



Focus: IDRA's 45th Anniversary

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IDRA at 45 Years: Courageous Connections for Advocacy

Editor's Note: Anniversaries make us pause and pull out memories. We think back about the early days when people joined together for a special purpose. For IDRA, that purpose has not changed. As long as excellence in schools is available to only a few students, IDRA has kept its purpose – its mission – to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. For this issue of the IDRA Newsletter, two of our own, whose passion has helped fuel our work over the years, took some time out to reflect on IDRA's trailblazing work along six paths: the path to fair funding, the path to good educational practices, the path of valuing students, the path of valuing educators, the path of valuing families, and the path of systems change. Their three articles in this newsletter are accompanied by photos across the decades and a peek at an online timeline of IDRA's policy work. We are grateful for all who have been a part of this journey since 1973 when a small group of people set out to change the world.

Beginning with the End in Mind to Establish Equitable, Excellent Education

by María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

In 1973, the Edgewood school district was in dire economic circumstances. So were many of her sister Texas school districts: student and family rich, but funding poor. A group of parents wanted to know why their district couldn't do more to fix their old, partially condemned school building, buy enough books or hire better teachers when nearby school districts could. A federal court had agreed in 1971 and found the Texas system unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment.

But in March 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that, while the Texas system of funding schools was indeed "chaotic and unjust," there was no federal requirement to assure that it be just and equitable (*San Antonio ISD v. Rodriguez*). In essence, until education becomes a federal responsibility through a constitutional amendment,

Texas and the other 49 states hold responsibility for education of their children.

The Path to Fair Funding

The next month, Dr. José Angel Cárdenas left the Edgewood superintendency to create a San Antonio-based organization that would inform the citizens and leaders of Texas about the gross inequities of school finance. The new non-profit, Texans for Educational Excellence, would later become IDRA as staff participated in each reform study group, attended each session of the Texas legislature and provided research data and testimony during litigation in the state courts.

At the beginning, the expectation was that, once there was public knowledge about the alarming
(cont. on Page 2)

“As we complete 45 years, IDRA continues to stand against educational injustice, inequality and lack of excellence for all. Schools can matter and succeed with a new vision created by people who believe that all children are valuable, that all people can contribute, and that public education can indeed change things, including futures.”

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

(Beginning with the End in Mind to Establish Equitable, Excellent Education, continued from Page 1)

economic circumstance of hundreds of public school districts and thousands of children, the legislature would do the right thing and close the funding gaps. Forty-five years later, gaps between the rich and poor are a bit better, but on the whole, inequities continue, augmented now by the state's divestment reduced commitment and the funneling of money to private charter schools funded by public monies.

Today, Texas ranks 41st nationally and earned a grade of D+ in the school finance portion of the 2018 Quality Counts report released by Education Week (2018). For equity in spending across districts in the state, Texas earned a grade of F (43rd nationally), and for overall school finance, Texas earned a D+.

There is currently a gap of \$1,100 per student between the richest and poorest 5 percent of districts in Texas. That resource advantage translates to over \$1.1 million for a school district serving 1,000 students. Also, Dr. Marialena Rivera, the IDRA 2016 José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow, reported last year that Texas local school districts are responsible for funding over 90 percent of facilities with little or no state assistance.

One harsh irony is that, even as people across the country struggle to create a public will for full, adequate and equitable funding and to elect legislators who will enact the laws and rules that will achieve it, a powerful and sinister movement to drain limited public funds into private, unaccountable charter schools worsens the problem.

The yet to be attained equity in school funding remains a fundamental goal of our work at IDRA.

The Path to Good Educational Practices

Undereducation and inequities are clearly deeper than insufficient funding. One "expert" on school

 Listen to our podcast episode: "A Valuing Professional Development Model" (15 min) <https://budurl.me/2-IDRApod143>

 Listen to our podcast episode: "Busting Myths About Children of Poverty" (24 min) <https://budurl.me/IDRAr8RTxIg>

finance proclaimed: "It's good to have some children in schools with less money than others because it forces the state to pump in new money each year. The children in poor districts are like rabbits in a dog race. They serve an important purpose of giving the dogs something to chase" (Cárdenas, 2005).

Education in the 1970s was clearly disconnected and hugely incompatible with students and families. IDRA called attention to its Theory of Incompatibilities, asserting that the failure of students of color and poor children "can be attributed to a lack of compatibility of the characteristics of minority children and the characteristics of a typical instructional program" (Cárdenas & Cárdenas, 1977). We identified over 40 such incompatibilities in the areas of poverty, culture, language, mobility and societal perceptions.

Rather than blaming students and families and expecting *them* to adapt, a fundamental belief in the genesis of IDRA was that adults, in schools and in public decision-making positions, are responsible for transforming school practices and policies so that all students have the opportunity to learn. Poor children and families do not cause schools to be poor; rather, poor schools are caused by poor educational practices and poor educational policies.

Even as IDRA continued to focus on fair funding, we quickly moved to establish multiple approaches increasing school compatibility with the economic needs, culture, language, mobility, and societal perceptions of children and families. And of course equitable resources must be invested in appropriate and effective education.

Having the resources to hire more teachers and counselors still does not guarantee that children will be seen and taught as potential college students and successful graduates. Rather, innovation in educational practices has been a must.

In 1975, IDRA's Center for the Management of Innovation in Multicultural Education (MIME) assisted schools to serve English learners, addressing issues of student identification and proper placement, and curriculum and instruction. At the time it was a new way of thinking. First and foremost was the very early recognition that education is an "innovation ecosystem that organizations must create if they want to be able to stay relevant and compete in this rapidly changing world we are seeing" (Morgan, 2015).

IDRA developed a school-based change approach on three planes – *comprehensive*, *focused* and *general assistance* – that have stood the test of time and remain in place today.

- The management of innovation required an approach for training and technical assistance (*comprehensive*) that was labor intensive and designed to facilitate a multi-year process for school districts desiring broad transformation.
- Another assistance approach (*focused*) involved a campus-level, professional or curriculum development process that was site-based and sustained over several school years.
- The third approach (*general assistance*), while

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Valuing Youth and Assuring that All Youth Count

by María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

All children are valuable; none is expendable. This simple and profound fact guides the work of IDRA.

Based on empirical research, IDRA designed, developed and expanded the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program nationally and beyond. The program personifies our view and expectations of students. *Valued* became our synonym for *assets*. A student who the school considers “in danger of dropping out” or “at risk,” we see as a potential tutor of little ones.

To date, more than 718,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by this program that has become an internationally-recognized cross-age program with a unique twist. The program works by identifying middle and high school students who are thought be in “at risk” situations and enlisting them as tutors of younger students. Thousands of students have stayed in school and succeeded. The program has maintained a success rate of over 98 percent.

IDRA also examined the reasons for school dropouts. We threw a strong light on *attrition* (the numbers of students from the freshman class, for example, who were no longer in school as seniors) by developing a strong and, then, unique methodology. And we created the phrase *school holding power* to shift the spotlight from the student (and perceived student deficits) to systemic patterns of exclusion by schools.

We guided schools to focus on student and family assets, beginning with home language and culture, the inherent familial interest in education and the student’s potential to learn.

The shift was to an asset-view, removing the biased lenses about students and families that perpetuated misperceptions disparaging families of color, poor, English learners, recent immigrant or from “those neighborhoods.”

The Path of Valuing Students

Through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program,

we demonstrated: “When students are placed in responsible roles and are supported in their efforts, powerful changes occur. Valued youth tutors stay in school, improve their literacy and thinking skills, develop self-esteem, feel they belong in school, and attend class more regularly. And schools shift to a practice of valuing youth considered at risk.” (Robledo Montecel, 2009)

Through a major study about Hispanic students in a large urban area, we discovered that if at least one adult in the school has the big picture of the student in mind and acts as mentor and counselor, that student will complete high school (Robledo Montecel, Cortez & Penny-Velasquez, 1989).

In 1986, IDRA was commissioned to conduct the first statewide study of dropouts in Texas. We found that in that year, 86,000 students had dropped out, costing \$17 billion in foregone income, lost tax revenues and increased job training, unemployment, welfare and criminal justice costs (Cárdenas, Robledo & Supik, 1986).

By 2017, time-series data indicated that Texas public schools had lost a cumulative total of more than 3.7 million students before high school graduation, including more than 2 million Hispanic students – 55.1 percent of those lost. Ethnic gaps continue unabated; in 2017, Texas schools were still twice as likely to lose Hispanic students before they graduated compared to White students. (Johnson, 2017)

In order to ensure that students stay in school and succeed, it is critical that we shift the deficit ways in which many educators see students and that we enhance the tools used to educate them.

For example, we saw and dealt with the language and culture of the child as a positive gift. Yet most schools, even as they attempted to develop bilingual approaches, were using deficit practices and terms, like “first language interference,” “cultural limitations,” and “limited English.” Our practice instead was rooted in the very real assets of children and families, specifically those who were
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We have seen the excitement and pride of educators, parents, communities and students when they work together and are successful. Our task is to transform systems so schools embrace the characteristics of all students, celebrating the strengths and contributions that they bring.

IDRA Leadership Legacy



“If students are faltering, failing, or leaving school, then their schools – not the students – need to change in fundamental ways. Every child has the right to a quality education.”

Dr. José Angel Cárdenas †

Founder 1973
Executive Director 1973-1992
Director Emeritus 1992-until his passing in 2011

Learn more: <http://b.link/jac>



“Let us make good on the promises we have made to children. It is not the time to look away or look on and do nothing. Now is not the time for despair or timidity. Now is the time for hope and action.”

Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel

Staff Researcher and Project Director 1986-1992
President & CEO 1992-2019
Director Emeritus 2019-

Learn more: <http://b.link/mrm18>

(Valuing Youth and Assuring that All Youth Count, continued from Page 3)

viewed in negative ways by schools and other institutions.

The Path of Valuing Educators

We also extended our valuing philosophy to respect the knowledge and skills of the teachers, principals and others we work with to model continually how educators can identify assets and build on the strengths of the students and parents in their schools.

Professional development for teachers and administrators has been a key element in our work with schools. Early on, we studied the nature of the adult learner. In contrast to the expert trainer who merely lectures and brings an ideal one-size-fits-all program, we did it differently. Our workshops and presentations are tailored to the situation and participatory, drawing on the experiences of the participants and encouraging critical dialogue.

Our assistance has taken many forms, including technical assistance, teacher professional development in all content areas, principal coaching, school strategic planning, curriculum development, classroom demonstrations, innovative mentorship for new teachers, professional learning communities, and collaborations with universities across the country to improve teacher preparation. From *Amanecer* (“the beginning of a new day”) to *Semillitas de Aprendizaje* (a new bilingual set of early childhood materials), we filled



Listen to our podcast episode: “Student Voices on Being Valued” (12 min)
<https://budurl.me/2-IDRApod54>



Watch our video about the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: Dropout Prevention that Works (12 min)
<https://budurl.me/2-IDRAvypVid12>

a gap of bilingual early childhood materials and teaching strategies.

IDRA's transition to teaching programs prepared over 800 teachers through college or university coursework and our professional development. They gained skills and insight to serve in high-need schools in bilingual education and STEM areas, with ESL or special education supplemental certification. Partner colleges refined their accelerated teacher preparation programs to better serve our rapidly changing student population.

The Path of Valuing Families

Because of the energy of families who have supported students to protest the inequities and biases in schools, we celebrate how critical families are in creating neighborhood public schools that provide the excellent education they desire. Many of us came from neighborhoods where we

heard, oft repeated, “*Educate para que no sufras lo que sufri yo*” [Get an education so that you don't suffer what I've gone through]. None of us sees universal perfection in our families and neighborhoods, but we do understand their visions and dreams. Those hopes and plans are the fuel for the engagement and leadership we embrace and catalyze.

From a 1970s training institute for parents who sought excellent language programs for their English-learning children, we saw the inherent power in our communities. Critical dialogue and projects to transform schools became laboratories for leadership. Throughout the years, we have convened people across race and gender, across sector, across geography and across educational role to build coalitions for ensuring educational opportunity. Community-based organizations with authentic family engagement and respect for the culture, language and traditions of the families became the best soil for planting the seeds of family leadership in education.

Even with the ever-present call for parent involvement, we assessed the traditional paths of parent involvement and found them wanting. Most programs were not leading to family influence on school policies and practices: not those of traditional parent organizations that stressed volunteerism and fundraising, and not the parenting and self-development classes.

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InterAction with the Ecosystem – The IDRA Quality Schools Action Framework

by María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., and Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

Five years before IDRA's founding, inequities in school finance and other areas had been the focus of hearings in San Antonio in December of 1968. Testimony was presented at Our Lady of the Lake University before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights about the status of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Two of the five days were dedicated to education. Dr. José A. Cárdenas, who would later found IDRA, and Mr. Aurelio Montemayor, who joined IDRA in 1975, were among the many who testified. The testimony gave a broad consciousness of the many challenges our students faced in schools and other institutions.

The commission found that school systems had not recognized the rich culture and traditions of students and had not adopted policies, programs and practices that would enable students to participate fully in the benefits of the educational process.

And while much has changed over the years, still today, compared to their more affluent peers, poor and minority students are far more likely to be assigned to classrooms with less qualified teachers and fewer opportunities to prepare for and take advanced and dual credit courses. And educational segregation is on the rise.

At the same time, we have seen that, by producing and leveraging a high quality education for all students, we can leverage opportunity, if we know where and how to invest. The good news is that we do know where and how to invest in schools. When it comes to transforming education, we don't need to take wild guesses; many educators are already showing what works.

The Path of Systems Change

Based on this empirical evidence and our 45 years of experience in the field, IDRA developed a change model that we call the Quality Schools Action Framework, that helps school, community, family and business leaders to assure that critical features are in place (Robledo Montecel & Goodman, 2010). The framework draws

from existing theories that suggest that, because schools operate as complex, dynamic ecosystems, lasting systems change depends on sustained action within and outside of those systems.

Research on best practices of high performing schools, for example, has examined the links among a constellation of indicators (e.g., teaching quality and effective school governance; parent engagement and student success). Less examined, however, are the contextual and moderating factors that may impede or accelerate school system change. The Quality Schools Action Framework aims to bridge this gap.

The framework offers a way to assess school conditions and outcomes, identifying leverage points for improvement and informing action. In essence, the framework poses five key questions:

- What do we need?
- How do we make change happen?
- Which fundamentals must be secured?
- Where do we focus systems change? and
- What outcomes will result?

The Quality Schools Action Framework draws on current research and knowledge of the field. It also is intuitive and reflects common sense. For example, research and experience recognize that students are far more likely to succeed when they have the chance to work with highly qualified, committed teachers, using effective, accessible curricula; when their parents and communities are engaged in their education; and when students, themselves, are engaged in their learning. We also know that effective schools depend on good governance to guide their success and on fair funding to effectively serve all of their students each school day.

The framework is helpful in focusing actionable knowledge on transforming educational systems. Like ecosystems in the natural world and many successful business ecosystems, educational ecosystems have inputs, throughputs and outputs (Morgan, 2015). Layers and levels are integrated to form a complete ecosystem.

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Thousands of classroom teachers, principals, other educators, families, policymakers, community leaders, researchers and, of course, students themselves, have been part of the IDRA story. As a result, millions of student lives have been powerfully affected by dramatically raising educational opportunities for all children.

(InterAction with the Ecosystem – The IDRA Quality Schools Action Framework, continued from Page 5)

With this framework, we make the case for metrics that measure not only outputs, but also inputs and throughputs. Simply focusing on the educational outputs of student scores, for example, without giving focused attention to the inputs, such as fair funding and efficacious governance, and the throughputs of teaching quality and curriculum rigor, will not lead to transformation or the successful education of all children. Neither will excusing school failure based on characteristics of the students in the school.

If your flower garden stops blooming, you check the soil to see if it needs more or less water. Similarly for our classrooms, measuring outputs alone denies school leaders and communities the opportunity to know the reasons behind their results and to focus efforts on substantial improvement.

As in networked knowledge systems utilized in business, “Organizational knowledge resides in a complex network of individuals, systems and procedures, both inside and outside the organization.” (Homa & Evans, 2010)

States must not only issue grades for school districts and campuses, as Texas is scheduled to do over the next couple of years, but must link those grades to fair funding and availability of resources, student engagement, and curriculum offerings and rigor, among other factors.

Adaptable ecosystems also require core technologies that provide substance knowledge about the system. In this regard, IDRA's experiences with technology have included evaluating the pedagogical and administrative value of large,

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- ▶ “Action for School Change” <https://budurl.me/z-IDRApod42>
- ▶ “Fundamentals for School Change” <https://budurl.me/IDRApod52>
- ▶ “School Change Strategies” <https://budurl.me/z-IDRApod53>

comprehensive programs, such as PLATO. Critical thinking requires critical dialogue that does not replace the teacher with a piece of software. Yet our educators must adapt and extend their practice to include the media and instruments accessible to all children and to use technology to provide knowledge about educational inputs, throughputs and outputs in schools, districts and states.

IDRA's use of technology has paralleled our work with organizing underserved youth to assist families in connecting to technology. The IDRA OurSchool website was built to provide key data for Texas school districts and high schools, including outcomes on ACT/SAT tests, college-sending rates, teacher certification rates, and district-level attrition rates (www.idra.org/OurSchool). Designed around IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework, the bilingual site provides key questions to promote community conversations and a framework that local, cross-sector partners can use to plan joint action to improve schools.

We've brought together communities of educators through online forums, such as our Equity Connection, where participants learn new strategies and share feedback and advice with each other (www.idra.org/equity-connection).

IDRA's work also recognizes the complex network that is part of the education ecosystems in different contexts. Actionable knowledge has been a focus of IDRA-sponsored and -designed conferences and strategic convenings over the years.

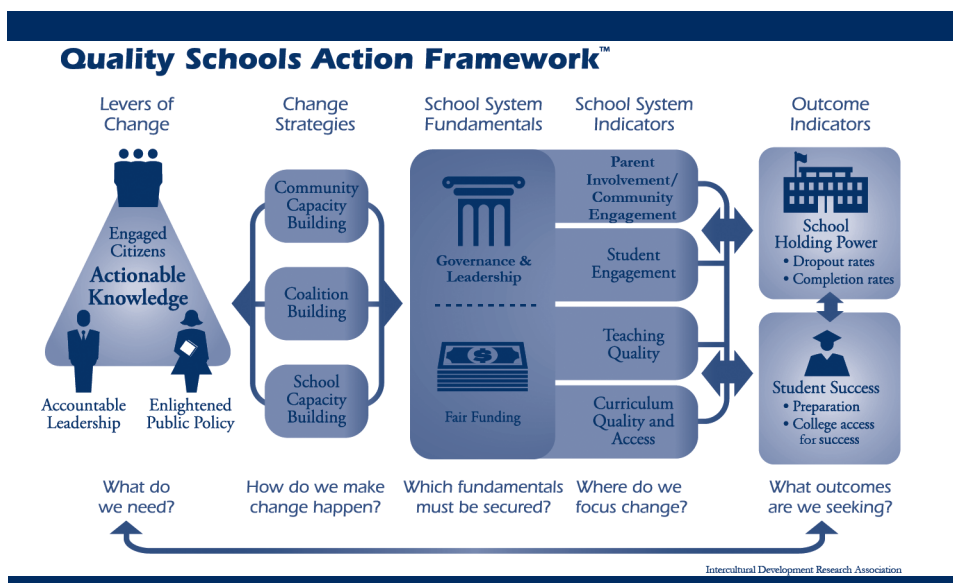
Our work has seen the interplay and inter-relationship of policy, research and practice. We have experienced each informing and affecting the others. All-too-often, public education policy and practice are enacted and implemented without the benefit of research; breakthrough practices are isolated to individual classrooms; and the power of intergenerational family leadership in school transformation is muted or marginalized.

IDRA adopts border-crossing strategies that bridge the divides from research to practice and school to community. Through this cross-cutting approach, we work to secure sustainable solutions for schools and districts across states and nationally. IDRA conducts research, keeps up with relevant, strategic findings in the field, and questions research that is flawed, primarily because of deficit roots, questions and approaches.

As IDRA celebrates its 45th year and San Antonio is celebrating its 300th, we also are commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1968 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights hearings at Our Lady of the Lake University. At the anniversary event on November 15-17, 2018, a major publication will synthesize what has happened and what remains to be done. IDRA staff is writing the chapter focused on education. Our IDRA history, experiences, findings and insights inform the education chapter of that publication.

Thousands of classroom teachers, principals, other educators, families, policymakers, community leaders, researchers and, of course, students themselves, have been part of the IDRA story. As a result, millions of student lives have been powerfully affected by dramatically raising educational opportunities for all children.

Four and a half decades ago, we thought that, in a few years, we would do what was needed to meet the challenges for our children to have access to



Will you do us a favor?



Fill out our reader survey now!

We need your feedback about our main communication tools. This survey has key questions about how you use the IDRA Newsletter, podcast, website and/or social media.

Your responses will be confidential, even if you provide your email address. **Please let us know how we're doing!**

As a token of our appreciation, you can be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

Go to survey: <http://b.link/IDRASurvey>

(InterAction with the Ecosystem – The IDRA Quality Schools Action Framework, continued from Page 6)

excellent public schools. Today, we celebrate the progress we are achieving by working together and by taking a stand when others would not. Following is our promise letter to children.

Dear Children,

We see you. We value you. We cherish you.

We promise to provide you an opportunity to learn in your own neighborhood with caring and qualified teachers. We promise you a curriculum that truly prepares you for college, in an environment that respects you and values you and your background. We promise to engage you – not only academically – but as an active part of the community and life of school. And we promise to support the commitment of

your parents to high quality education.

We promise to your families and communities... unwaveringly, we stand with you. Together, we will work fiercely to assure that youth, families and communities are heard – not as problems – but as partners in creating strong and vibrant schools. We promise to work with teachers and principals and superintendents and school boards to prepare all students so that we can all live in an America that keeps its promises to justice and opportunity. And we promise to tell the truth. We will share what we see honestly – to promote good and just public policy.*

We are still here because we haven't achieved those goals. We won't stop until we have.

Resources

- Homa, B.J., & Evans, S. (2010). *Super-Flexibility for Knowledge Enterprises A Toolkit for Dynamic Adaptation* (New York: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg).
- Morgan, J. (August 12, 2015). "The Innovation Ecosystem for the Future of Work," *Forbes*.
- Robledo Montecel, M., & Goodman, C.L. (Eds). (2010). *Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association).

* Closing letter reprinted from Robledo Montecel, M. (2017). *IDRA 2016 Annual Report – Keeping the Promise; Putting Children First* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association).

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(Valuing Youth and Assuring that All Youth Count, continued from Page 4)

Instead, we instituted an approach that supports family voice and influence, nurtured by actionable data, and granting full and equal partnership to families in relationship to the schools their children attend. The current embodiment of the approach, Education CAFE, grew from many years of effective school-family-community partnerships into a statewide network.

IDRA experiences and research over 45 years shows that the blueprint for quality education requires engaged students in learning, with a relevant and rigorous curriculum, a cadre of caring and qualified teachers and support staff, and an inclusive program of curricular and extra-curricular activities that provide students the opportunity to develop their talents, and strong partnerships

with families and communities.

We have seen the excitement and pride of educators, parents, communities and students when they work together and are successful. Our task is to transform systems so schools embrace the characteristics of all students, celebrating the strengths and contributions that they bring.

"I want to feel that I'm somebody. Somebody that my mother can be proud of," wrote Cory, a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor. "And I want the teacher and children to see that I can help them."

Effective schools are those where all students are valued and where all students count.

Resources

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consisting of one or a few days, was direct and on-site, giving information and also a taste for the highly-participatory and adult-learning-based workshops that became the standard for the most effective IDRA professional development events.

Along with disseminating information and presenting expert testimony in court and in legislative halls, IDRA's emulated approach deepened our attempts to transform institutions.

IDRA has promoted accountability and equity in public schools. IDRA has provided expert testimony in court cases that created contexts for change. IDRA worked with state legislatures to create policies that promote appropriate instruction in bilingual education programs and to advocate reforms to school finance systems. IDRA has conducted critical research on the status of education and promising practices.

For more than four decades, IDRA has operated an equity assistance center and various other research and technical assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. IDRA works with tens of thousands of educators each year in creating educational solutions through participatory training, coaching and technical assistance that promote sustained growth and development.

We will continue to find solutions to persistent problems, solutions that promise to set a new standard for all children – a standard of vision, hope, equity and excellence.

Resources

Cárdenas, J.A., & Cárdenas, B. (1977). *The Theory of Incompatibilities: A Conceptual Framework for Responding to the Educational Needs of Mexican American Children* (San Antonio, Texas, Intercultural Development Research Association).

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Morgan, J. (August 12, 2015). "The Innovation Ecosystem for the Future of Work," *Forbes*.

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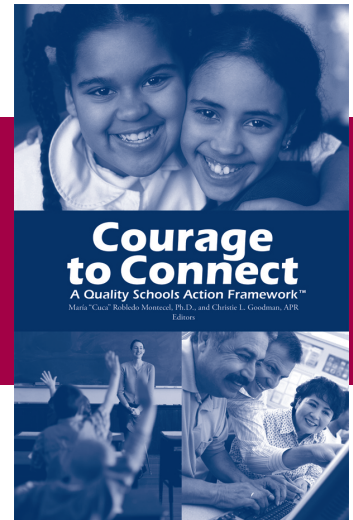
Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework

"The Quality Schools Action Framework helps people hone in on what's important and needed in their local school context. A number of our partner schools and coalition organizations have used the framework to assess baselines, plan and implement strategy, and monitor progress in educating all students to high quality."

– Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA president and co-editor of the new book

Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework™ provides a useful tool to:

- Conceive, design and manage sustainable change at the school or district level;
- Encourage thoughtful and coherent selection of transformative practices that are grounded in the reality of the school and its community;
- Focus on particular strategies and/or instructional approaches (e.g., bilingual education) without losing track of the contexts that matter (e.g., teaching quality, school/district leadership, funding);
- Inform evidence-based community collaboration and oversight in productive ways; and
- Inform meaningful comparisons across schools and districts.



Learn more and see how you can get your copy!
www.idra.org/change-model/courage-to-connect/

A History of IDRA Policy Work to Secure Excellent and Equitable Schooling for All Children

Sample policy work in the 1970s

- 1973** **Rodriguez vs. San Antonio ISD** Future IDRA leaders provided research and strategic technical assistance to lawyers and advocate groups. Following the decision, IDRA participated in each reform study group, attended each session of the Texas legislature and provided research data to promote fair funding.
- 1975** **Texas HB 1126 adopted** IDRA provided research and technical assistance to policymakers and advocated for more equity in funding. IDRA also launched a statewide information campaign on the issue.

Sample policy work in the 1980s

- 1981** **Texas SB 477 adopted** IDRA provided technical assistance to policymakers about state policy for EL education and testified at legislative hearings. IDRA also coordinated strategies among policymakers and EL advocacy groups.
- 1984** **Edgewood I filed** IDRA convened legal and research experts to identify the right time for state litigation. IDRA also conducted extensive research on the extent of funding inequity and reforms needed and provided expert testimony at state court trial.
- 1986** **IDRA commissioned to conduct the first Texas statewide dropout study.** IDRA conducted research on dropout counts and percentages (attrition rates), existing dropout prevention programs, and evaluation of effectiveness. IDRA's report included policy reform recommendations. IDRA worked with policymakers and advocates in drafting policy reforms needed to address issues and has continued to release updated attrition studies every year thereafter.

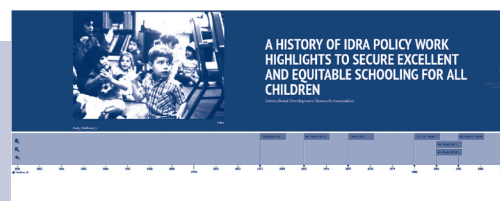
Sample policy work in the 1990s

- 1993** **Texas SB7 adopted** IDRA provided technical assistance to policymakers and advocates on the impact of funding reforms and provided advice and technical assistance related to proposed litigation.
- 1999** **Texas' 78th legislative session** IDRA provided research and expert testimony. And IDRA organized the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Public Education comprising community organizations and individuals who support the use of public money for neighborhood public schools and who oppose any effort to divert public tax funds to subsidize private education.

Sample policy work in the 2000s

- 2001** **Texas Latino Education Coalition established** IDRA convened a group of organizations and individuals to establish the Texas Latino Education Coalition. Representing thousands of Texans, founding member organizations included: IDRA, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Mexican American School Board Members Association, League of United Latin American Citizens, among many others. The coalition continues to work today.
- 2007** **No Child Left Behind Act renewed** IDRA presented testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor about dropout prevention and student engagement strategies.
- 2018** **Texas Senate Education Committee hearings on school finance** IDRA presented testimony on research and analysis to inform the legislature's policy work prior to the 2019 session.

See the full dynamic timeline online at <http://b.link/IDRAtimeline>



IDRA Across the Decades

See more images online: <http://anniversaries.events/idra45>

The 1970s was a decade of transformation, a time of profound cynicism, crises and a need for change... IDRA begins its fight for children's rights.



Dr. Albert Cortez, school finance project director, discusses the progress of the special legislative session at the IDRA board of directors meeting. Pictured with Mr. Cortez are (l-r) Jesse Rangel, board member; Craig Foster, PTP director; and Gonzalo Garza, board member. (*IDRA Newsletter*, August 1978)

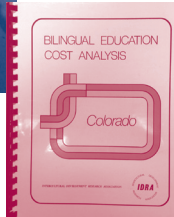


Dr. María del Refugio Robledo, director of IDRA's bilingual education cost analysis project.



Dr. Abelardo Villarreal (standing) of the Center for the Management of Innovation in Multicultural Education (MIME) explains initial planning procedures for establishing a five-year comprehensive education plan in a school district to a group of school officials. Pictured are (l-r) Anselmo

Trevino, principal, Arturo Benavides Elementary School, San Ignacio, Texas; Leobardo Martinez, principal, Zapata High School, Zapata, Texas; and Modesta Pena, assistant superintendent, San Diego ISD, San Diego, Texas.



Bilingual Education Cost Analysis published for Colorado, Texas and Utah, 1986.

The 1980s finds a "nation at risk" with global unrest, health hazards and a move from equity to excellence... IDRA leads the way with landmark studies and solutions.



Mrs. Laura Cárdenas is introduced to Secretary of Education Shirley Hufstедler at a reception held in her honor at IDRA in 1980. Standing with Mrs. Cárdenas are (l-r): James Lehmann, superintendent of Eagle Pass ISD and IDRA board member; Dr. Albar Peña, professor with the division of bicultural/bilingual studies, UTSA; and Mary Turk, supervisor with Northside ISD, San Antonio. (*IDRA Newsletter*, October 1980).



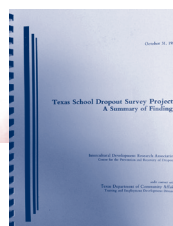
Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutoring.



Dr. Henry Williams, professor of education at the University of Houston – Clear Lake, addresses participants at the IDRA's Commemorative Summit Conference, "The Brown Decision in Retrospect, Introspect, Prospect." (*IDRA Newsletter*, July 1980).



Pausing during the busy conference at the Ford Foundation Urban Dropout Prevention Collaboratives in San Antonio are (l-r) Aurelio M. Montemayor, Dr. María del Refugio Robledo, Dr. Edward J. Meade, Jr., and IDRA Executive Director Dr. José A. Cárdenas. (*IDRA Newsletter*, June 1988).



Texas School Dropout Survey Project: A Summary of Findings published, 1986.

IDRA Across the Decades

The 1990s ushered in the electronic age, the 24-hour news cycle, schoolwide reform and accountability... IDRA influences national discourse on restructuring education.



Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel with Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors in Puerto Rico, 1997.



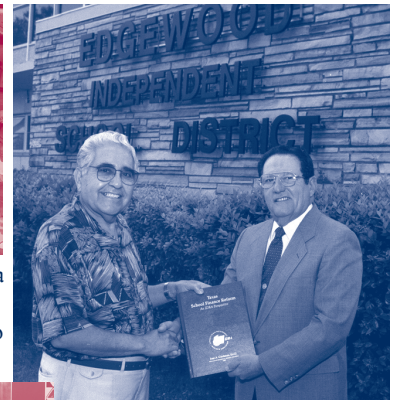
83 middle school students assembled for IDRA's MIJA AIM conference "Aspirations In Math" and heard keynote speaker, Mr. Sonny Melendez, from KTFM radio, June 1992



Students in a whole language program. *Starting Today... Steps to Success for Beginning Bilingual Educators*, 1994.



Teacher in IDRA's Alianza project, a model teacher preparation and leadership development program.



Dr. José A. Cárdenas (right) presents a copy of his new book, *Texas School Finance Reform: An IDRA Perspective*, to Demetrio Rodríguez (left), lead litigant in the *Rodríguez v San Antonio ISD* case, 1997.



Hispanic Families as Valued Partners: An Educator's Guide published, 1993.

The opening of the 21st Century has given us both detachment and connectivity. It is an age of fear and hope... IDRA chooses hope and demonstrates that the dream is possible.



Participants in IDRA Annual *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute, 2004.

Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework published, 2010.



Parents in South Texas read to their children from IDRA's *Semillitas de Aprendizaje* books, 2012.



Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel is interviewed in a documentary video by Emmy-award winning documentarian, Robert Currie, that presents a historical perspective of Head Start and Lady Bird Johnson's involvement in both Head Start and the war on poverty, 2012.



IDRA and a coalition of other organizations, educators and families demonstrate their support of public money for public schooling and opposition to publicly-funded vouchers, 1999.

The José Angel Cárdenas Early Childhood Center in Edgewood ISD was rededicated in a ceremony on June 16, 2010.





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Focus: IDRA's 45th Anniversary

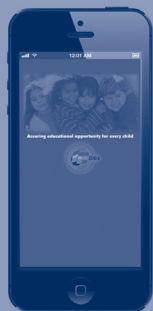
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Call for Applications for the IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program

IDRA is inviting research applications for the IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program. This will be the third round of this fellows program to support research that will inform efforts to secure equitable funding of public schools across the country.

Under the leadership of Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO, the program was established by IDRA to honor the memory of IDRA founder, Dr. José Angel Cárdenas.

IDRA will select one or more fellows who will dedicate themselves to a period of intense study and writing in school finance. We will hold a symposium that includes release of the fellows program paper. The paper and findings will be published in the symposium proceedings and disseminated to the education research and policymaker community.

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