



In the spring of 2011, the Texas legislature cut education funding the first time in over four decades. Regardless of the opportunity to end funding disparities, nearly \$6.6 billion in cuts were made, pushing millions of Texas children aside.

In response to these budget cuts, communities across the state are taking action to make sure that schools are equipped to guarantee that all children graduate ready for college and career.

Fair Funding Now! is an initiative led by the Intercultural Development and Research Association (IDRA). Based in San Antonio, Texas, IDRA is led by Dr. Maria "Cuca" Robledo Montecel and continues to be a state leader in providing educational research and resources that aim to strengthen public schools for all students since its inception in 1973.

IDRA's efforts have brought together notable state leaders such as League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Mexican American School Board Members Association (MASBA) and Texas Center for Educational Policy (TCEP) to hold a series of roundtable discussions across the state. The goals of these roundtables are to educate multiple stakeholders on the budget crisis and provide them with tools to respond within their respective schools and districts.



Enclosed are the following materials:

- Key Points on School Funding Equity
- Principles for Fair Funding
- Snapshot of Texas Education
- Online Analysis, Data Tools and Resources
- Equity Center: In-Depth Understanding Texas School Finance
- Kauffman: Lawmakers must equalize public school funding
- Fair Funding Now Resolution

You can also download the powerpoint presentation used for the Roundtable discussions: http://www.idra.org/images/stories/Fair_Funding_Now_9292011.ppt

For more information contact Angela Valenzuela, TCEP Director or Patricia D. Lopez, Research Associate at tcep@austin.utexas.edu • (512) 471-7055



Key Points on School Funding Equity

Texas is Rich – But Our Public Schools Are Poor

Texas is the second richest state in the country (in gdp) – but ranks 47th in revenue raised per capita. And the cuts were made in ways that hurt the poorest schools the hardest. It's time to put our money where our children are.

Special Interests Got the Breaks – But Schools Got the Bill

The Texas Legislature had the option to close loopholes that give tax breaks to many special interests but chose to give them breaks instead. At the same time, they forced local schools to pick up the tab by raising taxes or cutting programs for students.

Texas School Funding is Still Inequitable

The gap in revenue between the poorest 100 school districts and richest 100 is more than \$1,000 per student. The legislature could have created equity, but walked away – pushing millions of Texas children aside.

All Schools Lost Money – But the Poorest Schools Were Hurt the Most

While all school districts lost money, simplistic across-the-board cuts are highly inequitable when applied on top of a school funding system that was already underfunded and inequitable by hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of dollars per student.

It's Time Our Public Schools Were as Good as our Public Rhetoric

Texas has a long history of talking big but playing (and paying) small. Texas ranks 43rd in state aid for students and 43rd in high school graduation rates.

You get what you pay for.



Puntos claves sobre el financiamiento de nuestras escuelas

Texas es rico – Sin embargo, nuestras escuelas públicas son pobres

Texas es el Segundo estado más rico en el país pero ocupa el 47º en los ingresos recaudados por habitante. Y los recortes al presupuesto se hicieron de manera que perjudican a las escuelas más pobres. Es hora de invertir nuestro dinero donde están nuestros hijos.

A intereses especiales se les rebajaron impuestos – Sin embargo a las escuelas se les dio la cuenta

La Legislatura de Texas tuvo la opción de cerrar las lagunas que conceden excepciones fiscales intereses especiales, pero optó por seguir las brechas injustas. Al mismo tiempo obligaron a las escuelas locales a subir los impuestos o recortar servicios para los estudiantes.

La financiación de Texas la escuela es todavía desigual

La brecha de ingresos entre los distritos escolares más pobres y más ricos es más de \$1,000 por estudiante. La legislatura podría haber creado la equidad, pero se alejó - haciendo a millones de niños de Texas a un lado.

Todas las escuelas perdieron dinero – Pero fueron las escuelas más pobres las más perjudicadas

Cortes simplistas através a todas las escuelas a bordo son muy desiguales cuando se aplica arriba de un sistema de financiación de las escuelas que ya se encuentran rezagadas y desigual por cientos, y en algunos casos, miles de dólares por estudiante.

Es hora que nuestras escuelas públicas sean tan buenas como nuestra retórica pública

Texas tiene una larga historia de presumir con palabras grandes pero no cumpliendo con sus pequeños. Texas ocupa el lugar número 43 en la ayuda estatal para estudiantes y 43 en las tasas de graduación de la escuela.

Lo que vale cuesta.



Principles for Fair Funding for the Common Good

To help focus on the reforms that may be included in upcoming school reform plans, IDRA uses a set of principles to help assess any proposed school funding reform plan. We welcome their adoption and dissemination by all who agree that all children are valuable, and none is expendable.

Principle 1: Funding Equity - Texas must maintain or increase the level of equity found in the existing funding system.

Principle 2: Equal Return for Equal Tax Effort - Texas must specifically provide for equal return for equal tax rates, for all school districts, at all levels of the state permitted tax effort.

Principle 3: Excellent Education - Texas must provide equitable access to excellent education (defined as equitable access to high quality curricula, teaching, support services, and facilities) for all students in all school districts, precluding the need for and thereby prohibiting any local un-equalized enrichment.

Principle 4: Access to Equalized Enrichment - Texas must ensure that, if local supplementation of a state-funded adequate system is allowed, the entire additional local tax effort provides equal yield for equal tax effort, regardless of the local property wealth of individual districts.

Principle 5: Recognizing Special Student Costs - Texas must equitably provide add-on funding based on actual costs of providing appropriate supplemental services to students identified as limited English proficient, low-income, or requiring special education services.

Principle 6: Access to Equalized Facilities Funding - Texas must provide equitable access to funding for school facilities so that all districts have equal access to facilities revenue for equal tax effort. Facilities funding should provide support for updating and maintaining existing facilities, as well as funding for new facilities. Special facilities-related needs for fast growth districts should be recognized in any proposed funding formulae.

Principle 7: Maintaining Levels of State Support - Texas must ensure that the state will fund a minimum of 60 percent of the overall cost of education in the state.

Principle 8: Tax Burden - Texas must base any potential requirement for additional state revenue on adoption of progressive measures of taxation that are based on local school district and/or individuals' ability to pay taxes, and must not result in a shift of tax burdens from high wealth to all other districts or from more affluent to lower income taxpayers.



Online Analysis, Data Tools and Resources

Get Resources on Texas Education Funding

For tools, handouts and more resources, visit IDRA's Courageous Connections – Fair Funding Now! webpage <http://www.idra.org>

Share Your Story! How Are Funding Cuts Affecting Your School?

Have budget cuts forced your school to cut teachers? Curricula? Programs? Transportation? Visit the School Funding Crowmap to share your story: <http://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com/>

You can also send reports via:

- Email – By sending an email to fairfundingnow@gmail.com
- Twitter – By sending a tweet with the hashtag **#TXequity**
- Phone App – By downloading the **Ushahidi Maps** “app” on your smartphone. Then look for Texas School Funding Map and post your story.

See Maps of Funding Cuts

Find out the level of school funding cuts across school districts and for every county in Texas.

http://www.idra.org/Courageous_Connections/Events/Fair_Funding_Now

Visit IDRA's OurSchool Data Portal

See funding information and compare school districts and find out how your high school is doing academically. (Simple, free registration is required.)

In English: <http://www.idra.org/portal/>

In Spanish: <http://www.idra.org/portalsp/>

About the Fair Funding Now! Initiative

In 2011, the Texas legislature cut education funding for the first time in four decades. Instead of ending funding disparities, they walked away – pushing millions of Texas children aside. But communities across the state are taking action to make sure that schools are equipped to guarantee that all children graduate ready for college and career. Through IDRA's Fair Funding Now! initiative, we are convening roundtables statewide with LULAC, NAACP, the Mexican American School Board Members Association (MASBA) and Texas Center for Educational Policy (TCEP).





Recursos informativos

Obtenga recursos sobre el estado del financiamiento escolar en Texas

Visite la página <http://www.idra.org> para herramientas, folletos y más recursos.

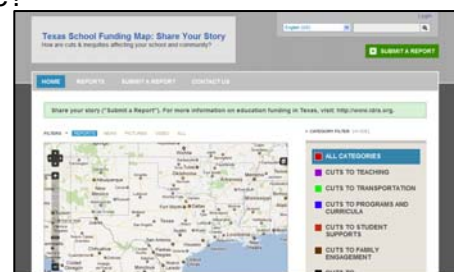


¡Comparta su historia! ¿Cómo está afectando los recortes a su escuela? ¿Han recortado a maestras por falta de fondos?

¿Han ocurrido recortes a clases? programas escolares? transporte?

Visite la página <http://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com/> para compartir su historia.

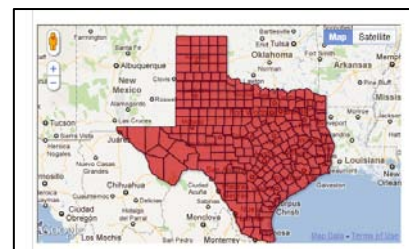
- También puede enviar información a través de:
Correo electrónico – a fairfundingnow@gmail.com
- Twitter – Al enviar un tweet con el hashtag #TXequity
- En su teléfono – Descargue el "app" Ushahidi. Busque el Mapa de financiamiento y publique su historia.



Vea mapas de los recortes

Busque el nivel de los recortes a su distrito escolar o a cualquier condado.

http://www.idra.org/Courageous_Connections/Events/Fair_Funding_Now/



Visite la pagina de IDRA - OurSchool

Vea información sobre financiamiento escolar y compare distritos escolares y descubra cómo su escuela está haciendo académicamente.

En inglés: <http://www.idra.org/portal/>

En español: <http://www.idra.org/portalsp/>



Sobre la iniciativa Financiamiento Justo ¡Ya !

Sobre la iniciativa Financiamiento Justo ¡Ya !

En 2011, la legislatura de Texas recortó los fondos de educación por primera vez en cuatro décadas. En lugar de poner en fin a las disparidades de financiamiento, se alejaron de esta meta- empujando a millones de niños de Texas a un lado. Sin embargo, las comunidades de todo el estado están tomando medidas para asegurarse de que las escuelas están equipadas para garantizar que todos los niños se gradúen preparados para la universidad y carrera. A través de la iniciativa Financiamiento Justo ¡Ya ! , estamos convocando juntas a nivel estatal con LULAC, el NAACP, la asociación de Miembros México-Americanos de Mesa directivas escolares (MASBA) y el Centro de Texas para Políticas Educativas (TCEP).

An initiative of the Intercultural Development Research Association

5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101 • San Antonio, Texas 78228 • 210-444-1710 • contact@idra.org • www.idra.org



Share your story...

How are funding cuts affecting your school?

Last spring... Texas lawmakers cut **\$6.4 billion** for public education.
They left the rainy day fund untapped.

This summer... **12,000 teachers** got pink slips.

This fall... our children went to school with more **crowded classrooms**.
Qualified college students **lost scholarship funds**.

What have funding cuts to Texas public education meant for you?

schoolfunding.crowdmap.com

Get fliers and graphics to help you take action!

The Fair Funding Now! website has handouts about key points, ideas for action, infographics on the funding gap and Texas' low ranking, a sample resolution for school boards and civic groups, and background info.

In English and Spanish!

<http://budurl.com/IDRAfairfund>



Visit IDRA's OurSchool data portal

See funding information and compare school districts.
And find out how your high school is doing academically.
(Simple, free registration is required.)

In English: <http://www.idra.org/portal>
In Spanish: <http://www.idra.org/portalsp>

See a Google map of funding cuts by Texas county & school district

Get a quick look at the unnecessary cuts affecting schools in your area.

<http://budurl.com/IDRAfairfund>

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@IDRAed #TXequity

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Some actions to take

Other effective & doable actions

1. Talk to other families in your neighborhood and the larger community.

2. Document and report how funding cuts are affecting your school.

3. Organize a group to speak at public events.

4. Work with your PTA to take a stand for equitable funding and publicize it.

5. Ask groups – like your school board, city council or county commissioners – to pass a resolution (see sample at www.idra.org).

6. Talk to clergy about funding inequity and approach congregations.

7. Hold a news conference on the issue.

8. Write a letter or talk to your state elected officials.

9. Organize a letter writing campaign in support of fair funding of schools.

10. Testify before the legislature on this topic.

Action Examples and Resources

1. Talk to other families in your neighborhood and the larger community.

- ☐ Use the key points flier to have conversations with other families (see flier at www.idra.org).

2. Document and report how funding cuts are affecting your school.

- ☐ Have budget cuts forced your school to cut teachers? Curricula? Programs? Transportation? Visit the School Funding Crowdmap to share your story: <https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com>
- ☐ Get teenagers to help you go online and report how your schools have been hurt.
- ☐ Give the Crowdmap web address to your friends and encourage them to report too.

3. Organize a group to speak at public events.

- ☐ Join two or three others who are willing to speak at a public meeting using the Fair Funding Now! materials to make your points.
- ☐ Give out the Crowdmap web address and encourage participants to report too.

4. Work with your PTA to take a stand for equitable funding and publicize it.

- ☐ Get on the PTA meeting agenda and hand out this Fair Funding Now! information.
- ☐ Get volunteers to commitment to distribute the info to other families.
- ☐ Use IDRA's OurSchool portal to show how budget cuts are affecting your school.

5. Ask groups – like your school board, city council or county commissioners – to pass a resolution.

- ☐ Find a member of a board to introduce the resolution giving them the Fair Funding Now! sample resolution as a model (see sample at www.idra.org).

6. Talk to clergy about school funding equity and approach congregations.

- ☐ Talk to your minister or a church leader to introduce this topic to the congregation.
- ☐ Have your congregation host a meeting for you to present on the topic.
- ☐ Use IDRA's OurSchool portal to show how budget cuts are affecting your schools.

7. Hold a news conference on the issue.

- ☐ Prepare a statement based on the Fair Funding Now! materials.
- ☐ Gather representatives from several organizations and call a press conference on this topic.

8. Write a letter or talk to your state elected officials.

- ☐ Give Fair Funding Now! materials to your elected officials and ask for their support.
- ☐ Use IDRA's OurSchool portal to show how budget cuts are affecting your schools.

9. Organize a letter writing campaign in support of fair funding of schools.

- ☐ Get some friends together for a letter-writing party. Get the addresses of your elected officials and your newspaper a head of time. Gather different kinds of writing materials & stationery.

10. Testify before the legislature on this topic.

- ☐ Find out when state committees meet and have hearings and go and give your testimony.

Get more resources and news at www.idra.org



How are Funding Cuts Affecting Your School?

Sample Questions

In Spring 2011, Texas lawmakers cut \$6.4 billion from the state's education budget, leaving local districts to make up the difference. How are budget cuts impacting schools in your community? Below are a set of guiding questions to gather this kind of information and put your story on the map at <http://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com/>

What is the school district name: _____

What is the school name (if applicable): _____

Questions you could ask the school superintendent or principal...

- ☐ Did our district [or school] have to cut faculty, staff, programs or services?
 - If so, what specific services were cut?
 - How many teachers and staff were fired or laid off?
 - Which teachers lost jobs?
 - In which schools can we expect to see a decline in teaching staff?
- ☐ How do school administrators think these cuts will impact school capacity to serve students, involve parents, engage communities?
- ☐ Is the district working with the city with the intent of raising local taxes
 - If so, to cover what kinds of services, staff, programs?
- ☐ Is the district raising fees to make up the difference?
 - If so, what kinds of fees?
- ☐ Is there a school or community website or news article that describes the budget cuts, specifically how they relate to the district (or campus)?

Questions you could ask families and community members...

- ☐ Have you heard about budget cuts in your district or school to faculty, staff, programs or services?
- ☐ What are you most concerned about?
- ☐ How are these changes affecting your child or children in your community?

Questions you could ask teachers or counselors...

- ☐ Have there been cuts to faculty, staff, programs or services at you school?
- ☐ What cuts concern you most?
- ☐ How are they affecting you, your students or families in the district?

Visit the School Funding Crowdmap to share your story
<https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com>



Algunas acciones efectivas y factibles para tomar

1. Hable con otras familias en su vecindario y la comunidad en general.

2. Documente y denuncie cómo los recortes de fondos están afectando a su escuela.

3. Organice un grupo para hablar en eventos públicos.

4. Trabaje con su PTA a tomar partido por una financiación equitativa y darle publicidad.

5. Pida a los grupos – como el consejo escolar, municipal o los comisionados del condado – que aprueben una resolución (ver ejemplo en www.idra.org).

6. Hable con el clero y su congregación sobre la desigualdad y la financiación de las escuelas.

7. Organice una conferencia de prensa sobre el tema.

8. Escriba una carta o hable con sus funcionarios electos del estado.

9. Organice una campaña de cartas en apoyo de un financiamiento justo de las escuelas.

10. De testimonio ante la legislatura sobre este tema.

Ejemplos y recursos para acciones

1. Hable con otras familias en su vecindario y la comunidad en general.

- ☐ Use el volante de los puntos clave para tener conversaciones con otras familias (vea el folleto en www.idra.org).

2. Documente y denuncie cómo los recortes de fondos están afectando a su escuela.

- ☐ ¿Han forzado los recortes en el presupuesto de su escuela un recorte de los profesores? ¿De los planes de estudio? ¿De programas? ¿De transporte? Visite el sitio de este programa para compartir su historia: <https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com>
- ☐ Invite jóvenes que le ayuden para conectar con nuestra página del Internet e informe cómo sus escuelas se han visto afectados.
- ☐ Reparta esta dirección del web <https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com> a sus amigos y motive a que informen también.

3. Organice un grupo para hablar en eventos públicos

- ☐ Unan dos o tres más que están dispuestos a hablar en una reunión pública con este tema y usen los materiales de Financiamiento Justo ¡Ahora! para hacer sus puntos.
- ☐ Reparte la dirección del web de este proyecto y anime a los participantes a que también informen sobre los cortes en sus escuelas

4. Trabaje con su PTA a tomar partido por una financiación equitativa y darle publicidad.

- ☐ Pida ser parte de la agenda de la reunión de la PTA y distribuya información de Financiamiento Justo ¡Ahora!
- ☐ consiga voluntarios que se comprometan a distribuir la información a otras familias.
- ☐ Use el portal <https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com> para mostrar cómo los recortes presupuestarios están afectando a su escuela.

5. Pida a los grupos - como el consejo escolar, municipal o los comisionados del condado – que aprueben una resolución (ver ejemplo en www.idra.org).

- ☐ Encuentre un miembro de un consejo para introducir la resolución dándoles la muestra como un modelo de resolución (ver ejemplo en www.idra.org).

6. Hable con el clero y su congregación sobre la desigualdad y la financiación de las escuelas.

- ☐ Hable con su pastor o un líder de la iglesia para introducir este tema a la congregación.
- ☐ Pida que su congregación tenga una reunión para que usted presente sobre el tema.
- ☐ Use el portal <https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com> para mostrar cómo los recortes presupuestarios están afectando a su escuela.

7. Organice una conferencia de prensa sobre el tema.

- ☐ Prepare una declaración basada en los materiales de esta campaña.
- ☐ Reúna representantes de varias organizaciones para convocar una conferencia de prensa sobre este tema.

8. Escriba una carta o hable con sus funcionarios electos del estado.

- ☐ Repartan los materiales de esta campaña a los funcionarios electos del estado que representan su comunidad.
- ☐ Use el portal <https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com> para mostrar cómo los recortes presupuestarios están afectando a su escuelas.

9. Organice una campaña de cartas en apoyo de un financiamiento justo de las escuelas.

- ☐ Reúna amigos para escribir cartas. De antemano obtengan las direcciones de sus funcionarios elegidos y el periódico local. Usen una variedad de tipos de materiales para escribir las cartas.

10. De testimonio ante la legislatura sobre este tema.

- ☐ Averigüen cuándo los comités estatales se reúnen y tienen audiencias y den su testimonio ante estos comités.

Get more resources and news at www.idra.org



¿Cómo están afectando los recortes del presupuesto a su escuela?

Ejemplos de preguntas

En la primavera de 2011, los legisladores de Texas cortaron \$ 6,4 mil millones del presupuesto de educación del estado, dejando a los distritos locales para compensar la diferencia. ¿Qué impacto están teniendo estos recortes en su comunidad? A continuación se presentan una serie de preguntas orientadoras para recoger este tipo de información y poner su historia en el mapa al <http://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com/>

¿Cuál es el nombre del distrito escolar?: _____

¿Cuál es el nombre de la escuela (si aplica)?: _____

Ejemplos de preguntas que usted podría hacer al superintendente de la escuela o el director son...

- ☐ ¿Nuestro distrito [o en la escuela] tuvo que cortar la facultad, personal, programas o servicios?
 - Si es así ¿cuáles son los servicios específicos fueron cortados?
 - ¿Cuántos profesores y personal fueron despedidos?
 - ¿Cuales profesores perdieron sus empleos?
 - ¿En cuales escuelas se ve una disminución en el personal docente?
- ☐ ¿Cómo piensan los administradores de las escuelas que estos recortes afectarán la capacidad de la escuela para atender a los estudiantes, la participación de los padres y la participación de las comunidades?
- ☐ ¿Esta el distrito escolar en dialogo con el municipio para aumentar los impuestos locales?
 - Si es así, los nuevos impuestos son para pagar ¿que tipo de servicios, personal y programas?
- ☐ ¿Piensa el distrito aumentar las tarifas para compensar la diferencia?
 - Si es así, ¿qué tipo de tarifas?
- ☐ ¿Tienen o saben de algún website de su escuela, su comunidad o algo que salió en el periódico que describe los recortos financieros y el impacto que éstos tienen en su distrito escolar o a su escuela en particular?

Questions you could ask families and community members...

- ☐ ¿Han oído hablar de recortes en el presupuesto de su distrito o escuela que hayan afectado a los maestros al personal o a programas o servicios?
- ☐ ¿Qué les preocupa más?
- ☐ ¿Cómo estan afectado estos cambios que afectan a su hijo o alumnos en su comunidad?

Ejemplos de preguntas que usted podría hacer a los maestros o consejeros...

- ☐ ¿Ha habido recortes en la facultad, personal, programas o servicios en que la escuela?
- ☐ ¿Qué corte le preocupa más?
- ☐ ¿Cómo le afecta usted, a los estudiantes o las familias en el distrito?

Visite <https://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com> para compartir su historia

InDepth

Understanding Texas School Finance

Published Quarterly

Bragging Wrongs

In last quarter's *InDepth*, our cover story featured an article ("[Bragging Rights](#)") about our 44th place standing among all the states with respect to state and local expenditures per pupil in public schools. If that standing has improved, it will only be because some other state cut public education funding more than Texas did. Even so, our embarrassingly low place doesn't reveal just how bad our public education funding actually is.

That's the problem with statistics and averages; they sometimes give the wrong impression. One mathematician put it something like this: On average every Texan has exactly one ovary and one testicle, but not any Texan is actually so equipped. Proving, we guess, that there is no such thing as an average Texan, and warning us to look beyond the average for the truest picture.

During the 82nd Legislative Session, legislative leaders were concerned that reducing funding just in very highly-funded districts would be too severe. They actually characterized it as "too extreme" and "unfair," even though those high-funded districts would have still been funded above the low-funded districts after cuts were implemented. Instead, they cut the districts already at the lowest levels, an irresponsible act that was more about protecting certain perennially high-funded districts than seeking a fair solution. If fair was indeed a priority with the state leadership, there wouldn't be funding inequities to start with. Let's be straight about that.

It is commonly hoped that some piece of good may result from tragedy, and there will be some in this one. The public education funding system in Texas is arbitrary and therefore cannot be efficient. Even before this legislative session, a great deal of that inefficiency was hidden by the complexity of various hold-harmlesses and outside-the-system funding

Table: An Arbitrary & Inefficient System

Same...	District	Tax Rate*	Revenue**
Location	Alamo Heights	\$1.04	\$6,242
	San Antonio	\$1.04	\$5,035
Size	Glen Rose	\$0.825	\$8,423
	Diboll	\$1.04	\$4,882
Tax Rate	Austin	\$1.079	\$6,180
	Amarillo	\$1.08	\$5,139
Revenue	College Station	\$1.00	\$5,654
	Jourdanton	\$1.17	\$5,652

*2010-11 M&O Tax Rate **2011-12 SB 1 Revenue per WADA

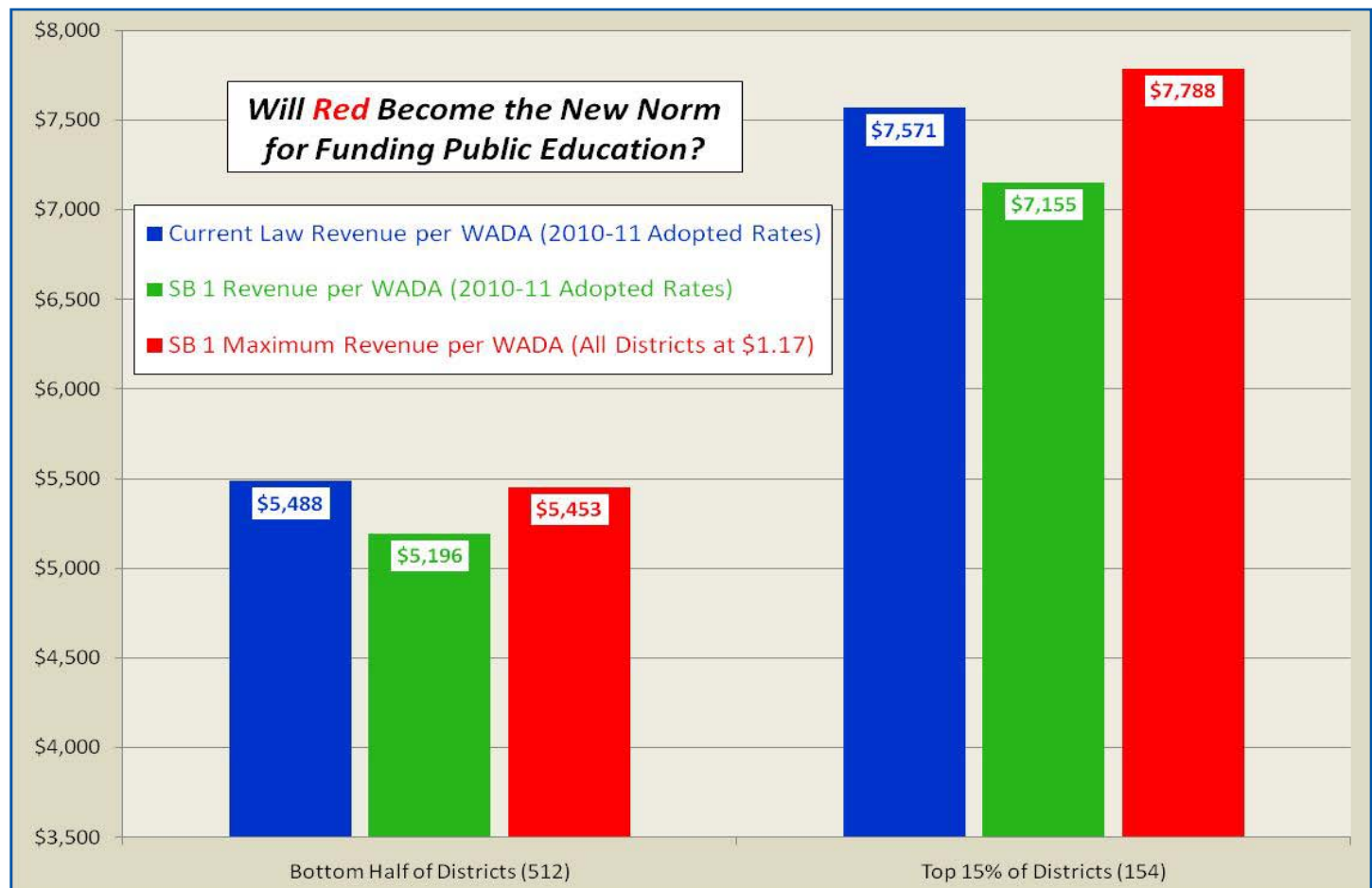
schemes. In 2007, when the Basic Allotment was set at a level that actually cut formula funding, every district in the state went to Target Revenue Hold-Harmless funding for the entire biennium. By so doing, the great inequities in our funding system were more obviously exposed than any average or statistical treatment could possibly have shown.

This time, three additional truths have been exposed:

- Maintaining an inequitable system takes funding from the districts at the bottom. In fact, the leadership admitted they were cutting low-funded districts in order to avoid cutting high-funded districts back to the formula level.
- The leadership does not want an efficient, equitable funding system. If we have an unfair system, then it is because that's the way they want it.
- Fair treatment for children and taxpayers will not come until the people demand it.

SB 1: The Aftermath

Table: What House Leadership Got Out of the SB 1 Compromise



The chart above should give our readers a pretty picture of what they experienced as SB 1 developed through the long six months of the legislative session. Having started out with the right plan--using the \$5.5 billion Target Revenue scheme to cover the \$4 billion cut to public education--the legislature immediately changed its course in a successful effort to protect the arbitrary and inefficient Target Revenue Hold-harmless.

Although the second year of the biennium will be better for low-funded districts, the first year represents devastating cuts. On average, the lower-funded 512 school districts (one-half of all) suffered cuts of around \$300 per weighted student (WADA), reducing their funding to just under \$5,200 per WADA. About 22% of these districts will drop below \$5,000.

The highest-funded 15% (154) districts on average were cut a little more than \$100 per WADA more than the bottom half, but retained over \$7,100 WADA in the end. After the legislative dust settled, the top group averaged about \$2,000 per WADA more than the bottom group. Using state average statistics, \$2,000 per WADA amounts to about \$56,000 for every 22 children (a typical classroom size).

For the 2011-12 school year, the data indicate that the average district in the bottom group cannot regain funds lost by the cuts, even by taxing at the maximum M&O rate of \$1.17. The average district in the top group could, at maximum effort, not only regain the money lost, but could actually increase funding by over \$200 per WADA above the pre-cut levels.

Given an excellent political excuse of "having" to cut funding for public education, the legislature could have taken the opportunity to at least make the current funding scheme more fair and efficient. Instead, the leadership chose to require substantial funding cuts for the children in the lowest-funded districts in order to mitigate the cuts for those lucky enough to reside in privileged zip codes. **EC**

Looking Beyond the Averages

Based on the acts of the 82nd Texas Legislature, one might justifiably conclude that the state truly believes the least-funded districts will have access to a funding level that is sufficient to meet all accountability standards, state laws, TEA regulations, and reasonable community expectations while maintaining sufficient local discretion regarding their tax rate. Otherwise, the state knowingly and intentionally cut funding below the lowest acceptable level in some districts when it did not have to for the upcoming biennium.

So what else could the state have done? Other options for funding the \$4 billion shortfall were widely discussed during the regular and special sessions, some of which are shown in this table:

Options	2012-13 Biennium Revenue Estimates	Actual State Benefit Realized
Eliminate Tax Loopholes a. High-Cost Gas Exemption b. Certain Sales Tax Exemptions c. Chapter 313 Abatements	a. \$2 billion b. \$5.6 billion c. \$420 million	- 0 -
Restructure Franchise Tax	\$2 billion	- 0 -
Use Rainy Day Fund	Up to \$6.5 billion	- 0 -
Adopt Additional Taxes, for example: a. Increase Tobacco Tax by \$1.05 b. Levy 1¢/oz. on Sugary Soft Drinks	a. \$700 million b. \$1 billion	- 0 -
Reduce or Eliminate Inefficient Funding (Target Revenue, Wealth Hold-Harmless)	Up to \$5.5 billion	\$1.5 billion
Totals	Up to \$23.72 billion	\$1.5 billion

Instead, the state leadership chose to reduce funding to public schools, including these low-funded districts:

District	Adopted M&O Tax Rate	Current Law Funding Level per WADA	SB 1 Funding Level per WADA	Amount Saved by State in 2011-12
Riesel ISD	\$1.04	\$5,058	\$4,773	\$253,000
Lufkin ISD	\$1.04	\$5,225	\$4,965	\$2,781,692
Abilene ISD	\$1.04	\$5,207	\$4,929	\$5,735,210
Total				\$8,769,902

Even if they insisted on cutting public education, they could have done it better. Check this out:

District	Adopted M&O Tax Rate	Funding Level per WADA After SB 1 Cuts	If Funding Levels Were Cut to Reasonable Level per WADA	Amount Saved by State in 2011-12
Groesbeck ISD	\$0.92	\$6,473	\$6,240	\$480,679
Seminole ISD	\$0.74	\$6,368	\$6,240	\$408,704
Northwest ISD	\$1.04	\$6,641	\$6,240	\$7,898,497
Total				\$8,787,880

Why would anyone think cutting Riesel, Lufkin, and Abilene to below \$5,000 per WADA is better than cutting Groesbeck, Seminole, and Northwest down to \$6,240? If Target Revenue had been reduced more from the top down, districts in the formula system would not have to be cut. **EC**

Note: All figures listed in the tables above are estimates based on information from the Legislative Budget Board and the Center for Public Policy Priorities. Figures will be updated as new data become available.

Should School Districts Go Back to Court?

You never know what is going to happen if you go to court, but after a session in which the Legislature reduces spending on public education by \$621 million in All Funds and shorts the school-finance formulas by \$4 billion, the question must be asked: Should school districts go back to court?

Texas Constitution, Article 7, Section 1, requires an efficient system of public education. As interpreted by the Texas Supreme Court, efficiency requires both equitable and adequate funding.

Equitable funding refers to the fair distribution of resources to districts, adjusting for the varying costs of educating different students (for example, special education versus general education students) and the varying costs of operating different districts (for example rural versus urban districts).

Adequate funding refers to the amount of resources needed to provide a general diffusion of knowledge. The Supreme Court has not defined exactly what a general diffusion of knowledge means, though the Court has loosely equated it with an "acceptable" accountability rating.

So do schools have a case?

Equity

The 82nd Legislature had less state revenue to distribute due to the 2009 recession and the 2006 property tax cut. Instead of using the Rainy Day Fund or raising new revenue, the Legislature shorted school funding formulas by \$4 billion.

If current law were fair, it would be easy enough to prorate what each district is supposed to receive by \$4 billion. Unfortunately, even after years of litigation and legislation, current law is not fair. Some districts are limited to formula funding while other districts receive higher funding under "hold harmless" provisions rolled into "Target Revenue." And, some districts are still able to raise more money locally than others.

SB 1 is a blended plan. For Fiscal 2012, it uses an across-the-board cut favored by some in the House leadership, and for Fiscal 2013, it uses a hybrid plan favored by some in the Senate that cuts more from districts with Target Revenue, but limits their loss.



F. Scott McCown
Retired District Judge
Executive Director, CPPP

SCHOOL FINANCE LITIGATION: A HISTORY

GILMER-AIKIN ACT	RODRIGUEZ V. SAN ANTONIO ISD	EDGEWOOD I	EDGEWOOD II
Laid the foundation for Texas' current school funding system. The Act established the Minimum Foundation Program (later to become the Foundation School Program or FSP), which guaranteed minimum levels of funding per student and allowed for local property taxes to support programs beyond the minimum.	Between 1949 and 1970 funding formulas, tax responsibilities and requirements were adjusted and changed. In 1971, Rodriguez v. San Antonio ISD was filed. The courts initially sided with the plaintiff, agreeing that the state funding system was a "violation of equal protection," but the ruling was later overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, ruling that education is not a federally protected right.	The inequities in funding statewide, which created a per-student funding range of \$2,133 to \$19,333, led to the first Edgewood case. The Texas Supreme Court's decision stated that "there must be a direct and close correlation between a district's tax effort and the educational resources available to it." The system was declared in violation of the "efficiency" requirement of the Texas Constitution. They ruled that a system that relied so heavily on local property taxes must produce similar revenue for similar local tax effort.	The Legislature passed SB 1 in 1990, aiming for similar tax effort to produce similar yields regardless of local property wealth by creating studies to monitor inequities. These studies didn't actually implement a new system. The Supreme Court once again ruled that the system was unconstitutional.

Under SB 1, of the \$4 billion cut from current law, about 62 percent comes from the Regular Program Allotment, while only 37 percent comes from Target Revenue.

You can see the inequity starkly by sorting the districts from lowest to highest by total revenue per penny of tax and then comparing yields. The bottom half of all districts with more than 2.6 million children (about 60 percent of all kids in public school) would average \$5,100 per weighted student in average daily attendance (WADA), while the top 15 percent of districts would be left at \$7,100 per WADA, about \$2,000 per WADA higher. Frankly, it is hard to see how the state can justify this sort of inequity in court.

To make matters worse, SB 1 also protects lower tax rates in favored districts at the expense of the other districts. Generally lower-funded school districts have been forced to adopt higher local tax rates to meet the needs of their children. Another way to say this is that districts that receive more state money than others are able to keep local taxes lower. Consequently, the bottom half of districts have average tax rates of \$1.09, while the top 15 percent have average tax rates of only \$1.01.

Under SB 1, the across-the-board cut takes a bite out of the revenue generated by the lower-funded districts with their higher local tax rates and uses it to protect the higher-funded districts. To make matters

worse, some districts won't be able to mitigate the loss of state dollars with local dollars because they can't pass a tax ratification election (TRE), required for tax increases over \$1.04, or because they are already at or near the \$1.17 tax cap. Again, it is hard to see how these inequities can be justified in court.

Adequacy

The cuts also left our schools woefully underfunded. Contrary to the public relations claims of some, the Legislature actually cut spending on public education by \$621 million in All Funds, even in the face of projected student enrollment growth of about 90,000 in 2012 and another 78,000 in 2013. No one knows how bad things would have to be before the Supreme Court would be willing to say that funding is inadequate, but certainly the case is growing stronger than ever.

Unconstitutional State Property Tax

Our state constitution prohibits a state property tax. To determine whether a local property tax has become a de facto state property tax, the Supreme Court decides whether a school district retains "meaningful discretion" over its property tax rate. By "meaningful discretion," the Court means that after raising the money required for a general diffusion of knowledge, the district still has some significant local tax capacity available to use or not to use as the district desires.

(continued on page 9)

EDGEWOOD III	EDGEWOOD IV	WEST ORANGE-COVE I	WEST ORANGE-COVE II
The Legislature responded with the passage of SB 351, which aimed at eliminating the property wealth differences between districts by creating County Education Districts (CEDs), but this new system was challenged. The plaintiffs claimed the law instituted a statewide property tax, which is unconstitutional, and won.	The Legislature's next solution was SB 7, which sought to eliminate property wealth differences in a new way – through recapture. The law was challenged by districts of varying wealth levels, but was upheld by the Texas Supreme Court. The Court claimed that the system provided for "the general diffusion of knowledge," as required by the Constitution, and provided reasonable access to educational opportunities for all students.	The finance system for public education was challenged again, as the plaintiffs claimed the system's maximum tax rate of \$1.50, the rate at which most districts were taxing, was essentially a statewide property tax, which is prohibited by the Texas Constitution. Districts argued that taxing at that rate was essential to provide a basic education for their students. After being dismissed by an appeals court, the case was heard by the Texas Supreme Court, which ruled that the plaintiffs had a valid claim, and the case was returned to a trial court.	A Travis County District Court found SB 7 was unconstitutional on the grounds that, since many districts were at the maximum tax rate and no longer had "local discretion," it constituted a statewide property tax. The court required that the legislature address the problem by June 1, 2006. In a third called special session, the Legislature lowered property taxes to allow for more local control of tax rates, levied a new business tax, increased tobacco taxes, increased certain guaranteed funding levels and reduced recapture.

Equity Center Hosts 30th Annual Membership Breakfast and Presents *Champion of Equity* Award to Dick Lavine

The Equity Center hosted its 30th Annual Membership Breakfast in Austin on June 27th. Over 100 Equity Center members and affiliates gathered to nominate new board members, hear updates about potential school finance litigation, and honor Equity Center directors and CPPP's Dick Lavine.

Following opening remarks by President Joddie Witte, Stan Surrat, Superintendent of Lindale ISD, was recognized for his invaluable contributions to the Equity Center's mission during the last four years as a Regional Director. Regional Directors Mark Pool, Superintendent at El Campo ISD, and Mike Quatrini, Superintendent at San Elizario ISD, were also recognized though they were not present.

Dr. Wayne Pierce presented the 2011 *Champion of Equity* Award to Dick Lavine, Senior Fiscal Analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP). When presenting the award, Wayne emphasized that Dick's accolades go well beyond his impressive resume. "The things that he says and the things that he fights for are the same things that [Equity Center members] say and fight for, which is, let's treat people fairly. He's dedicated so many years to that and we greatly appreciate those efforts."

Upon receiving his award, Dick said that he's always so impressed with the number of Equity Center superintendents he sees at the Capitol during the legislative session. He emphasized how important that involvement is.

Dick said that his job is to talk to legislators and the public about the role of government in funding those things that Texans prioritize.

"And what people care about the most is their kids. Not just their own kids, but all the kids in their community, and that's expressed through the public education system. So when you're talking to people about equity and school finance, I think what you're really doing is helping advance people's understanding of the role of government and the importance that we're all in this together."

He also said that the key point of equity is that if all districts, including districts like Alamo Heights, Plano and Highland Park, are in the same boat as all other districts, it will be in everyone's interest to move us all forward together. **EC**

Top Left: Equity Center members **Right:** Executive Director Wayne Pierce presents *Champion of Equity* award to Dick Lavine
Bottom Left: Dr. Wayne Pierce and Dr. Ray Freeman present Certificate of Appreciation to Stan Surrat



Lege Gets it Wrong

Stakeholders Will Vote More Taxes for Better Schools



Joe Smith
TexasISD.com

Voters cleared up a few things with the May 14 School Bond Referendums. The elections conducted in 59 Texas communities, if viewed as a poll, support my conclusion that the lege got it wrong and their actions do not reflect what the people said in November 2010. The legislators' mantra has been that in 2010 the voters said they want less government. In response, the 82nd legislature has set about slashing the public education budget by \$4 billion. The drastic cuts to school districts in every Texas community have been, and will continue to be, translated into teacher lay-offs.

I have a completely different take on what the voters of Texas want less of and it is not to cut the budgets of the local schools that their children attend. I read publications from across the state that were reporting as the polls closed and votes were counted on May 14th of this year.

One that caught my eye referenced the city of Weatherford: "Tea Party incumbents swept out of office in Weatherford." Voters are restating what they meant in November 2010. Is anyone listening?

The message appears to be clear. On May 14th, when 39 out of 56 local school bond referendums in typical Texas communities were passed, voters saw needs in their school districts and were willing to pay higher taxes to fix them. These are Texans voting to raise their taxes to pay for things they care about and, in this case, their local public schools. If taxpayers will support tax increases for funding facilities, it is reasonable to expect stronger support for the teachers that teach in those buildings.

The legislature has decided to balance the state ledger without raising revenues, taking approximately \$23 billion from current spending levels, reflecting some of the deepest cuts contemplated anywhere in the nation. Spending cuts to Texas public schools, already among the nation's most poorly funded (we are ranked 44th), means teacher layoffs, pre-K programs decimated and schools that will be closed.

“The message appears to be clear. On May 14th, when 39 out of 56 local school bond referendums in typical Texas communities were passed, [voters] saw needs in their school districts and were willing to pay higher taxes to fix them.”

May 14, 2011 School Bond Referendum Results

Total District with Bond Referendums	59
Districts with Bond Referendums that Passed	42
Districts with Bond Referendums that Failed	17
Percent Passed	70%

This is not what voters intended even if they said "less government" in November 2010. They did not mean less teachers or more cuts to local public schools.

And how local stakeholders feel about their local schools is not isolated to the May 14th school bond referendums. Consider the 2010 TREs (tax ratification elections) held in 77 Texas school districts that proposed higher M&O tax rates. Sixty of the 77 (or 76%) of districts' taxpayers voted to ratify the higher tax rates proposed.

The lege simply got it wrong. **EC**



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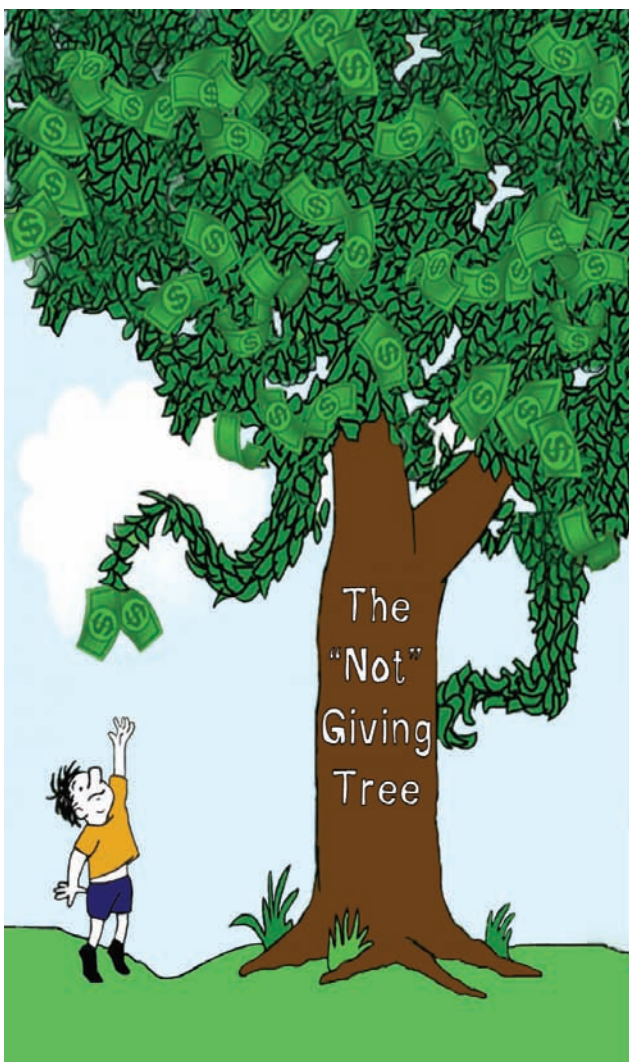
Should Districts Go Back To Court? *(continued from p. 5)*

As the Supreme Court put it in *West Orange-Cove II*, “a cap to which districts are inexorably forced by educational requirements and economic necessities . . . will in short order violate the prohibition of a state property tax.” In other words, a district has no meaningful discretion if the tax cap has become a floor and a ceiling.

Have districts been forced by educational requirements and economic necessities to use all their local tax capacity, leaving them no meaningful discretion? Currently, 220 school districts in Texas are taxing at the maximum Maintenance & Operations rate allowed by state law, which is \$1.17. Another 649 districts are taxing at \$1.04, the highest rate allowed without seeking voter approval. Many of those 649 districts have attempted a Tax Ratification Election (TRE), but failed. But this is the status of property taxes before the cuts. What will happen to tax rates once the cuts are implemented? They will go up.

And it is important to keep in mind that the number of schools pushed to the tax cap is only a piece of evidence, not the controlling issue. Often overlooked is the Court’s holding from *West Orange-Cove I* in 2003 that if a *single district* is forced to the tax cap because of inadequate state funding for a general diffusion of knowledge, then the state is imposing an unconstitutional state property tax. In the context of shorting formulas by \$4 billion, and cutting All Funds spending in the face of enrollment growth, there may be a number of districts (and the legal test only requires 1) that must now use all their local property tax dollars to pay for a general diffusion of knowledge. If so, the state is imposing a state property tax.

Is it time to go back to court? You be the judge. **EC**



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U.S. Department of Education

Equity and Excellence Commission

Unfortunately, Texas is not the only state in the nation that struggles with providing for an equitable school finance system. Because so many states face these same issues, the Department of Education established the *Equity and Excellence Commission* in February of this year. The commission's charter details its purpose, which is "to collect information, analyze issues, and obtain broad public input regarding how the Federal government can increase educational opportunity by improving school funding equity."

The 34-member commission was created at the urging of Congress and is made up of academics, union leaders, community organizers, philanthropists and seven ex-officio members from the White House and Department of Education staff. In addition to traditional commission meetings held in Washington D.C., the commission is holding town hall meetings across the country, including the one it hosted in Dallas on June 8th (see *more on following page*).

The commission is charged with producing a report

by the end of the year with recommendations on actions that both the federal government and state and local governments can take to improve equity and achievement in public education. Ex-officio Committee Member Russlyn Ali, a recent Equity Center podcast guest, explained that it is still unclear

exactly what the federal government's role can be in improving educational equity. When speaking on our radio show, she expressed great hope that whatever the outcome, the report the committee produces will not simply sit on a shelf, but will lead to meaningful change.

Ms. Ali also emphasized that the commission was organized to hear from people across the country, and urged our members to provide input and share their stories with the commission. You can email the commission

at equitycommission@ed.gov.

For more information about the Equity and Excellence Commission, visit: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/index.html>

Chairman Edley outlined the direction of the commission at the first meeting:

1. **Outlining the problem** – Determining the equity issues, disparities, and shortfalls in excellence.
2. **Setting goals** – What does a more equitable, more excellent system look like, and what sort of educational opportunities need to be available "for every child and in every community."
3. **Determining how to reach those goals** – Setting an outline of how to get to our goals.
4. **"What kind of education finance system -- federal, state, local -- is needed in order to deliver?"**

The USDE's Russlyn Ali told the committee at their first meeting that the *Excellence and Equity Commission's* members are said to represent the "all-stars" in education reform. Here's a few members of the all-star team:

Reed Hastings, co-founder of Netflix and former chair of the California State Board of Education, and **Christopher Edley**, Dean of Berkley School of Law, serve as the committee's co-chairs. **Lisa Darling Hammond** is a professor of education at Stanford University and founder of the Stanford Center

for Opportunity Policy in Education. She focuses her research, teaching, and policy work on issues of school restructuring, teacher quality and educational equity. **Michael Rebell** is a professor and executive director of The Campaign for Educational Equity, at Teachers College, Columbia University, and

an adjunct professor at Columbia Law School. Previously, he was counsel for plaintiffs in Campaign for *Fiscal Equity v. State of New York*. **Randi Weingarten** is president of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, representing thousands of teachers and school employees across the

country. **Ben Jealous** is the youngest person to hold the position of President and CEO of the NAACP. The Equity Center's 2010 publication, *Money Does Matter! Investing in Texas Children and our Future*, includes research from several of these esteemed commission members. **EC**

Dr. Wayne Pierce's Testimony to the Equity and Excellence Commission

June 8, 2011 - Dallas, Texas

Thank you for this opportunity to present some important information about the status of equity in Texas public school funding and the challenges that lie before us.

I have spent 31 years working in public education at practically all levels, including teaching high school mathematics, coaching, driving a bus, serving as middle and junior high school principal, assistant superintendent, and for 15 years, superintendent. I have been involved to one degree or another in Texas school funding litigation since *Edgewood I* and have seen the good that it has done as well as its shortcomings.

For the last 10 years, I have served as Executive Director of the Center for Equity and Adequacy in Public School Funding, or, as it is better known, the Equity Center. The Equity Center is an organization of 690 Texas school districts, dedicated to the principle of fair treatment of children and taxpayers.



Wayne Pierce
Executive Director, Equity Center

As you may already have begun to suspect, this is not a presentation of scholarly research, complete with regression analyses of dependent and independent variables about the various aspects of Texas state policy and funding for public education although it does contain its share of numbers, charts and tables. It is not a history of Texas school finance, although the battle for school funding equity has raged for over 40 years in Texas through litigation, special legislative committees and interim studies, and, most importantly, in the funding statutes adopted over many years by our state legislature. This is a simple story about Texas children and the principles that today guide their state government in funding their public education.

The fact is that Texas already has a very good structure of funding formulas that take into consideration both district and student costs in providing a public school education in the calculation of each district's weighted student count, which is also used in a second funding tier for enrichment. It is funded at such a low level, however, that the Legislative Budget Board estimates that fewer than one in every eight districts will be in the formula system. All other districts are funded by a Target Revenue Hold-harmless that simply reflects the accumulation of historical inequities.

Texas is--and always has been--a very conservative state. However, while there is a general consensus that every state entity can get by with 95% of its current funding level (even when it is already 95% of 95% of 95%) polls generally reflect the public's support for a commitment to maintaining and increasing funding for education. Despite this firmly held belief, the underlying lack of trust in the ability of public entities to conduct business in an efficient manner has allowed those who choose to put political expediency above principle to distract and diffuse the public's attention by simply pointing, and saying the magic word: wastefraudandabuse.

Common sense dictates that if Texas is to be competitive on a global level in the future, then Texas public school children must be educated in world-class schools today. Not just some, but all. Texas has simply failed to live up to that standard. It certainly is possible, but the Texas Legislature and its leaders over the years have continually postponed "the fixing" of our school finance system, always with the stated intention of doing something next time. Unfortunately, to date, "next time" has never become "this time."

Perhaps this assessment is unfair. Perhaps, it is beyond the ability of any legislative body to have the vision and the discipline to stick to the vision that is required to create and maintain a fair, efficient school funding system. If so, our only remaining salvation lies in the hands of the Texas citizenry and efforts like those of this Commission. Hopefully, passionate Texans, individuals like you, and organizations like the Equity Center can rise to the challenges we face and create the solutions that will bring a brighter tomorrow to our public school children. **EC**

Beyond the Capitol Dome

The Chronicles of an Underfunded District

The local district impact of school funding decisions made at the state level is usually lost in the magnitude of a system that serves five million children with myriad needs. Statewide decisions are sometimes made like bombs dropping from 40,000 feet. The damage done to the communities below goes unrealized. Let's imagine for a moment what this local impact looks like, *without* ignoring the collateral damage...

The Scene: Campaign event at the town square. Kids running around, the smell of barbecue. The locally-elected state representative shaking hands and kissing babies. He gets up to the podium, and after brief remarks about the great townspeople and Miss Jenny's amazing peach cobbler, he begins talking about the difficult decisions the legislature made during the 82nd Legislative Session...

State Rep. Doe: ...And I'm proud to say that not only did we cut state spending, but we did it without raising taxes!

Crowd: <Light Applause>

State Rep. Doe: You elected me to go to Austin and tell our state leaders that the great people of this town were ready for a fiscally conservative budget. We were willing to do the hard work of cutting the pork and eliminating wasteful government spending.

Crowd: <Medium Applause>

State Rep. Doe: Because you deserve better, friends. You deserve a government that is responsible, that looks out for you, and that fights for your interests!

Crowd: <Heavy Applause, even a whistle at the back>

State Rep. Doe: So that's why we cut spending for public education by \$4 billion.

Crowd: <GASP!>

State Rep. Doe: Well, I mean, education is my #1 priority, as I know it is to this community, but \$4 billion was really our only option, the best option. We really had no choice...

Little Lady from the Methodist Church up on the Front Row: But Mr. Doe, I was reading the other day that y'all had this state savings account with over \$9 billion piled up. Did y'all spend all that first and that's why you had to cut schools?

State Rep. Doe: Eh, er, actually ma'am, we thought it was best to keep some of that money for the future, for an even rainier day.

Local Teacher: Well, I can tell you Mr. Doe that it is raining now! Especially for a district like ours that was already one of the lowest-funded in the state before y'all even got to Austin! I know there are wealthier districts down the road, but why did you have to cut our schools?

State Rep. Doe: Well, uh, actually we decided that it would only be fair for all districts to "share the pain." Cutting our schools will only make them more efficient!

Crowd: <So quiet you can hear a pin drop>

To Be Continued...

Disclaimer: Obviously this little tale is far from realistic. We all know that politicians would never candidly admit how much they cut from public education. As soon as they hit their home turf, education returns to being their #1 priority, and they will vow to fight for their schools until the bitter end. Well, we'll see how our state's senators and representatives choose to answer to their voters this summer and next year as they gear up for the 2012 election cycle. The question is, will the voters let them off the hook, or will they demand answers about why their school children had to share in so much pain? **EC**



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Invoice to the State

Equity Center member Micheal French, Superintendent at Quinlan ISD, is the contributor for this edition of *From the Field: EC Members Speak*. We're spotlighting his Invoice to the State and the strong message it sends.

Here is Micheal's message to the state: The invoice below is reflective of monies owed to low Target Revenue districts across the state. Reimbursement is requested for lost revenue in comparison to high target revenue districts per WADA since FY06. Equity and adequate funding should be for all children all of the time, not for some of the children all of the time. Please remit payment NOW! **EC**

INVOICE						
Low Target Revenue ISD		INVOICE # 1 DATE: JUNE 28, 2011				
100 Limited Opportunity Lane Anywhere, TX 75474						
TO: <i>The State of Texas</i> Austin, TX 78701						
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>PAYMENT TERMS</th> <th>DUE DATE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Due on receipt</td> <td>PAST DUE</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		PAYMENT TERMS	DUE DATE	Due on receipt	PAST DUE	
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Due on receipt	PAST DUE					
QTY	DESCRIPTION	UNIT PRICE	LINE TOTAL			
15,600 WADA from 2006-2011	Reimbursement requested for lost revenue in comparison to high target revenue districts per WADA since FY06. Example given: High TR district \$7,544 - Low TR district \$4,880 = \$2,664 \$2,664 X 3,120 WADA = \$8,311,680 \$8,311,680 X 5 years = \$41,558,400 PLEASE REMIT PAYMENT IMMEDIATELY!	\$2,664	\$41,588,400			
		SUBTOTAL				
		SALES TAX				
		TOTAL	\$41,588,400			
THANK YOU FOR YOUR BUSINESS!						



Do you have a successful local campaign, op-ed piece, TRE materials or any story from your district that may benefit other EC members or the fight for equity? If so, please call Lauren Cook at 512/478-7313 or e-mail cook@equitycenter.org. We will post it in the Member Forum on our website and we may highlight it in our quarterly *InDepth*.



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Lawmakers must equalize public school funding

Make sure the system accounts for past transgressions.

By Al Kauffman / Special to the Express-News

Published 12:30 a.m., Friday, June 3, 2011

After unsuccessful efforts to ram through a school finance bill with less than a day of discussion, the Texas Legislature this week will hopefully take a more careful look at the twin dragons of our school finance system. There is not enough money to provide an adequate education to all our children, and our children do not have equal access to the clearly inadequate funding available.

I join those who seek more funds for the finance system from the rainy day fund, closing tax loopholes or even raising taxes. But it is crucial to the future of our state that whatever funds are available are made equally accessible to all students.

To ensure that every Texas student has an equal chance to succeed in school, Texas school districts must have equal funds to compete for and keep good teachers, attract good housing and industry, meet and adapt to the special needs of their students, overcome the deficiencies of our past school finance systems and benefit from the equalized funding system that our Texas Constitution requires.

To hire and keep the best teachers, schools must offer better salaries, benefits, buildings and support services for students. This competition is especially hot in urban areas with many districts, but affects the entire state teacher market. Having a high-quality teacher for complete school years for many years in a row is universally recognized as a necessity for quality education. Well-funded schools can offer that; low-funded schools cannot.

Low-wealth Texas districts have for decades had higher tax rates and lower expenditures on schools. Housing developers and businesses will naturally locate where school taxes are comparatively lower and school offerings better. This has caused a cycle of poverty in Texas school districts that cannot be changed without equal funding over decades.

Though there are low-income students and students with special educational needs all over Texas, there is a concentration of these “higher-cost” students in low-wealth districts in Texas. If Texas is ever to reduce its insidious educational gaps among ethnic and income groups, it must send as much of its resources as possible to the districts that need it most. When Texas spends more on its



students and districts with greater needs, students and districts have performed better and reduced the gaps.

The accelerating changes in technology and educational levels necessary for Texas' future competitiveness will be best met by focusing our resources efficiently where they are most needed.

All of these inequalities have been exacerbated in Texas by the decades of low funding and the even lower funding in districts with the greatest needs. As low-wealth districts built their buildings, hired their teachers and administrators, developed their curriculum and bought their equipment, they had to do it all with clearly inadequate resources, and the results are obvious. Look at the details from teachers in school finance at [idra.org](#) and [equitycenter.org](#).

Real equality among Texas school districts has a legal advantage, too. It is guaranteed by the Texas Constitution's efficiency clause, and the [Texas Supreme Court](#) has recognized that.

So if we will all suffer from lack of funding, let's make sure that the new system accounts for the transgressions in our past to achieve the most equality we can with the limited funds we have.

Al Kauffman is an associate law professor at St. Mary's law school and was a MALDEF attorney for low-wealth districts in the Edgewood case from 1984 to 2002.

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Fair Funding Now! Resolution

Whereas, the Texas Legislature continues to decrease its funding of public education and abdicate its constitutional responsibility to provide an appropriate educational system for the children of our state; and

Whereas, the state greatly reduced the levels of state support for public schools by eliminating over \$6.4 billion in funding for the 2012-13 biennium, with possibilities of further cuts in 2104-15; and

Whereas, the state reduced funding equity to levels similar to those found in the 2005 school year; and

Whereas, the recently-adopted state policy violates the equal return for equal tax effort standards established by the Texas state supreme court that dates back to the historic *Edgewood I* court ruling; and

Whereas, the new legislation provides for continued excellent education for some students, while watering down the quality of schooling for the overwhelming majority of Texas students by cutting school funding; and

Whereas, the state blocked local school districts' access to equalized enrichment for all students by imposing extra hurdles for school districts to access all their local enrichment options; and

Whereas, the state continued to underfund programs serving students who are low income, English learners, and gifted and talented, shifting the burden to local schools to cover the difference in real costs; and

Whereas, the state failed to equalize facilities funding, leaving it exclusively to local school communities to pay for updating and maintaining existing facilities as well as funding for new facilities needed to cover growing student enrollments; and

Whereas, the recent state funding cuts increased the potential local tax burden by giving schools the option to cut back local staff and programs or to increase local taxes to try to minimize the damage created by state cuts in funding;

Therefore be it resolved, that we, the (school board of _____ ISD; the County Commissioners Court of ____ County; the City Council of the City of _____; LULAC Council _____; NAACP _____ Unit; MASBA of Texas) [repudiate, condemn, censure, denounce, reject, oppose] the actions of the Texas State Legislature and call on our state elected officials to correct their short-sighted policies in a special called session or the subsequent legislative session, and we call on citizens to demand equitable funding for excellent public schools for all Texas children.

Resolución Financiamiento Justo !Ya!

Considerando que la Legislatura de Texas sigue disminuyendo la financiación de la educación pública y abdica de su responsabilidad constitucional de proveer un sistema educativo apropiado para los niños de nuestro estado, y

Considerando que el Estado ha reducido considerablemente los niveles de apoyo estatal para las escuelas públicas mediante la eliminación de más de \$ 6.4 mil millones en fondos para el bienio 2012-13 con la posibilidad de nuevos recortes en 2104-15, y

Considerando que el estado redujo la equidad de financiamiento a niveles similares a los encontrados en el año escolar 2005, y

Considerando que la política estatal recientemente aprobada viola el retorno igual a igual esfuerzo fiscal bajo las normas establecidas por la corte suprema del estado de Texas que se remonta a la primera histórica sentencia judicial de Edgewood y

Considerando que la nueva legislación establece que siga una educación excelente para algunos estudiantes mientras que pone en riesgo la calidad de la educación para la inmensa mayoría de los estudiantes de Texas mediante la reducción de fondos para las escuelas, y

Considerando que el estado ha bloqueado el acceso para los distritos escolares locales el enriquecimiento equitativo a todos los alumnos con la imposición de obstáculos para acceder a todas sus opciones de enriquecimiento local, y

Considerando que el Estado continuo disminuyendo los fondos a los programas que sirven a los estudiantes que son de bajos ingresos, aprendices de Inglés, y dotados y talentosos trasladando la carga a las escuelas locales para cubrir la diferencia en los costos reales, y

Considerando que el Estado no igualo los fondos para edificios dejando exclusivamente a las comunidades locales para pagar por la actualización y mantenimiento de las edificios existentes, así como la financiación de las nuevas construcciones necesarias para cubrir cada vez mayor número de estudiantes matriculados, y

Considerando que los recortes estatales recientes incremento la posible la carga de impuestos locales forzando a las escuelas la opción de reducir el personal local y los programas o aumentar los impuestos locales para tratar de minimizar los daños causados por los recortes del Estado en la financiación;

Por lo tanto se resuelve, que el (consejo escolar del Distrito Escolar Independiente de _____, la Corte de Comisionados del Condado de ____ del Condado, el Ayuntamiento de la Ciudad de _____; LULAC Consejo _____; NAACP Unidad _____; MASBA de Texas) decide [repudiar, condenar, censurar, denunciar, rechazar, oponerse a] las acciones de la Legislatura del Estado de Texas y hace un llamado a los funcionarios electos de nuestro estado para corregir su miopía política, en una sesión especial convocada o a la sesión legislativa posterior, y hacemos un llamamiento a los ciudadanos a la demanda de financiamiento equitativo para excelentes escuelas públicas para todos los niños de Texas.