

# Keeping *the* Promise



## Putting Children First

*Equal Educational Opportunity for Every Child Through Strong Public Schools*



Annual Report 2016

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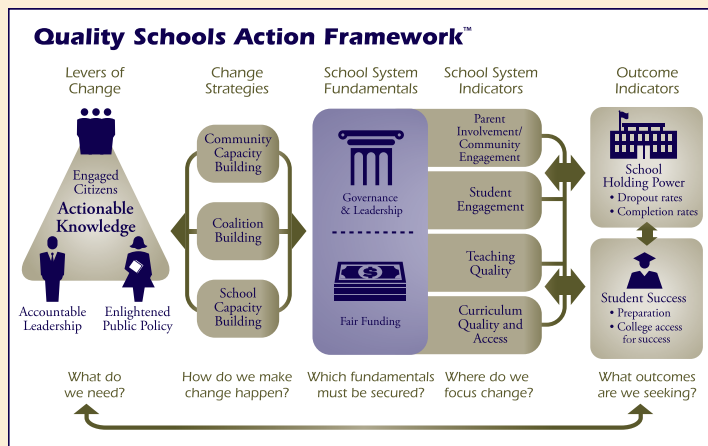
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## Funders Who Have Helped Make IDRA’s Work Possible

- Administration for Children, Youth and Families
  - The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
  - Anheuser-Busch Companies, Inc.
  - The Annie E. Casey Foundation
  - ASPIRA of New York
  - The AT&T Foundation
  - The Carnegie Corporation
  - The Challenge Foundation
  - Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
  - The Children’s Trust Fund of Texas
  - Clemson University – NDPC
  - The Coca-Cola Foundation\*
  - The Coca-Cola Company
  - The Danforth Foundation
  - The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
  - The Edward Hazen Foundation
  - The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
  - The Ford Foundation
  - The General Sciences Foundation
  - George Washington University
  - Greater Texas Foundation\*
  - The Houston Endowment, Inc.
  - JP Morgan Chase Foundation
  - The Kresge Foundation
  - The Lilly Endowment
  - League of United Latin American Citizens
  - Marguerite Casey Foundation
  - The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
  - The National Coalition of Advocates for Students
  - The National Endowment for the Humanities
  - National Education Association
  - National Institute of Mental Health
  - The National Science Foundation
  - National Urban Coalition
  - The Primerica Foundation
  - The Rockefeller Foundation
  - Southwestern Bell
  - Texas Department of Community Affairs
  - Texas Education Agency
  - Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
  - Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
  - U.S. Department of Education\*
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
  - U.S. Department of Justice
  - University of Houston
  - The W.K. Kellogg Foundation\*
  - Wachovia Foundation
  - Wells Fargo Foundation
  - The William Randolph Hearst Foundation
- \* Grants during current period.



## Everything We Do is Built on a Model for Success

IDRA’s Quality Schools Action Framework is a comprehensive action model for graduating and preparing all students for college. The framework (1) outlines the elements that must be in place to create schools that work for all children, (2) describes strategies that most often lead to change, and (3) shows how people can work together across sectors and around key information to leverage change.

# Keeping the Promise: Putting Children First



**Come fall, all across America**, more than 50 million children will attend one of our nation's public elementary or secondary schools. They'll tote bookbags, shoulder knapsacks or carry sack lunches. They'll come in by bus or by sidewalk – running or rolling or skipping or walking – or by subway or SUV. They'll have had a hearty breakfast or no breakfast. They'll have first-day jitters or be delighted or distracted or focused.

Wherever they come from and however they arrive, will we put children first?

Will we keep the promise of quality public education for all?

The United Way's Common Good Forecaster places education at the cornerstone of our nations' social and economic good. In *Plyler v. Doe*, Justice Brennan held that education has "a fundamental role in maintaining the fabric of our society." In *Brown v. Board of Education*, Chief Justice Warren called public education "a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."

To secure this basic right, we must affirm an essential promise to children. And at IDRA, we do.

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.

These are the promises, the **compromisos**, that guided our work last year – the work you will learn about in the pages that follow of IDRA's 2016 Annual Report.

We thank IDRA's funders and school, community and family partners from Atlanta, to Hidalgo, to Washington, D.C., for working with us to fulfill a vision of educational opportunity for all.

Ours is a world of inestimable possibility. We owe it to our children to keep the promise of a quality public education so that they may find their fullest future, and fulfill it.

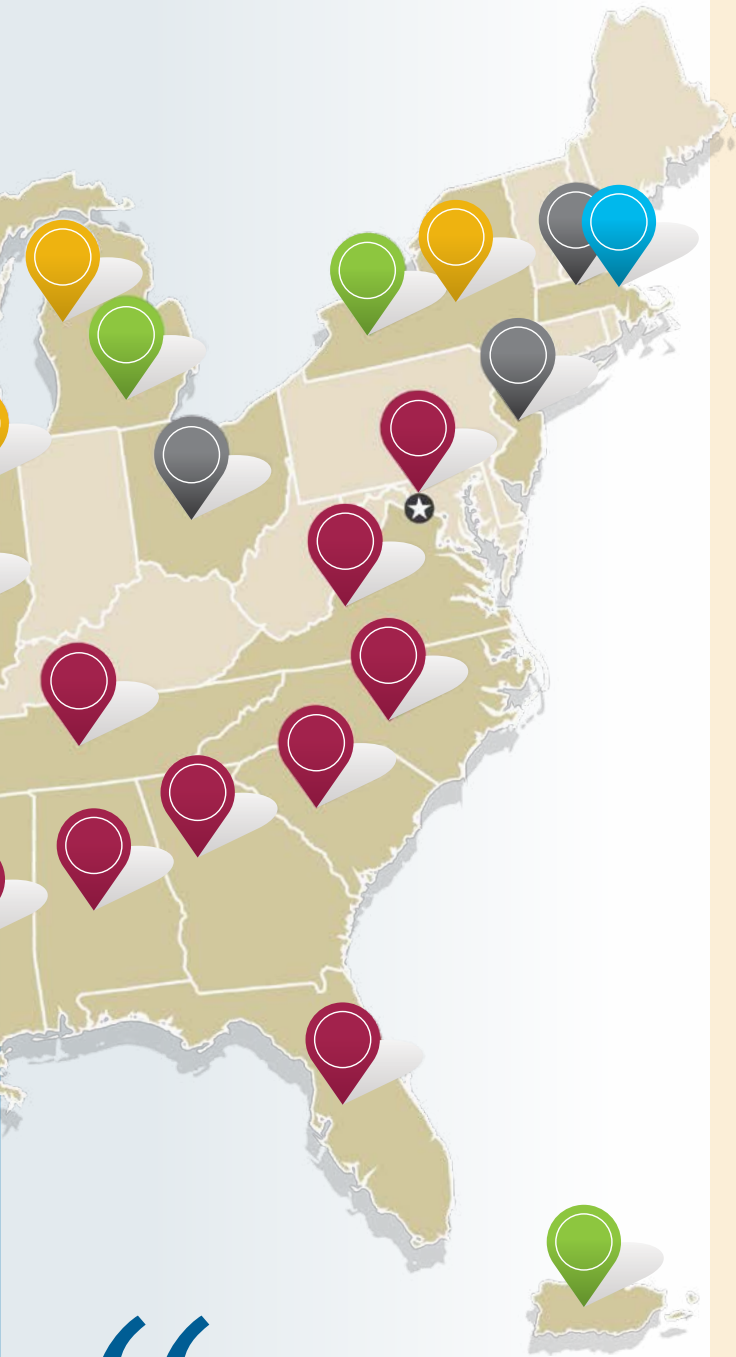
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "María Robledo Montecel".

– María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.



# Building National Connections and Networks for Strong Public Schools

**Rooted in a commitment to valuing youth of all backgrounds,** IDRA is partnering with communities and schools across the country to keep the promise to children of a high quality public education. From Atlanta to Baton Rouge, from Boston to Detroit, from Los Angeles to New York and from Hidalgo to Washington, D.C., IDRA is working to strengthen public education through timely research and analyses, effective programs, authentic collaboration, and technical assistance and training that produce results.



“

It [IDRA] is a place where a parent or anyone seeking answers to educational rights of students will be able to find answers. It is an excellent resource for those that want to further their knowledge on how to become involved in the education of their child. Very helpful.”

– Facebook review



### Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

California • Illinois • Michigan • New York • Texas

**3,588** students served in 2016

**34,100** students kept in school during the life of the program (1984–2017)

**671,400** children, families and educators have been positively impacted



### South Central Collaborative for Equity

Arkansas • Louisiana • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas

Served schools in a five-state region representing **7.5 million** students

**2,291** work sessions, planning sessions, workshops, presentations, seminars and conferences, teleconference meetings, observations, information dissemination activities, collaborations, development and production activities, and telephone consultations, during the last five-year project period (2011–2016)



### EAC-South

Alabama • Arkansas • Florida • Georgia • Louisiana • Mississippi • North Carolina • South Carolina • Tennessee • Texas • Virginia • Washington, D.C.

Serving schools in **11** states and the District of Columbia representing **16.4** million students

**2,341** school districts, **29,632** schools and **1,080,373** educators

**97%** of the country's active desegregation cases are in the U.S. South



### José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program Facilities Research

Massachusetts • New Jersey • Ohio • Texas • Wyoming

Research conducted in 2016 on school facilities funding across the country, features case studies for five states



### USDA Evaluation

Arizona • California • Illinois • Michigan • New Mexico • New York • Puerto Rico • Texas • Washington

Conducted evaluation of 57 USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program projects in 2016



### Teachers for Today and Tomorrow

Texas

**124** new teachers fully-certified to teach in high-need schools through IDRA's T<sup>3</sup> project (2011–2017)



### Libre Learn Lab

Massachusetts

Libre Learn Lab at MIT explored open source technology resources for schools



# Transformative Models for Education Equality

**IDRA's work reimagines what is possible.** We, and our school and community partners, are transforming education leadership; strengthening home, school and community connections from early childhood education to college readiness; modeling technology innovation and equity; and conducting and sharing new research on education quality, access, equity and outcomes. Together, we are replacing biases and systemic practices that hold children back with effective, practical models that achieve results for children.

## Meet IDRA STAARS Leaders Principal, Dr. Luz M. Martínez

**Dr. Luz Martínez** always seemed destined to teach. As a little girl, growing up in her native Puerto Rico, she taught “imaginary students.” By fourth grade, she was teaching adults to read and write. And from junior high through high school, she tutored for Upward Bound. These early skills would serve her well as she traveled and worked in the United States and abroad alongside her husband, who served in the military. Dr. Martínez would teach at a university and as a core instructor for the Department of Defense. Her leadership and service were recognized with the Presidential Volunteer Service Award, DA-Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, and numerous Commander’s Awards for Public Service.

But in spite of talent and success, Dr. Martínez also encountered substantial obstacles. She had been the first of six siblings to graduate from college, and she saw first-hand the effects of discrimination on low-income students and English learners like herself. These two threads of her life – her unwavering passion for teaching and her direct understanding of how discrimination impacts youth – would inspire her to become a school leader.

“

*Our greatest asset is our students.*

*As a long-standing educator, who is also Hispanic, an English learner, a child born in poverty, and a woman, I am strongly committed to the moral imperative of ensuring equity and excellence for all, especially for disenfranchised and minority students. I strongly believe that our greatest asset is our students. As dedicated educators, we must be committed to opening doors and nurturing all students. After all, this is the promise of public education.”*



“Education was the key to changing my stars,” she says. “I became a principal because I wanted to have an overarching impact beyond the classroom.” She has done just this. As a high school principal, Dr. Martínez transformed a suburban AYP/Stage 4-Math 3-A Texas high school into a successful school in two years. She led a 6-A urban high school to 90 percent graduation rates and to receiving from zero to four to six academic distinctions within three years. And she also established new college-track academies: biomedical, finance and dual language.

Now, Dr. Martínez brings that vision and commitment to her role as principal of Highlands High School in San Antonio ISD. She is part of a cohort of IDRA STAARS Leaders who are working with IDRA to implement professional development communities, focused on improving tier one instruction and developing a culture of instructional feedback and support. The project is building a strong pipeline of principal leadership.

Dr. Martínez is committed to further using the knowledge and skills acquired from her previous experiences to successfully turn around Highlands. “The IDRA program has been instrumental in supporting our school improvement efforts,” Dr. Martínez says. “Not only have our students benefited from the services and support provided by IDRA, but I have also directly benefited from IDRA’s coaching and mentoring. I have gained much insight and professional development through the resources and trainings offered by IDRA. We have also engaged in purposeful data disaggregation, which has resulted in developing targeted interventions for all students. Our students and staff at Highlands High School have been blessed to have received the support and coaching of IDRA’s dedicated staff.” Dr. Martínez’s aim for Highlands is to “implement a culture of care and excellence in which all students are able to achieve success.” She and her colleagues are well on their way to securing this promise.



**LEFT** At the Annual IDRA La Semana del Niño Parent Institute, parents from Comunitario PTAs presented information about graduation requirements in Texas and how parents can make sure their children are on a path to college. (left to right) Rosalba Terán, Elvia Alcalá, Mireya Cortina, Carmen Guerra, Magdalena Gutiérrez, Juany García, Elsa González. **RIGHT** Students facilitated and led presentations on key aspects of college preparation at an event held by ARISE, in partnership with the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district and IDRA, to conduct a mini-mesa for parents and the community.

## Intergenerational Family Leadership that Transforms Education

*“Si no fuera por la información que ARISE e IDRA nos han dado mi hija estuviera tomando Algebra avanzada. La consejera no creía que pudiera entender el tema y tal vez sería mejor para ella tomar clases más fáciles como cocinar. Gracias por toda la ayuda que nos han dado.”*

*“If it wasn't for the information that ARISE and IDRA has given us, my daughter would not be taking advanced algebra. The counselor didn't think she could understand the subject and said perhaps it would be better for her to take easier classes, like cooking. Thank you for all the help you have given us.”*

– Parent of ninth grade student



IDRA’s Comunitario model was set in motion in 2009 when IDRA and the women-led non-profit, ARISE, co-convened an organizing meeting of the nation’s first grassroots Comunitario in a colonia, or unincorporated area, in South Texas. Unlike many parent meetings, this gathering would not focus on “fixing” parenting or enlisting parents as volunteers. There were no door prizes or special perks for attending. Families attended, and kept coming, because these gatherings were substantive, respectful and – ultimately – family-led.

Six months later, 35 ARISE families invited Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD superintendent Dr. Daniel King for dinner in a family home to talk about the future of their children’s education. From these small beginnings, the IDRA-PSJA-ARISE partnership and Comunitario model has spurred a sea change of family leadership in education across the region that has benefited more than 120,000 students.

IDRA has honed the Family Leadership in Education principles that gave rise to this model through decades of work with low-income families, grassroots CBOs, and public schools in Texas and across the country. In the Rio Grande Valley, IDRA further developed the family leadership model with ARISE and CBO partners, such as Proyecto Juan Diego, Brownsville Community Health Center and the Equal Voice-RGV Network, funded by the Marguerite Casey Foundation, and with school districts in Pharr-San Juan-Alamo, La Joya, San Benito, Donna and Rio Grande City through an i3 grant from the U.S. Department of Education that completed in 2016.

Focusing on the most pressing issues for low-income and working poor families in the colonias, the project convened in-depth meetings with thousands of families, K–12 educators and leaders, colleges and universities, and policymakers to examine how schools were performing, study the state of their resources to serve all children, and develop plans to address attrition, graduation and college readiness. Participating families drew on rich, bilingual education data sources, such as IDRA’s bilingual OurSchool portal, and conducted their own research and data collection.

Their work informed a series of family-school-community convenings across the Rio Grande Valley (“Mesas Comunitario” and “Mini-Mesas”) that examined Texas’ new graduation requirements and how to assure that students stayed on track with the courses they needed to graduate college-ready.



As a result of the project (1) school districts are acknowledging that families want their children prepared for college and taking steps in that direction; (2) local school districts have improved their communication with colonia parents about graduation requirements and improved how they are informing families about the college tracks (endorsements) for their children; and (3) targeted districts now accept representatives from the Comunitarios as peers and partners in co-planning for excellent schools for all children.

Each Comunitario group included 50 to 75 family members and reached a grassroots network of over 500 families each year through trainings and workshops on family leadership in education. San Benito/Los Fresnos and ARISE Comunitario groups alone conducted training and workshops that touched about 600 persons a year.

## Texas Education CAFE Network Launched

Based on the success of the Comunitario approach, IDRA has now launched the Education CAFE. Like the model that inspires it, the Texas Education CAFE Network will break down divides between families, educators and communities to help schools meet the promise of public education that is rooted in, renewed by, and responsive to its neighborhoods and communities. Made possible with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Texas Education CAFE Network is a statewide expansion of IDRA's parent-led approach that will focus on implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act by states and districts.

Learn more at: <http://budurl.com/IDRAedCAFE>

### Established Comunitarios

- ARISE Cesar Chavez in Las Milpas/South Pharr
- ARISE South Tower in South Alamo/Donna
- BCHC Mano a Mano Galaxy in Brownsville
- BCHC Mano a Mano Southmost in Brownsville (plus two more in development)
- Proyecto Desarrollo Humano in Peñitas/La Joya
- Proyecto Juan Diego in Brownsville
- RGV La Raiz in San Benito
- RGV La Raiz in Los Fresnos



**LEFT** Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program seniors in Odessa, Texas, dressed in cap and gowns, walked through the elementary school ceremonies where they had tutored, followed by the 10th and 11th grade tutors for recognition. **RIGHT** A Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in Detroit practices using STEAM activities with her tutees.

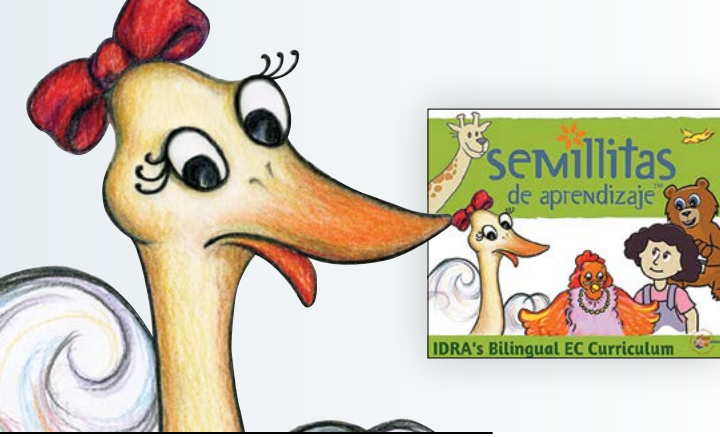
## Changing the Equation: The IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program's Reach, Innovation and Impact

In La Joya, Texas, and in Detroit, teams of seventh and eighth grade students hover around tables strewn with foam, foil, cardboard and Makey Makey kits that can turn everyday objects into touchscreens. Heads bent together and working quickly and collaboratively, the students' mission is to build new, affordable mobile-tech devices for youth with mobility impairments. In a matter of hours, student teams have constructed some extraordinary prototypes. Part of our STEAM integration strategy in IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, this project has classrooms buzzing with excitement as students knit together principles in math, science, art, technology and engineering through a game-changing, practical application.

Since its inception in 1984, the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth program has kept more than 34,100 students in school, who were previously considered at risk of dropping out and positively impacted the lives of more than 671,400 children, families and educators. With support from The Coca-Cola Foundation, and in partnership with school districts, IDRA has continued to extend the reach of this pioneering program, to serve youth in five new U.S. regions (see map on Page 2).

With a focus on dropout prevention, we also are expanding K-12 and university connections and developing new approaches – like our STEAM integration project – to strengthen student learning and success. Following 2016 Leadership Days during which tutors visited universities and local businesses, STEAM projects transformed Coca-Cola YVP classrooms into learning laboratories. Based on their success, in the coming year STEAM strategies will be expanded and incorporated into IDRA's Advo-Tech (Advocacy through Technology) initiative.

Learn more and read what tutors have to say about the program at: <http://budurl.com/IDRAVYP>



## Semillitas de Aprendizaje™ Early Childhood Curriculum

Semillitas de Aprendizaje is being implemented district wide in a school district that integrated the curriculum's scope and sequence into the district's own scope and sequence for all pre-kinder 5-year-old students. After IDRA provided additional training on how Semillitas de Aprendizaje connects with the state standards, teachers in the pre-kindergarten 4-year-old program wanted it too. So they purchased another round of the materials that are now in use across the district for prekindergarten 4- and 5-year-olds. From bilingual big books to small readers, storytelling videos, STEM activities and cartitas ("letters home"), the materials are designed with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to help teachers foster literacy, numeracy and social-emotional development, while valuing children's home language and culture.

See samples at: [www.semillitasdeaprendizaje.com](http://www.semillitasdeaprendizaje.com)

## Early Learning, Family Leadership and a Culture of Encuentro: IDRA's SEED Project

Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, IDRA's multi-year Seeding Equity in Education through Dialogue (SEED) project is working to strengthen family-school-community relationships in San Antonio to improve early education for children, ages 0–8. In 2016, IDRA partnered with the San Antonio Barshop Jewish Community Center and more than 15 local organizations to work on issues of implicit bias that impact learning opportunities for low-income children, children of color and English learners.

IDRA is mobilizing family and community leadership through SEED with the development of the open-data San Antonio Connects platform and through data-focused partnerships with Voices for Children, the Center for Public Policy Priorities, and the City of San Antonio. We are fostering a school culture of Encuentro – valuing home-school relationships – with the launch of an Education CAFE with San Antonio ISD and the Presa Community Center. Also, through the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Parent Institute, we are assuring that parents are at the podium – and that their successes can be shared in person and via local and nationwide broadcast through a partnership with NowCast-SA.



# Ready Texas:

A Study of the

## Implementation of HB5 in Texas

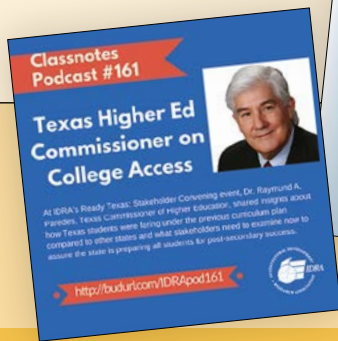
In 2013, the 83rd Texas Legislature established the Foundation High School Program (HB5), which allows for significant local variation in graduation planning and represents one of the most substantial changes to Texas curricula in recent history. How these changes are implemented can have a deep impact on preparation, access and completion of a post-secondary degree in Texas – particularly for students who are already underrepresented in degree attainment.

With funding and in collaboration with the Greater Texas Foundation (GTF), IDRA is conducting a mixed methods study (Ready Texas: A Study of the Implementation of HB5 in Texas) examining two research questions: (1) Statewide, what district characteristics are associated with indicators of postsecondary success? and (2) How are educators, families and students navigating the implementation of the new high school graduation requirements? The study was informed by the Ready Texas: Stakeholder Convening, funded by GTF and hosted by IDRA with UT Austin in 2016 as well as by IDRA's empirically-based Quality Schools Action Framework. IDRA's Ready Texas research will provide timely information for policymakers, educators, families, students and the field.

Learn more at:  
[www.idra.org/research\\_articles/ready-texas](http://www.idra.org/research_articles/ready-texas)



**TOP** Dr. Jenny Knowles Morris, Texas A&M University; Ms. Celina Moreno, MALDEF; **LEFT** Mr. Emiliano Romero, Office of Representative Diego Bernal; **RIGHT** Dr. Sofia Bahena, IDRA



**Classnotes Podcast Episode 161:** At IDRA's Ready Texas: Stakeholder Convening, Texas Higher Ed Commissioner, Dr. Raymund A. Paredes, shared insights about college access and how Texas students were faring under the previous curriculum plan compared to other states.

## Implementation of New Texas Graduation Requirements Needs Further Study – Ready Texas: Stakeholder Convening Proceedings Report

The Ready Texas: Stakeholder Convening, led by IDRA and carried out in partnership with UTeach at UT Austin, brought together education, community, policy, foundation, business and philanthropic leaders to discuss the future of post-secondary education in Texas and to provide input on the design of a statewide study of HB5 implementation. The convening was made possible through a grant from Greater Texas Foundation. IDRA's proceedings report explores student aspirations, school district and community responses to HB5, survey findings and scan of research, and an overview of stakeholder input.

## Preparing a New Generation of Teachers for Science, Technology, Math and Special Education

Through Teachers for Today and Tomorrow (T<sup>3</sup>), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, IDRA and our K–12 and university partners prepared and placed teachers, who bring a passion for teaching and innovation in bilingual/ESL and STEM subjects, in multicultural settings. IDRA developed a curriculum to certify teachers in bilingual/ESL and STEM subjects in mostly Latino communities and provided a comprehensive online and personalized support system to retain teachers for a minimum of three years.

T<sup>3</sup> also expanded the candidate pool to include paraprofessionals, a key feature of a “grow your own” teacher recruitment strategy. To date, 150 teacher candidates have been selected to participate in the program; 124 (102 percent of the goal) are fully certified (six more are expected to become fully certified) as math or science teachers and other high-need areas with ESL supplemental certification within 1½ years.

## Meet IDRA T<sup>3</sup> Teacher, Alyssa Avilés



*“I want for my students to be curious and able to create meaningful questions. I hope that by the time they leave my classroom, I will have been able to impact their*

*decision to choose a future career path in science. If I haven’t shared my passion of science with them, then I hope that I have at least allowed them to believe that they are more than the label that people have placed on them based on their socioeconomic background – and that they have the ability to achieve greatness. IDRA’s T<sup>3</sup> program has connected me with a network of teachers and provided me with the resources to create a plan and stick with it so that I could have a successful school year!”*

– Alyssa Avilés, graduate, IDRA (T<sup>3</sup>) Program

Alyssa Avilés had a passion for science. Growing up in Weslaco in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, she attended her first science fair in fourth grade. By high school, she went to the State Fair – twice – and began to “live in the question.” She loved how sheer curiosity could spark a question whose hypothesis could be tested. As a high school junior, she joined the biotechnology program at Texas A&M Kingsville Citrus Center in Weslaco. There, she learned to extract DNA from citrus, using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology to trace a plant’s distinct DNA fingerprint. The thrill of discovery drove her decision to major in biology at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio.

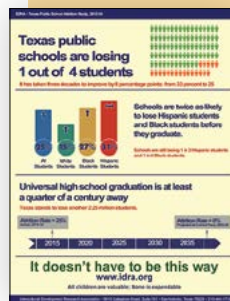
And every step along the way, her teachers had a profound impact. “I wanted to be able to make the difference that my teachers did for me to others. I wanted to be able to give that ‘wow factor’ that I experienced in the classroom!” **In her first two years of teaching, every one of Mrs. Avilés’ students passed their STAAR biology test.** By her second year, one in four achieved the *advanced* level.

Suddenly, Mrs. Avilés had a new task: writing college recommendation letters for her students. More than half of the students she recommended gained admission – along with scholarship opportunities – to the university of their choice. This year, Mrs. Avilés completes her fourth year of teaching. Now, a ninth grade biology teacher at Holmes High School in San Antonio, she is passing the torch, creating that “wow factor,” and inspiring a new generation of scientists.



## Texas Public School

# Attrition Study 2015–16



**Texas High Schools Stand to Lose Over 2 Million Students in Coming Years – At Our Current Pace in Texas, Universal High School Education is Two Decades Away**



**6 School Policies That Lead to Higher Dropout Rates – Zero Tolerance is One of the Six**

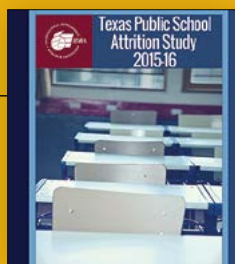
# Leading Edge Educational Research

## Annual Attrition Study

*“As IDRA’s latest report shows, if you are poor or minority or speak a language other than English, you are more likely to be affected by policies and practices that don’t work effectively to keep students in school through graduation.”*

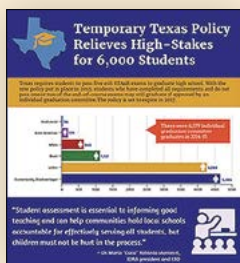
– Dr. María Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO

In 2016, IDRA published its 31<sup>st</sup> study of public high school attrition in Texas. Spanning more than three decades of data, the study is the only long-standing, independent measure of progress on attrition in the state. Finding in 2016 that progress has stalled, IDRA produced supplemental studies on trends and forecasts and sub-analyses by region, county, and student sub-group. This body of work was disseminated to policymakers, school and community leaders, and is informing action on the policies and practices that impact graduation, and disproportionately effect low-income and minority students and English learners.



**Despite Graduation Rate Progress, Texas Appears Stuck at Losing One-Fourth of High Schoolers** IDRA’s analysis released in the fall found that the attrition rate in Texas has risen for the first time in 18 years. Though just an increase of 1 percentage point, Texas schools have been losing between 26 percent and 24 percent of high school students annually for the last five years.

See the study & infographics at: <http://budurl.com/IDRAatrn16>



**Temporary Policy Relieves High-Stakes for 6,000 Students** – Use of Individual Graduation Committees Unlocks Diplomas for Qualified Students



**Zero Tolerance Policies Push Students Away** – High Attrition Rates of Black Students and Hispanic Students Are Linked to Exclusionary Discipline

## 2016 IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow



IDRA’s José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program was established in 2013 to honor the memory of IDRA’s founder. Under the leadership of Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel,

the goal of the program is to engage the nation’s most promising researchers in investigating school finance solutions that secure equity and excellence for all students. Our 2016 Fellow, Marielena D. Rivera, completed her doctorate at UC Berkeley. Her fellowship research on facilities funding equity across states was shared at our spring 2017 symposium at AERA.

Learn more at:  
<http://budurl.com/IDRAflw>

## IDRA Evaluation Links Test Results to Need for Better Instruction in Inferencing

Through a contract to serve as the external evaluator for a project in a major school district, IDRA analyzed STAAR test data, particularly looking at the reading test questions that a high percentage of students miss across grade levels. We found that students were having difficulty with questions that require a high level of proficiency in the underlying and foundational skill of inferencing.

And we looked at the professional development that teachers had received. After an analysis of the topics, we saw a heavy emphasis on pedagogy and little, if any, on strengthening the content that teachers must deliver, particularly on how to facilitate inferences during instruction.

Get the flier at:  
<http://budurl.com/IDRAinfer17>



# Crossing Borders from Research to Practice to Secure Systemic Solutions

**All-too-often, public education policy is enacted and implemented without the benefit of research;** break-through practices are isolated to individual classrooms; and the power of 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.

## Keeping the Promise of Children’s Educational and Civil Rights

Despite gains since the Supreme Court’s landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling, children in the United States continue to face educational inequality by virtue of race, sex and gender, national origin, and religion. Unwavering in its commitment to students’ civil rights, IDRA is the only organization in the country to have continuously operated a federally-funded equity assistance center since the program was created over four decades ago. In 2016, IDRA completed its most recent five-year period of service through the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity (SCCE), serving the five-state region of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Across Federal Region VI, IDRA worked with state, school, community leaders, families, and youth to address chronic and emerging desegregation issues that impact children’s academic opportunities and outcomes. **Through the IDRA SCCE, we served 2,367 districts and schools by providing 2,291 work sessions, planning sessions, workshops, presentations, seminars and conferences, teleconference meetings, observations, information dissemination activities, collaborations, development and production activities, and telephone consultations.**

In rural Louisiana, for example, when a mid-sized school district was compelled under consent decree to address significant disparities in course offerings and the distribution of certified teachers for Black students as compared to White students, IDRA was called upon to assist. The IDRA SCCE conducted a comprehensive review, interviewing school leaders

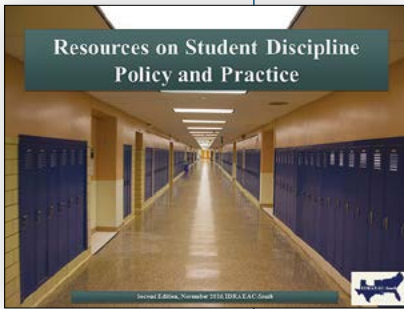


and examining district data on teacher qualifications, course offerings, enrollment policies, parent engagement and demographics. The district incorporated nearly all of IDRA’s key findings and 35 recommendations into its strategic plan. As a result, the district produced a **200 percent increase** in the participation of Black students in advanced coursework in its junior high and high school programs.

The IDRA SCCE also took a comprehensive approach to school discipline, providing technical assistance services to urban and rural school districts in Louisiana and Texas. We provided teacher and administrator training on cultural diversity, implicit bias, cultural responsiveness and classroom management. We helped school districts revise their codes of conduct to create clearer policies that are better aligned with positive intervention strategies, and principles of equity and inclusion. **Two school district partners dropped corporal punishment altogether.** These revised policies were presented to the U.S. Department of Justice in response to federal court desegregation orders.

With incidents of bullying and harassment on the rise in the region, IDRA worked in depth with districts to provide solutions, grounded in students’ civil rights. When an East Texas school district faced an alleged incident of racial bullying, the SCCE team provided tailored, onsite training sessions for counselors, teachers and principals, and fifth to eighth grade and high school students. As a result, youth became increasingly empowered through the sessions to speak out about their experiences and were met with newfound peer support and deepened mutual respect. School principals and faculty discovered new ways to prevent and address harassment and to create a safer more productive learning environment for all. IDRA shared these strategies and other resources on bullying and harassment across the region through dozens of newsletter articles, podcasts and web-based resources.

## IDRA EAC-South



Based on the results of this work, in 2016 IDRA was selected to lead the equity assistance center for Federal Region II and is now one of only four centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide desegregation services for the nation's public schools. Our center, IDRA EAC-South, covers Washington, D.C., and 11 states. IDRA is partnering with the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium and the Southern Education Foundation to develop local capacity in the region among the 2,341 school districts and 29,632 schools with over 1 million educators and 16 million students.

Seeking to tackle the most critical issues impacting students' educational and civil rights in these states, our work under the IDRA EAC-South focuses on:

- Reducing disproportionate school discipline for school districts cited by the Office for Civil Rights;
- Addressing English learner needs, including train-the-trainer models on professional development;
- Helping schools address bullying and harassment and building safer, healthier climates;
- Assisting districts under school desegregation orders in creating unitary school systems;
- Increasing minority student representation in higher-level courses;
- Designing low socioeconomic student integration plans with communities;
- Helping schools reduce religious discrimination;
- Expanding access to integrated school learning environments;
- Creating access to more rigorous courses and gifted programs for all students;
- Increasing parent involvement and engagement for underserved families; and
- Improving the capacity and distribution of teaching quality across schools

IDRA and our partners launched the center with an inaugural advisory meeting in early December in Atlanta, attended by 40 state and school district leaders across the South, community leaders, representatives from regional education labs, comprehensive centers, technical content centers and the Office for Civil Rights.

Learn more at: [www.idra.org/eac-south](http://www.idra.org/eac-south)

## Tech Equity



In a unique partnership with Judson ISD's STEM Academy middle school in Converse, Texas, IDRA is working with a team of faculty and staff to galvanize project based learning around an equity framework. Incorporating principles of inclusion and empathy into professional development and across the curriculum, we are constructing maker-space labs with students and inspiring project based learning around complex and commonplace tools, from high-end 3D printers to low-cost sewing supplies. Now in Year 2 of the three-year professional development project, the project is seeing significant results.

Dawn N. Worley, STEM Academy Director at Judson ISD shares: "After each professional development session, my teachers are successfully able to transfer their new learning to children. Most recently, the students were 'making' within a week of a session with the teachers that focused on using maker tools with intention and purpose. As the only STEM middle school, we serve children across the district and from varying economic backgrounds. Every student has shown academic success and achievement." J-STEM's goal, by the end of Year 3, is for every teacher to be able to effectively incorporate project based learning into their classrooms.

See our project based learning flier: <http://budurl.com/IDRApblp>







## Libre Learn Lab and the Promise of Open Tech Access



Joining Aleph Objects, the IAM Foundation, and GNOME, IDRA co-sponsored the national Libre Learn Lab, a summit at MIT in Boston in October. Co-organized by Libre Learn Lab's Mariah Noelle Villarreal; IDRA's Chief IT Strategist, Mark Barnett; Sugar Lab and (former) MIT Media Lab Executive Director, Walter Bender; and a cadre of dedicated volunteers, the Libre Learn Lab event brought together people from around the country who create, use and implement freely licensed resources for K-12 education.

Through the summit, creators of all kinds – from educators, to policy experts, software developers, hardware hackers, and activists – exchanged best practices and shared strategies for addressing the challenges of widespread adoption of open resources in education. The 2016 summit honored the late MIT Media Lab founder, Seymour Papert, a pioneer in the fields of computer science and constructivist education.



**Jerry Wilson** spent the summer of 2016 at IDRA as part of the Southern Education Leadership Initiative's fellows program. He is a second year doctoral student in education policy, leadership, and school improvement at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He also previously taught high school social studies in Chicago Public Schools. While at IDRA, he assisted in various policy-related work, including researching how states can more equitably implement accountability requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

# Pursuit of Fair Funding of Schooling Continues

**In May**, the Texas Supreme Court issued its disappointing ruling in the largest school finance lawsuit in the state's history. In doing so, it failed to ensure the constitutional right to a quality education for school children in the state of Texas. Earlier, the Texas District Court ruled that the current funding system is "constitutionally inadequate, unsuitable and financially inefficient." IDRA stressed that the Texas Supreme Court ruling however, did not restrict Texas policymakers from taking steps to provide more equitable funding and reduce funding gaps across the state. As it has done for the last four decades, IDRA provided key testimony in the trial on the funding inequities in the Texas public school finance system. IDRA also presented analyses at trial revealing that funding cuts to special programs disproportionately impact students in low wealth and major urban school districts. And as we have done for the last four decades, IDRA will continue to work with leaders, families, community members, and advocates who want more – not less – equity; who want more – not less – excellence; who want more – not less – fairness in our schools.

## IDRA Priority Policy Issues for Texas for 2017

IDRA identified the following issues as priorities for the 2017 Texas legislative session. IDRA also works with its partners in many other important areas, including early childhood, school discipline, bullying, multicultural education, school integration, teacher and teaching quality, and sex/gender equity.

Learn more and get Spanish version at: <http://budurl.com/IDRApoll7>

### • Fair Funding Means Equity and Excellence for All Students

The quality of children's education should not be determined by their family income or the neighborhood where they happen to live. In the new context of global competition, excellent schools are needed for all students – not good schools for a few and mediocre ones for the rest. The research is clear: educational resources matter and the state must invest in all children's education. This especially rings true for underserved students, like low-income and English learner (EL) students. Over 30 years ago, the state set their funding four times below the recommended level and it remains unchanged. Forcing schools to play shell games with their funds is a Texas culture that must end now.



**“Let’s keep our eye on the ball –  
Keep the public in public schools.”**

– Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., IDRA Senior Education Associate,  
before the Texas Senate Education Committee, September 13, 2016

### • Keep the Public in Public Education

The best way to strengthen public schools is to strengthen public schools. Diverting public money for private schools and subsidies for the rich takes money away from our communities resulting in higher taxes for homeowners and businesses. More importantly, private school vouchers, education savings accounts (ESAs), charter schools and related schemes are based on life-raft thinking: “saving” a few students while harming the children left behind. They also tend to further segregate students and do not result in improved learning.

# Fair funding is essential to assuring that all children have access to quality education.

– Equity Matters for All Schoolchildren IDRA Testimony on Texas Finance, September 29, 2016

## • Effective Accountability that Supports Schools and Puts Children First

We must make sure our schools are doing a good job with all of our students, and disaggregated data helps us know where to focus improvement efforts. But it is not necessary to test all students to ensure schools are producing good results. Sample testing achieves this and can also prevent misuse of testing data for holding students back or preventing them from graduating. In addition, Congress' passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act gives Texas an opportunity to focus its accountability system on improving struggling schools through asset-based approaches rather than punishing them. Texas can be a leader in this area by dropping its A-F accountability grading system and avoiding the creation of a state- or privately-controlled "opportunity school district" that strips local control from communities. Instead, the state should add opportunity-to-learn metrics as part of its accountability system, which will allow the state to focus its resources on areas of need, thereby increasing the efficiency of the system.

## • Testing that Doesn't Hurt Children

Reliance on a single measure fails to consider multiple factors that impact student achievement, including the fact that students have no control over inequitable school resources or the quality of teaching they receive. More importantly, the use of a single test score ignores several other academic achievements, including grades, projects, college readiness measures and teacher recommendations. The independent graduation committees remain a viable option for qualified students and should be continued.

## • Instruction for English Learners Must be Bolstered

EL students, with their potential for bilingualism, are a great asset that should be nurtured. Research shows that bilingual and dual language education programs are highly effective in helping EL students learn English while also learning their core subjects. Texas must ensure these programs are properly supported and implemented. But secondary EL students, many of whom only get 45-minute ESL classes each day, do poorly on several metrics. This middle and high school EL under-achievement is masked by the current practice of data reporting that lumps EL student performance across all grade levels. The state must monitor EL performance by school-level data instead, and it must vastly improve its efforts to support schools identified for intervention. Additionally, the state must ensure access to a strong public education for students, including new immigrant and refugee students, who may require more intensive, comprehensive services.

## • Higher Education Access for Success

Today's workforce needs many more people to have college degrees. In order to increase access, retention and college completion rates, we need expanded access, improved student financial aid, and strengthened support programs. High schools must ensure that all students receive a rigorous course of study that prepares them for college. Re-regulation of high tuition rates is desperately needed, but the state must ensure that it adequately supports the state's colleges and students needing assistance. This includes in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrant students who are a vital part of our future. The Top Ten Percent Plan is helping to increase the number and diversity of students applying for and enrolling in Texas colleges and universities. It has increased the number of high schools that are sending their students to the state's top institutions and remains one of the state's most successful policies.



Conversation with David Hinojosa and Albert Kauffman about the Texas Supreme Court's recent ruling on school finance in the NOWCastSA Studio on the 6th floor of Central Library.



David Hinojosa, J.D., IDRA National Director of Policy, before the Texas Senate Education Committee, September 13, 2016

## New Tools, Research and Publications

In 2016, IDRA published 101 new products, including publications, eLetters, infographics, eBooks, factsheets, web stories, policy statements, podcast episodes, outside publications, and newsletter articles.



[www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org)

### Website

IDRA launched its new website in the fall of 2016. This project included both a new design and structure as well as a completely new backend and database for managing website content (using WordPress customized for our needs). This website upgrade included a new system for monitoring and reporting usage data. The upgrade included two micro-sites, Brown-Mendez Blueprint Dialogues and Semillitas de Aprendizaje.



### IDRA News App

IDRA has a new app to provide easy access to IDRA newsletters, podcasts, videos and other resources. The free app is available through iTunes and works with Android and Blackberry devices.

### IDRA Honored

María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., Roy Johnson and Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., were honored by the LULAC National Education Service Centers at its Ninth Annual Education Awards Gala for their work over many years to make equal educational opportunity a reality for our children.

### IDRA Newsletter Awarded

The IDRA Newsletter received the El Bronce first place award from the Public Relations Society of America San Antonio. El Bronce awards recognize outstanding public relations tactics through categories reflecting their growing scope, creativity and the importance of strategic public relations. IDRA was awarded for increasing its online engagement rate by 48 percent through a new initiative to make the newsletter the core of our content strategy.

## Publishing



VUE Voices in Education article: **“Liderazgo Familiar Intergeneracional: Intergenerational Family Leadership as a New Paradigm of Family Engagement,”** by Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., and Dr. Nancy Chavkin published by Brown University, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2016



Texas Hispanic Journal of Law & Policy article: **“Of Course the Texas Top Ten Percent is Constitutional and It’s Pretty Good Policy Too,”** by David Hinojosa, J.D., Spring 2016

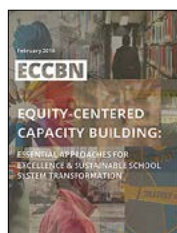
Richmond Law Review article: **“Race-Conscious” School Finance Litigation: Is a Fourth Wave Emerging?”** by David Hinojosa, J.D., March 25, 2016



Rio Grande Guardian Article: **“Our Children Could Get Lost – RGV Parents Gather to Discuss HB5,”** by Dr. Sofia Bahena, June 4, 2016

Texas Tribune Op-Ed: **“In School Finance Decision, the Poor People Have Lost Again,”** by David Hinojosa, J.D., June 14, 2016

NAFSCE blog post: **“Communitarios – A New Approach to Family Leadership in Education,”** by Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., May 27, 2016



Book chapter: **“The Regional Equity Assistance Centers – Fifty Years and Counting: Forging Civil-Rights-Based Technical Assistance to Serve All Students by Building Equity-Centered Capacity in Public Schools,”** by Dr. Bradley Scott, in *Essential Approaches for Excellence & Sustainable School System Transformation*, 2016

Education Post story: **“How ‘Comunitarios’ Are Changing the Way Schools and Communities Collaborate,”** by Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., May 31, 2016

## National Presentations

### Sample Speaking Engagements in 2016

**Can Public Scholarship Help School Finance Policy Meet the Challenge of Increasing Diversity?** American Educational Research Association (AERA). Presenters: David Hinojosa, J.D., and others

**Measuring Parent Self-Efficacy: Examining Its Relationship to Parent Engagement** American Educational Research Association (AERA). Presenters: Sofia Bahena, and others



**Telling Our Stories: Storytelling to Promote Student Identity** National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Conference. Presenters: Dr. Kristin Grayson and Jacob Tsoitigh, University of Oklahoma



**Everyone is a Maker, But Not Everyone Has Access** TEDxSanAntonio. Presenter: Mark Barnett, IDRA

**Solving Teacher Shortages: Attracting and Retaining a Diverse and Talented Teacher Workforce** Learning Policy Institute Policy Forum. Presenter: David Hinojosa, J.D.

**Strategies for Instructional Coaching – A Pocket Guide and How’s a Picture Worth 1,000 Words?** National Association for Alternative Certification. Presenter: Paula Johnson, M.A.

**Fostering Family Leadership in Texas’ Rio Grande Valley: PTA Comunitario** Roundtable Session: Principles for Transformative Latino Parent Leadership: Lessons from Three Investing in Innovation (i3) Grants, American Educational Research Association (AERA). Presenters: Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., and Dr. Nancy Chavkin, Texas State University

**Beyond Discipline: Building Communities of Practice in Diverse Learning Environments** Southern Minority Leadership Conference. Presenter: Paula Johnson, M.A.

**Language: The Lens to Culture** Oklahoma Association of Bilingual Education, Keynote Presenter: Dr. Kristin Grayson

**Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction (EBSI): Assuring Educational Opportunities for Every Child** Arkansas Educators Association. Presenter: Paula Johnson, M.A.

**Book Talk: The Enduring Legacy of Rodriguez: Creating New Pathways to Equal Educational Opportunity** University of Texas at Austin. Presenters: David Hinojosa, J.D., and Kimberly J. Robinson, J.D., Richmond Law Professor

**Defining Student Learning Outcomes: Beyond the Borders of a Textbook** Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Presenters: Dr. Kristin Grayson and Lynore Carnuccio, M.Ed.

**Co-Planning/Leading: A School District & Community Organizations** Third Annual National PSJA “College for All” Conference. Presenters: Aurelio Montemayor and Vickie Santana, ARISE

**Constructing Academic Conversations Across the Curriculum** Multicultural Education Institute. Presenter: Dr. Kristin Grayson

## Statement of Financial Position

*As of August 31, 2016*

### Assets

Total Current Assets	\$ 1,220,456
Assets Designated for Development and Research	14,484,272
Other Assets	154,322
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>15,859,050</b>

### Liabilities and Net Assets

Total Current Liabilities	131,794
Board Designated OPEB *	520,913
Net Assets-Undesignated	534,170
Net Assets-Designated for Development and Research	13,963,359
Net Assets-Temporarily Restricted	708,814
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 15,859,050</b>

\* Other post-employment benefits (OPEB) as designated by the IDRA Board of Directors.

## Statement of Activities

*For the Year Ended August 31, 2016*

### Support and Revenue

Foundations and Governmental	\$ 3,162,833
Program Revenue	491,775
Investment Income	310,215
Other	558
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>3,965,381</b>

### Expenses

Program Services	3,779,071
Management and General	65,093
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>3,844,164</b>

### Change in net assets

Change in Net Assets from Operating Activities	121,217
Non-Operating (OPEB)	(344,499)
Total Change in Net Assets	(223,282)
Net Assets, Beginning	15,429,626
<b>Net Assets, Ending</b>	<b>\$ 15,206,344</b>

The Statement of Financial Position as of August 31, 2016, and the Statement of Activities for the year ended August 31, 2016, are part of IDRA's financial statements. The complete audited financial statements are available upon request to IDRA.



## About IDRA

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, private non-profit organization dedicated to assuring educational opportunity for every child. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs. Each year, IDRA works hand-in-hand with thousands of educators, community members and families. All of our work stems from an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing public schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.

### Mission

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

### Strategy

Be a leading national voice for action and change that catalyzes educational opportunity through integrated research, policy and practice.

### Staff

María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel,  
Ph.D., President & CEO  
Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.,  
Chief of Operations

### Professional Staff

Nilka Avilés, Ed.D.  
Sofia Bahena, Ed.D.  
Mark Barnett, Chief IT Strategist  
Hector Bojorquez  
Sulema Carreón-Sánchez, Ph.D.  
Charles A. Cavazos  
Kristin Grayson, Ph.D.  
David G. Hinojosa, J.D.  
Paula Johnson, M.A.  
Roy L. Johnson, M.S.  
Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.  
Felix Montes, Ph.D.  
Laurie Posner, M.P.A.

### Technical Staff

Reymundo Flores, M.B.A.  
Christie L. Goodman, APR

### Support Staff

Sarah H. Alemán†  
Juanita “Janie” Daywood  
Lucia “Lucy” Estrada  
Annette Ramos  
Jocelyn N. Rivera



### IDRA Board of Directors

(Standing, L-R) Mr. Jessie Rangel, Lubbock, Texas; Mr. David L. Benson, Houston, Texas; Dr. Max Spencer Castillo, Houston, Texas; Mrs. Rosalinda González, Mission, Texas; Dr. Ricardo R. Fernández, The Bronx, New York. (Seated, L-R) Dr. Sally J Andrade, El Paso, Texas, Board Secretary; Mr. Jesse S. Treviño, McAllen, Texas; Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO; Mr. Juventino “Tino” Guerra, San Antonio, Texas, Board Chair; Mr. Othón Medina, El Paso, Texas, Board Vice Chair. (Not shown) Mr. William Acosta, Dallas, Texas; Mr. Leo Zuñiga, San Antonio, Texas.



## Intercultural Development Research Association

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