Bexar County) and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students have a positive correlation of +.943. On the other hand, percentage White and percentage economically disadvantaged students have a similar negative correlation of -.939.

The table on page 10 provides the percentage of all students (Total) passing the TAAS in all grade levels in the Spring 1993 administration of the test, the percentage of White, African American, Hispanic and other ethnic group (not included in the previous three categories) passing the TAAS in all grade levels, and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students passing the TAAS in all grade levels.

**TAAS Performance in Bexar County Districts**

Overall performance at all grade levels of the TAAS is generally low for all districts in Bexar County. Ten of the fifteen districts have passing rates for all students at below 50%. Percent passing ranges from a low of 21.2% (Edgewood) to a high of 70.5% (Alamo Heights). In seven of the fifteen districts the passing rate was less than 28%.

**TABLE 2:  
COEFFICIENTS OF CORRELATION  
TAAS, ETHNICITY AND  
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED**

	% WHITE	% AFRICAN AMERICAN	% HISPANIC	% OTHER	% ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE
% PASSING TAAS	+ .958	+ .439	-.916	+ .774	-.902
% WHITE		+ .486	-.963	+ .775	-.939
% AFRICAN American			-.702	+ .699	-.592
% HISPANIC				-.858	+ .943
% OTHER					-.760

There are extensive disparities in the passing rates between White, non-Hispanic students and minority and economically disadvantaged students. Passing rates are consistently higher for White students than for African Americans. This disparity is 3.68 times higher in one district (Alamo Heights).

Passing rates are consistently higher for White students than Hispanic students. The disparity is 2.52 times higher in one district (Southwest).

Economically disadvantaged students performed as poorly as minority students. In only one district (Randolph AFB) did more than one-half of the economically disadvantaged students pass the TAAS. With the exception of the three military districts, economically disadvantaged students had passing rates ranging from a low of 18.4% (Southwest) to a high of 37.9 (Alamo Heights).

Minority student performance was deplorable, except in the three military districts. With the exception of the three military districts, African American student passage of the TAAS ranged from a low of 12.7% (Edgewood) to a high of 33.9% (Judson). With the exception of the three military districts, the percentage of Hispanic students passing the TAAS ranged from a low of 20.3% (Southwest) to a high of 43% (Judson).

**Bexar County Correlations**

Table 2 presents the correlations among the variables. Correlations are always relative to the situation under which they are obtained, and the size of the correlation does not represent any absolute value. However, they do indicate the magnitude of the relationship between two variables. A perfect correlation (1.00) indicates a perfect relationship between two variables. Correlations in the .80s and .90s are deemed as very strong relationships. Correlations in the .10s and .20s are considered weak relationships. Positive correlations (+) indicate positive relationships; negative correlations (-) indicate inverse relationships.

**Interpretation of Relationships**

**Test Performance**

**% Passing / % White: + .958**

The very strong positive relationship between these two variables indicates that, to a great extent, the performance of a district in the TAAS is indicative of the percentage of White students enrolled in that district. Districts with high percentages of White students consistently outperform districts with low percentages of White students.

**% Passing / % African American:  
+ .439**





There is a mild positive relationship between the performance of African American students and their percentage in a district. There is a mild tendency for African American students to perform better in districts with higher concentrations of African American students.

**% Passing / % Hispanic: - .916**

The very strong negative correlation between these two variables indicates that district performance in the TAAS is inversely proportional to the percentage of Hispanics in the district.

**% Passing / % Other: + .774**

The strong positive relationship indicates that district performance in the TAAS is proportional to the percentage of other minority students in the district. This impact is minimal, since only 2,651 students, less than 2% of the county student population, were reported in this category.

**% Passing / % Economically Disadvantaged: - .902**

The very strong relationship between these two variables indicates that district performance in the TAAS is inversely proportional to the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district.

**Demographic Patterns**

There is a medium strength relationship between the percentage of White and African American students in the districts (+.486). This relationship is not necessarily indicative of a high level of race integration, since African Americans could have a high level of segregation among schools within the specific districts.

The very strong negative relationship (-.963) indicates extensive segregation of Hispanic students among school districts in Bexar County.

The very strong negative correlation (-.939) indicates that economically disadvantaged students tend to be located in school districts with low percentages of White students.

There is a medium-strength negative relationship between the percentage of African American and economically disadvantaged students (-.592).

The strong negative relationship between % Hispanic and % Other (-.858) indicates that students in the Asian and Native American category are not usually located in school districts in Bexar County

with high Hispanic enrollments.

The very high relationship between % Hispanic and % Economically Disadvantaged (+.943) indicates that Hispanic students in Bexar County districts have a very strong tendency to be economically disadvantaged.

There is a medium-to-strong negative relationship between students in the Asian and Native American category and % Economically Disadvantaged in Bexar County (-.763).

**Implications**

Data presented by the Texas Education Agency and analyzed by IDRA raises some serious questions about school performance in Texas as well as in Bexar County. The finding that the majority of all students in the State are unable to perform at the *minimum* level established by the state board is very disappointing. Even the performance of White students who have enjoyed a privileged position in the distribution of educational resources in Texas leaves much to be desired. The failure of more than one-third (38.2%) of White students in the state to meet minimum state expectations indicates the extent of inadequacies in the state educational system.

Broken down into different categories of students the picture becomes even more dismal. African American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students are failing at almost twice the rate of White students.

There is no school district in Bexar County with an exemplary performance in the education of all its student population. Higher passing rates for school districts are very much a function of the proportion of the student body which comes from the White, middle class. On the other hand, there are no school districts in which minority and disadvantaged students are performing well.

Although there may be a need for a drastic revision of Texas school practices as indicated by all performance on the TAAS, there is a desperate need for an immediate focus on the education of minority and disadvantaged students.

The past practice of blaming the victimized minority and disadvantaged population for its poor performance is thoroughly discredited by the TEA evaluation. It is readily evident that Texas schools are not providing the assistance necessary for raising the performance of students most in need of this assistance.

**School Reform Efforts**

State and national school reform efforts which focus on the raising of academic standards without providing more school assistance for the students to meet the standards are doomed to failure.

Similarly, quick fixes, such as the punitive educational reforms of the 1984 legislation, are not the solutions for the dismal performance of Texas students. Long range solutions must focus on the interaction between student and teacher, with assurances that the characteristics and needs of students are adequately addressed in the instructional program.

Staff training, individual diagnosis and prescription, enrichment experiences, and appropriate materials and methodology are essential for raising the performance of students.

**Accountability**

It is reasonable that the educational system, including its policy making board and its professional employees be held accountable for the performance of all of its students. Even high performing districts in Bexar County fail to provide adequate educational experiences for minority and disadvantaged students. The results of this study show that the recognition of exemplary performance should be discontinued for a district unless its scores are representative of all its students, including minority segments of the school population.

Each school district should be held accountable for satisfactory performance of all of its student body, not only for that segment of the student body that they find easiest to educate.

The enrollment of large numbers of minority and disadvantaged students should not be a rationalization for poor school performance. There is a sufficient number of innovative school programs in which the performance of minority and disadvantaged students is exemplary to argue against the use of deficit models. Schools cannot attribute poor performance to a large number of atypical students.

**School Choice**

An interesting by-product of this study is its application to a popular specific reform strategy - school choice. Minorities are skeptical of this strategy, in that there is little provision for adequate transportation that would guarantee a choice for the economically disadvantaged. In addition, there is a

lack of guarantee that high performing schools will accept applicants without an overt or covert regard for race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, gender, or handicaps.

The results of this study raise an additional concern. Which are the high performing schools or districts? From a minority or economically disadvantaged perspective there are no high performing districts. The choice available between enrollment in a school district where only 20% of the ethnic group meet the minimum competency levels of the TAAS and enrollment in a school district where only 25% of the students meet the minimum competency levels does not provide a sufficient performance gain to justify the massive logistical problems of the choice strategy.

Promises and Panaceas - continued from page 1

level voucher, or with children who are unable to meet the entry criteria that will almost surely be used in private school settings. In turn, entire communities will have fewer choices. By providing mechanisms for the empowerment to abandon public schools, public schools in the community have less chance of improving without public support for local schools, particularly by those families whose children are no longer enrolled there. While some propose that poor performing schools will be closed down, choice proponents fail to discuss where the students from those settings might end up.

The assumption that the provision of vouchers automatically increases levels of parental participation is also an untried proposition, based only on the unique groups of parents who currently enroll their children in private schools. No doubt some of the same issues that plague public schools' abilities to involve varying types of parents would be mirrored in the private school setting, particularly if those schools use the same ineffective parental involvement methods used in many existing public school settings.

A major question related to choice involves the extent to which real access would be available to all students wishing to attend alternative school settings. Most choice plans ignore student transportation issues, or side-step them with phrases such as "to the extent that tax revenues allow, every effort will be made to provide transportation for students."

Related also to access or "true choice" is the question of whether and if private schools will recruit or accept students who are different, e.g., students with special needs, minorities, low income children, disabled students, students who do not speak English. Lacking federal incentives or disincentives, many private schools routinely

exclude special populations through entrance exams or others strategies. It is doubtful that many schools would offer much of a choice to special needs pupils, particularly if the choice plan made no provision for the extra funding required to effectively address the unique instructional needs of these populations. The use of vouchers, it has been said, is more akin to seeking country club membership than to using gift certificates at a department store. In the former, they decide whether they want you (are you the right

**SCHOOLS WILL HAVE A CHOICE OF STUDENTS WHILE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES WILL HAVE FEWER CHOICES.**

class, the right color? the right religion? will you "fit in"?); in the latter, you decide where and what you buy.

It is clear that a critical look at the questions surrounding the working of a "choice-driven" funding scheme raises more questions than answers. One of the major underlying questions not raised often enough in the choice debate is how it will produce the grand results its proponents' promise. While some research does reflect that private schools do well in some cases with certain types of students, an analysis of private school family profiles suggests that groups currently using private schools are already unique. It may be their tendency to self-select that produces the results so often touted by choice champions. Will private schools retain their past track record given a very different clientele? No comprehensive study exists that provides that answer.

Who ultimately, then, has the choice about who enrolls at what schools? Any choice plan that provides specific dollar limits on the amount of the voucher will

Resources

Haney, Walter M., George F. Madaus & Robert Lyons. (1993). *The Fractured Marketplace for Standardized Testing*. National Commission on Testing and Public Policy, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston, MA.  
Texas Education Agency. (1994). *Impact of Education Reform on Students At Risk in Texas*. Austin, TX.  
Texas Education Agency. (Fall 1993). *Snapshot '93: 1992-93 School District Profiles*. Publication No. GE4 170 01, Austin, TX.  
Texas Education Agency. (Fall 1993). *Special Supplement, Snapshot '93: 1992-93 District Profiles*. Publication No. GE4 170 03, Austin, TX.  
*Texas Education News*. (March 14, 1994). Austin, TX.

*Dr. Maria Robledo Montecel is Executive Director of IDRA. Dr. José A. Cárdenas is founder and Director Emeritus of IDRA.*

automatically limit some families to the funding level provided. Some families will be able to supplement the base; others will not. Yet the cost of providing a voucher equal to whatever the highest tuition is currently charged would increase the need for education funding at least tenfold. Even if unlimited funding were provided, schools would at some point be faced with their capacity/facility limits. Faced with 200 applicants and only ten openings, who would make the choice about who enrolls? If past trends hold, accepting schools would themselves exercise overt or covert mechanisms for making choices, leaving rejected students an opportunity to seek second, third, and fourth "choices" of enrollment.

Whether it's called choice, parental choice, free schools, vouchers or whatever euphemisms become fashionable, use of public funds for private education is prohibited by many state constitutions. The framers of those documents intended for the states to exercise their obligation to educate their citizenry by providing public, free schools to all children. If the public schools need improvement, and we at IDRA agree that they need great improvement, then let us do that.

Resources

*False Choices: Why School Vouchers Threaten Our Children's Future*. A special issue of *Rethinking Schools*. (1992). Milwaukee, WI.  
Gorwin, R.G. & M.R. Dianda. (September 1993). "What can We Really Expect from Large Scale Voucher Programs." *Phi Delta Kappan*, pp. 67-74.  
Glenn, C.L. (November/December 1992). "What's really at stake in the choice debate?" *The Clearinghouse Vol. 66*. No. 2, pp. 75-78.  
Houston, P.D. (September, 1993). "School Vouchers: The Latest California Joke." *Phi Delta Kappan*, pp. 61-66.  
Kozol, J. (1991). "Savage Inequalities." *Children in American Schools*. New York: Crown.

# RESOURCES ON SCHOOL CHOICE

## ADDITIONAL READINGS AND INFORMATION

***IN MASSACHUSETTS,  
THE COMBINATION OF  
ECONOMIC RECESSION AND  
SCHOOL CHOICE OFFERS A  
GLIMPSE OF HOW POORLY  
DESIGNED SCHOOL CHOICE  
PROGRAMS CAN PUSH SCHOOL  
DISTRICTS INTO DISASTROUS  
DIRECTIONS...STRIPPED  
OF ITS RHETORICAL TRAPPINGS  
THE PLAN ENCOURAGED  
STUDENTS TO LEAVE.***

***- Stan Karp***

***"Massachusetts: Robbing The  
Poor To Pay The Rich," False  
Choices: Why School Vouchers  
Threaten Our Children's Future.***

***A Special Issue of Rethinking  
Schools September 1992.***

Asher, Carol. "Retravelling the Choice Road." *Harvard Educational Review*, Summer 1994, pp. 209-221.

Cárdenas, José A. "Is School Consolidation the Solution to Achieving School Finance Equity." *IDRA Newsletter*. February 1988, pp. 1-4.

Cárdenas, José A. "The Impact of School Wealth Variation: Why Money Matters." *IDRA Newsletter*. April 1993, pp. 2, 14.

"Parental Choice Guidelines." *IDRA Newsletter*, February 1990, p. 13. (Reprinted with permission from What's Happening in Washington, The National PTA Legislative Newsletter. December 1989/January 1990.)

Scott, Bradley & Anna De Luna. *Magnet Schools: Pockets of Excellence in a Sea of Diversity*. San Antonio, TX: IDRA, 1994.

"The School Choice Debate." *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 1993, pp. 18-19.

*Titles in bold are available from IDRA at no cost.*

*Contact IDRA's Communications Manager to obtain reprints. Thank you.*

## IN MEMORIAM

### **EDWARD J. MEADE, JR.**

The education community was saddened to learn that Ed J. Meade, Jr. has passed away. He was a senior program officer at the Ford Foundation for almost thirty years. He had many responsibilities at the Foundation, including the development and management of a wide and diverse range of research, training, demonstration and policy programs in human development, urban affairs, human services, and most especially, in education. His interest and involvement in education ranged from preschool to the graduate level. He participated in the development of educational policy and services for children and youth in at-risk situations, teacher education, community involvement, educational technology, school and college improvement, and the organization, governance and management of education at the local, state and federal levels.

IDRA's relationship with Ed Meade was a long and close one. As administrative officer of IDRA's Ford Foundation sponsored programs, he received and reviewed all our financial and programmatic reports from our inception to his retirement. He also served as program officer for IDRA's School Dropout Collaborative. After his retirement from the Ford Foundation, he provided extensive assistance in establishing relationships between IDRA and other entities with similar interests and purposes.

In our many dealings with him, he was always interested, knowledgeable and helpful. Much of our success in school finance reform, multicultural education and dropout prevention can be attributed to his leadership and assistance.

As an organization, IDRA has lost a valuable resource. Personally we have lost a close friend. We will miss our close relationship with him, whether asking for his assistance in the design and implementation of a new educational project, or just discussing batting and earned-run averages for his beloved Mets.

# SCHEDULE OF IDRA TRAINING AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

August 1 - August 31, 1994

DATE	SCHOOL DISTRICT/AGENCY	TOPIC
Aug. 2	New Mexico State University	English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Content Areas
Aug. 3	New Mexico State University	Validating Students' Culture
Aug. 3-5	Beeville Head Start	Using Learning Centers Effectively In a Preschool Center
	Mission Independent School District (ISD)	Role of the Para-Professional
Aug. 4	Camden, Arkansas (AR)	Educational Equity
	East Baton Rouge, Louisiana (LA)	Integrating Technology into the ESL Classroom
	Lubbock ISD	Multicultural Awareness
Aug. 5	Asherton ISD	Parent Training
	Camden, AR	Educational Equity
	Kingsville ISD	Program Design-Technique Assistance
Aug 8	Laredo Head Start	Management Training
	Southside ISD	Designing a Developmentally Appropriate Program
Aug. 9	McAllen ISD	Learning Strategies for the Content Areas
Aug. 10	McAllen ISD	ESL Strategies
	Lasara ISD	Higher Order Thinking Skills
Aug 10-12	Southside ISD	Designing a Developmentally Appropriate Program
Aug. 11	Lyford ISD	Cooperative Learning
		Make & Take Activities/Reading Strategies
Aug. 12	Cotulla ISD	Reading Strategies
	El Paso ISD	Role of the Para-Professional in a Bilingual/ESL Classroom
	Rio Grande City Consolidated ISD (CISD)	Technical Assistance
Aug 13	Asherton ISD	Parent Training
Aug. 15	La Villa ISD	ESL Strategies (Secondary)
	Progreso ISD	Institute for the Para-Professional
Aug 15-17	Southside ISD	Designing a Developmentally Appropriate Program
Aug. 16	Edcouch-Elsa ISD	Language Proficiency Assessment Committees (LPAC) Training
	Harlingen ISD	Reading Strategies: Part I
	Pearsall ISD	ESL for Content Area Teachers
Aug. 17	Houston ISD	High Expectations
	Midland ISD	Role of the Para-Professional in a Bilingual/ESL Classroom
	Pearsall ISD	ESL Techniques (Secondary)
	Rio Grande City CISD	Technical Assistance
	San Felipe Del Rio CISD	Developmentally Appropriate Practices in a Bilingual Preschool Program
Aug. 18	United ISD	Cooperative Learning
	Dallas ISD	Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (VYP)
	Houston ISD	Team Building
	Rio Grande City CISD	New Teacher Training on <i>Project STRIKE</i> (Student Teacher Reading Involvement as a Key to Excellence)



# SCHEDULE OF IDRA TRAINING AND WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

August 1 - August 31, 1994

DATE	SCHOOL DISTRICT/AGENCY	TOPIC
Aug. 18	South San Antonio ISD	Coca-Cola VYP
Aug. 19	Laredo ISD	The CALLA Model
	San Angelo ISD	The Role of the Para-Professional in a Bilingual/ESL Classroom
	Weslaco ISD	Coca-Cola VYP
Aug. 22	South San Antonio ISD	Coca-Cola VYP
Aug. 23-24	McAllen ISD	Strategy Training
Aug. 24	Nebraska State Education Agency (SEA)	Validating Students' Culture
	Socorro ISD	Higher Order Thinking Skills
	South San Antonio ISD	Coca-Cola VYP
Aug. 24-25	Weslaco ISD	Coca-Cola VYP
Aug. 26	Rio Grande City CISD	Trainer of Trainers
Aug. 27	Asherton ISD	Parent Training
	Eagle Pass ISD	Whole Language
	Education Service Center (ESC), Region 20	Parents as Teachers
Aug. 29	Uvalde ISD	Project Adelante
	Weslaco ISD	Coca-Cola VYP
Aug 31- Sept 2	Brownsville ISD	Valued Youth Program



Non-Profit Organization

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Permit No. 3192  
San Antonio, TX 78228

5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350  
San Antonio, TX 78228-1190

ACQUISITIONS  
ERIC/CRESS  
PO BOX 1348  
CHARLESTON WV

25325