



Statewide, charter school graduation rates are much lower than the traditional public schools'

Study notes low performance of Texas charters, questions expansion

A new study from the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) bolsters the results of other studies we've seen recently on the low performance of charter schools in Texas. IDRA, a nonprofit that publishes research and evaluations on public education, discovered that Texas charter students overall have lower graduation rates and accountability ratings than their peers in traditional public schools. IDRA then poses the question of whether Texans should be supporting the expansion of a charter system that fails to meet the needs of students.

Some of the key findings of the study include:

- The Class of 2016 saw graduation rates of 62 % in charter schools compared to 90 % in traditional public schools.
- While some charter schools serve some of the students in highest need, analysis of TEA data for 2016-17 statewide reveals that there is very little difference in the %age of students served who are considered at risk of dropping out: 50 % in traditional schools compared to 52 % in charter schools.
- More than one out of every five charter campuses (22.9 %) failed to achieve "meet standard" or the lower "alternative standard," compared to about one of every 25 traditional public schools.
- State funding for charter schools increased at a much faster rate than for public schools in the last decade, with an 8 % increase for traditional schools

compared to a 236 % increase for charters.

"Texas needs to let go of the claim that charter schools can 'rescue' students from their so-called failing neighborhood public schools," said Dr. Maria Robledo Montecel, IDRA president. "As our communities predicted, the data shows otherwise. Our families and communities don't need 'rescuing' by lottery. They demand strong neighborhood public schools."

CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) endangered by congressional neglect

Texas AFT has supported the federal Children's Health Insurance Program for children in low-income working families ever since CHIP was first enacted 20 years ago.

CHIP funding is both a health and educational imperative; however, current leaders of the U.S. Congress have not made renewed funding for CHIP a priority, put in the program in serious jeopardy as funds run out and Congress continues to do nothing. For an update on what's happening—or not happening—with CHIP, we share with you below a December 11 story from Public News Service:

Austin, Texas—Almost 9 million families - 400,000 in Texas alone - are anxiously waiting to hear if their children will have health insurance in 2018 and beyond.

Congress has passed a two-week, stop-gap budget to avoid a government shutdown, but again failed to fund the Children's Health Insurance Program, also known as CHIP. This leaves Texas and many other states with only enough money to pay for coverage for a few more months.

Anne Dunkelberg, associate director at the Center for Public Policy Priorities, said the program's future depends on a Congress that can't seem to agree on much of anything.

"We know that there is a plan for another vote in Congress on December 22--so right before Christmas--for a so-called continuing resolution that will cover a bunch of things, including CHIP," Dunkelberg said. "Now, whether that's going to be a five-year fix or a two-year fix, or another one-month, we don't know yet."

CHIP was created with bipartisan support in 1997,



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and Congress has renewed its funding several times since then; however, lawmakers let pass an October 1 deadline to re-fund the program, and other than authorizing short-term extensions for the first few states that run out of money, there are currently no funding proposals.

Dunkelberg said the uncertainty has parents, program administrators and health care providers on edge:

"You have to give parents some warning if you're going to shut the program down," she said. "So, if we had thought that we were not able to cover kids in February, we would have had to mail the parents letters before Christmas warning them about that."

She added there is very little Texas officials can, or will, do if Congress fails to act.

"They have been talking about what they could do to fill short gaps so that you wouldn't have the crazy situation of shutting down the program for a month and then, having to go to all the expense to start it up again," Dunkelberg said. "But, if Congress were to just decide not to fund CHIP, we do not have support at this point from our leadership to replace it."

Dunkelberg said CHIP mostly serves working families who make too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford marketplace coverage through the Affordable Care Act.

We need a clean Dream Act and justice for immigrant families

Call Congress and demand a clean Dream Act before the end of the year: **888-369-9935**.

People nationwide are calling Congress to ask for a clean Dream Act without border militarization. The **#BorderWeekofAction** is an effort to uplift the reality of border communities and push back against more Border Patrol agents and invasive technology, like lights, cameras, and drones that intrude on the lives of border residents.

The immigrant community and its advocates are in a fierce fight to pass the Dream Act, which would provide a long-term solution for people with DACA eligibility. Currently, more than 11,000 immigrant youth have lost their DACA status and are at risk of deportation. Without



We are at a critical moment when we must reclaim the promise of public education—not as it is today or as it was in the past, but as it can be—to fulfill our collective obligation to help all children succeed.

congressional action, every day 1600 immigrant youth will lose their DACA protection and work authorization beginning March 6, 2018. Rallies, protests, petitions and calls for Congress to pass the Dream Act are now at an all time high because DACA could be tied to the upcoming budget bill—legislation that must be passed by the end of the year in order to keep government services funded.



Texas AFL-CIO scholarship program accepting applications

Reminder—if you know of a high school senior in an affiliated union family, this year's Texas AFL-CIO Scholarship Program is under way, with a deadline of January 31, 2018.

The one-time grants have been raised from \$1,000 to \$1,500. The program helps children of union members pay for college, but it goes beyond that. Through an interview and testing process, all applicants get more exposure to how unions work and to labor history. The program is open to high school seniors whose parent or legal guardian is a member of a union that is affiliated both with a Central Labor Council (or Area Labor Federation) and with the Texas AFL-CIO. (In some cases, students themselves are affiliated union members and, of course, that makes them eligible.)

