



Focus: 50th Anniversary – Year in Review

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Envisioning a Bright Future for All Students

by Celina Moreno, J.D.

Editor’s Note: The following is the text of remarks by IDRA President & CEO Celina Moreno, J.D., at IDRA’s 50th Anniversary Gala.

Thank you for celebrating with us tonight as we honor the bold legacy of Dr. José Cárdenas. I think about what it must have been like to take such a leap of faith to leave his superintendent position and start an organization from scratch. Such courage! 50 years later, our team is still driven by his vision.

We believe deeply that all young people have the right to graduate from high-quality public schools that are equitable and well-funded and that prepare every single young person to access and succeed in college – without being forced to abandon their language, gender or cultural identities in order to thrive.

We also envision a reality where bilingualism is not just accessible for middle-class students but as a civil right for all students learning English. That’s why, over the last few years, we trained 3,000 bilingual teachers in the U.S. South and crafted laws to improve their education.

We envision a reality where immigrant students are celebrated not just for what they can add to our economy but for what they mean to our communities. That’s why – whether in the Fifth Circuit this year or in the Texas Legislature session after session – IDRA will

never stop fighting against attacks on the *Texas Dream Act*.

We envision a reality where students are not gaslit by classroom censorship policies that seek to prohibit discussions and ban books about race, gender and sexuality. That’s why IDRA has led advocacy coalitions in Texas and Georgia to fight these policies, launched a resource hub for teachers, and worked with partners to file federal complaints to challenge anti-LGBTQ+ school district policies.

We envision a reality where all students feel safe and welcomed in their schools. That’s why Congress has invited IDRA to testify on the harmful impact of exclusionary school discipline and over policing that is especially harmful to Black students.

We envision a reality in which students go to school free from racial bullying. That’s why IDRA engages in “movement lawyering” and teamed up with courageous Black students and their families to hold community forums, co-write legislation and file federal complaints. We are proud the Office for Civil Rights is actively investigating those complaints in Slaton and Lubbock Cooper ISDs.

50 years later, we remain committed to building community power.
(cont. on Page 2)

We believe deeply that all young people have the right to graduate from high-quality public schools that are equitable and well-funded and that prepare every single young person to access and succeed in college – without being forced to abandon their language, gender or cultural identities in order to thrive.

(Envisioning a Bright Future for All Students, continued from Page 1)

We envision state capitols where policy advocates have deep roots in our communities. That's why, through the IDRA Education Policy Fellows Program – now in its fourth round – we are changing the face of advocacy in Texas and Georgia.

We envision a reality where our communities drive policy change. That's why IDRA leads state and regional policy coalitions like the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition, the Georgia Coalition for Education Justice, and the Southern Education Equity Network. We have united students, educators, and business leaders and equipped them with actionable data to successfully oppose efforts to privatize our public schools.

We envision a reality in which parents are true partners in their children's education. When Texas diluted its high school curriculum, ARISE – the co-creators of IDRA's Education CAFE™ model – demanded better for their children. They collected survey data across the colonias in the Rio Grande Valley and, with IDRA support, used that data to convince 10 school districts to adopt a more advanced graduation plan. Those mamas are powerful – and they know it.

We also envision a reality in which young people are treated as partners in their own education. That's why we created IDRA's Youth Advisory Board, convened a national youth summit, and supported student researchers studying the impacts of the pandemic and inequities in access to ethnic studies courses here in San Antonio.



IDRA staff [l-r]: Annette Ramos; Stephanie Garcia, Ph.D.; Jocellyn Rivera; Lizdela Piñón, Ed.D.; Christie L. Goodman, APR, Fellow PRSA; Claribel Tirú; Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D.; Thomas Marshall III, M.Ed.; María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.; Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.; Celina Moreno, J.D.; Makiah Lyons, J.D.; Morgan Craven, J.D.; Terrence Wilson, J.D.; Hector Bojorquez; Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed.; Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D.; Rebekah Skelton (intern); Michelle Martínez Vega; Silvia Valencia, MBA; Reymundo R. Flores, MBA. [Not shown: Cristina Quintanilla-Muñoz, M.Ed.; Joanna D. Sánchez, Ph.D.]

We envision a reality in which young people have a say in the decisions of today that impact their future. That's why IDRA leads the Alamo STEM Ecosystem to elevate the voices of girls and students of color in science on key issues like climate change. That's why we serve our VisionCoders eighth graders, 90% of whom are students of color. And it's why we continue our youth mentoring and dropout prevention programs like Valued Youth Partnership and Youth Leadership Now to ensure all students, especially those considered "at risk," are prepared for college.

We are in a critical moment for K-12 public schools and higher education. We see what I call the "Texas Three-Step" happening across the country: public schools and universities are being defunded, demonized and privatized.

We are living in a time when so much of the progress that has been made over the past 50 years is at risk. This is not theoretical. We've seen the Supreme Court continue to overturn 45 and 50 years of settled precedent. There is a well-funded and well-coordinated effort to undermine public schools and undo gains made in college diversity. This is not the first time our communities have faced adversity or powerful interests. Nor will it be the last.

But here's the problem with their plan. They don't know on whose shoulders we stand.

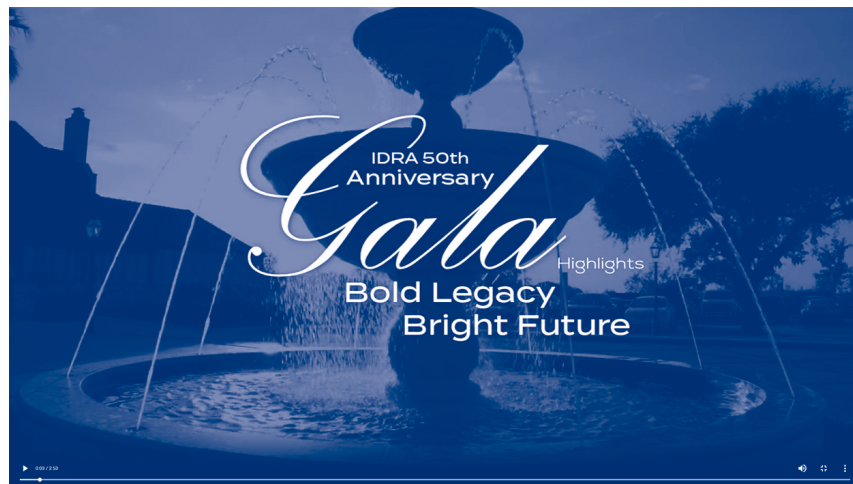
We stand on the shoulders of giants and geniuses, of fighters and farmworkers.

We stand on the shoulders of the young people and families and community organizers and teachers and lawyers who led walkouts and fought their way to the U.S. Supreme Court rather than settle for substandard schools.

And, because they don't know, they underestimate our commitment to continue to fight and stand together to protect Dr. Cárdenas' legacy and the bright future of students across this nation.

We will always choose to have hope in young people and in ourselves and to build people power. *Estoy asegurada que juntos, Si venceremos.*

Celina Moreno, J.D., is President & CEO of IDRA. Comments and questions may be directed to her via email at contact@idra.org.



See the highlights video from IDRA's 50th Anniversary Gala, featuring: Dr. Carmen Tafolla, Former State Poet Laureate of Texas
<https://idra.news/IDRAat50galaVideo>

Anniversary Year in Review

Since the *Rodríguez v. San Antonio ISD* Supreme Court ruling in 1973 allowed a host of inequities in school funding to continue, IDRA has transformed public education by providing dynamic educator training, actionable research, innovative student and parent leadership programs, and bold policy advocacy in the southern United States and across the nation.

During the last five decades, IDRA helped write the first bilingual education law in the state of Texas, one of the strongest in the nation. IDRA also provides expert testimony to Congress on school safety, discipline, dropout rates and funding. IDRA implements powerful student and family leadership programs that have touched millions of lives. And IDRA has added more than 800 bilingual, science, math, ESL, and bilingual special education teachers to more than 55 school districts. The list of milestones and IDRA's real-world impact goes on.

IDRA has been celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout 2023, reflecting on a small group of concerned citizens who in 1973 set out to change the world and defend all students and their right to an excellent and equitable education.

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

This year has not just been a celebration of IDRA's accomplishments over the last 50 years, but also a commitment to the next 50 and beyond – a commitment to equity, access, excellence, and the recognition of the inherent value of every student who steps into a classroom.

IDRA 50th Anniversary Video Gallery

Gala Program Video

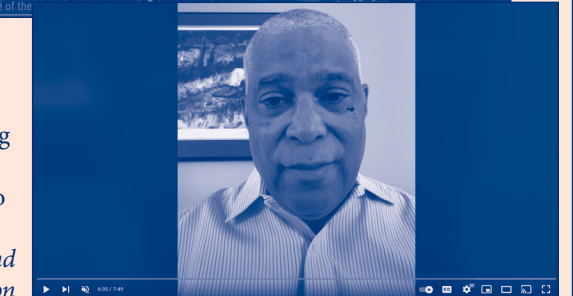
"José would have been proud of what IDRA has become."

– Laura Cárdenas, wife of the late Dr. José A. Cárdenas (IDRA Founder)

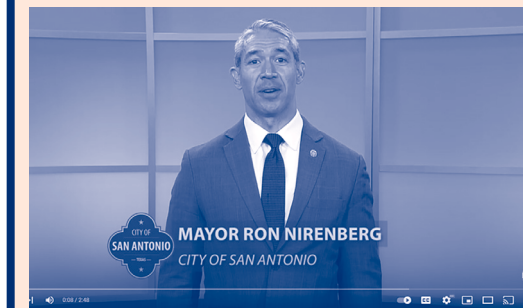


"I don't know very many organizations that have both the capacity for rigorous policy analysis on the one hand and strong organizing and advocacy chops on the other. It's the blend of those two things that stands IDRA apart."

– Kent McGuire, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation



<https://idra.news/IDRAat50video>



San Antonio Mayor's Congratulatory Video

"Over the past five decades, IDRA has been an extraordinary force for transformational change in education, both here in our city and across the nation."

– San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg (and former IDRA intern)

<https://idra.news/IDRAat50MayorNirenberg>

Tribute Videos

See our anniversary video gallery for messages from public officials, community leaders and students.



Phyllis Gant, Lubbock NAACP

Jordan Madden, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition

Texas State Senator José Menéndez

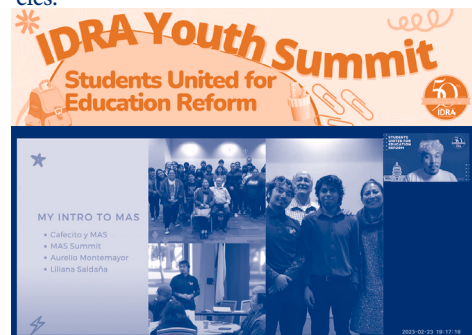
<https://idra.news/IDRAat50videoGallery>

Highlights of IDRA's 50th Anniversary Calendar of Events

This year, IDRA held events to both celebrate our anniversary and, importantly, do so with members of the education community, public officials, and longtime supporters. These are people who have been part of IDRA's story since the beginning and those who are doing the work with us today.

National Youth Summit

We started the year with a national virtual youth summit because IDRA's reason for being is students. IDRA's virtual summit was planned by students for others to learn about how they can advocate for safer and more successful learning environments, especially in communities targeted by inequitable education policies.



Day of Action at the Texas Capitol

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) held a day of action at the Texas Capitol to lay out the coalition's priorities for 2023 legislative session. The day included a live-streamed news conference. IDRA convened a group of organizations and individuals in 2001 to found the Texas Latino Education



Coalition, which was later renamed the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition. The coalition has had a strong presence in state-level advocacy since its first days.



Paige Duggins-Clay, IDRA chief legal analysts

Rodríguez v. San Antonio ISD 50th Anniversary Commemoration – The Fight for School Finance Equity: Past, Present and Future

San Antonio is the place where the battle for fair funding of schools in Texas was born with the *Rodríguez vs. San Antonio ISD* case and the series of *Edgewood* cases that followed. The community was at the forefront of what turned out to be a hard and often bitter fight that has continued for decades – the fight to assure that children in this and other communities like it would not continue to suffer under a bad and unjust system of financing schools. This case led to IDRA's founding, also 50 years ago.

On the 50th anniversary of this momentous ruling, IDRA, Trinity University and its Center for Education Leadership, Edgewood ISD and the National Coalition on School Diversity hosted a commemorative event to reflect on the case, its impact, and its legacy of struggle and activism.

IDRA also released a "Law in Education" Classnotes Podcast episode on the history of the case, its impact, the litigation that followed, and how the case led to IDRA's founding. And, with the National Coalition on School Diversity, we co-hosted a Twitter Chat (#RodriguezAt50).

See video replay and data dashboards: <https://idra.news/Rodriguez50thEvent>.

(cont. on Page 5)



Rodríguez v. San Antonio 50th Anniversary Commemoration Panelists [l-r]: Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA, President & CEO; Chandra Kring Villanueva, Every Texan, Director of Policy & Advocacy; Albert Cortez, Ph.D., Former Director of Policy IDRA – Retired; Al Kauffman, J.D., Professor of Law, St. Mary's University

(50th Anniversary Events Highlights, continued from Page 1)

José A. Cárdenas School Finance Symposium

IDRA held a symposium featuring research by two IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows. Dr. Vanessa A. Sansone, presented her study that examined CARES Act funding and spending patterns among Hispanic-serving institutions in Texas. Dr. David Martínez presented his analysis of South Carolina school finance priorities in high-proportion LatinX school districts during COVID-19.



IDRA established the José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program in 2013 to honor the memory of IDRA founder, Dr. José Angel Cárdenas. The program is engaging the nation's most promising researchers in investigating school finance solutions that secure equity and excellence for all public school students.

During the symposium, we also had a bonus presentation by a team of high school students on the results of their youth participatory action research study. The four students – Josué Peralta de Jesús, 12th grade, San Antonio; Kennedy Moore, 12th grade, Frisco; Manav Lund, 12th grade, Austin; Shreya Selvaraju, 11th grade, Austin – were members of IDRA's Youth Advisory Board in 2022.

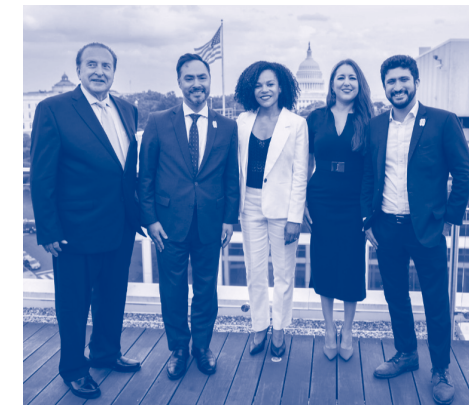
See video replay and research reports: <https://idra.news/Symposium23Reg>.

IDRA Board Reception in Washington D.C.



U.S. Department of Education Deputy Secretary Cynthia "Cindy" Marten

In July, IDRA hosted a 50th Anniversary Board Reception in Washington, D.C., along with host committee partners Legal Defense Fund, MALDEF, National Coalition on School Diversity, and Seek Common Ground.



Board Reception Guests [l-r]: IDRA Board Chair Juventino "Tino" Guerra; Congressman Joaquin Castro; IDRA National Director of Policy, Advocacy and Community Engagement Morgan Craven; IDRA President & CEO Celina Moreno; Congressman Greg Casar

The reception featured a keynote address from U.S. Department of Education Deputy Secretary Cynthia "Cindy" Marten and remarks by Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernández, Congressman Joaquin Castro, IDRA President & CEO Celina Moreno, and IDRA National Director of Policy, Advocacy and Community Engagement Morgan Craven.

IDRA's reception was a celebration of 50 years of fighting for and with young people and families for excellent and equitable schools. It was also a call to action to continue that fight through strong partnerships and strategic planning. See video highlights: <https://idra.news/50thReceptionDC>.

Paving the Way for Educational Justice – IDRA 50th Anniversary Archives Donation Reception

As some state leaders attempt to limit learning and discussions of diversity, our communities will not be silenced. On November 16, the University of Texas at Austin welcomed IDRA – one of the nation's leading education civil rights organizations – for its 50th anniversary celebration and archives dedication.

Down the street in Austin, the state legislature debated whether to increase school funding or to divert millions for privatization. At the same time, the State Board of Education worked to codify censorship policies that restrict classroom learning about diversity and true history.

At our reception, we discussed the importance of connecting past social justice movements with the current struggle to protect our histories and civil rights. IDRA's 50-year archives at the LILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections provides resources for students and researchers. Participants got a glimpse of IDRA's impact across the decades in advocating for equal educational opportunity across the nation and leading today's fight for educational justice.

Co-sponsors were: IDRA; LILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections; Center for Mexican American Studies, College of Liberal Arts, UT Austin; College of Education, UT Austin; Department of Mexican American & Latina/o

Studies, College of Liberal Arts, UT Austin; Latino Research Institute, College of Liberal Arts, UT Austin; Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs, UT Austin; and William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Law, UT School of Law. See the video replay at: <https://idra.news/50thReceptionUT>.



Araceli García, UT Law student & former IDRA Education Policy Fellow

Recognitions in 2023

City of San Antonio Declares IDRA Day

In recognition of IDRA's 50th anniversary gala celebration, the City of San Antonio issued a proclamation declaring November 2, 2023, to be "IDRA Day." See the proclamation and the video message from Mayor Ron Nirenberg: <https://www.idra.org/50th>.



San Antonio Business Journal Honors IDRA

The San Antonio Business Journal recognized IDRA's community leadership during its non-profit awards ceremony. The event video featured IDRA's new VisionCoders program in eight San Antonio middle schools.



Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA President & CEO, and Stephanie Garcia, IDRA STEM and Gender Equity Specialist

Bexar County Commissioners Court Recognizes IDRA

During IDRA's 50th anniversary and gala, Bexar County Judge Peter Sakai presented a proclamation recognizing the contributions of IDRA for 50 years at the local, state and federal levels.

Texas Senate Recognizes IDRA's 50 Years of Work for Education Equity

On March 1, 2023, the Texas Senate adopted Resolution 262 to recognize IDRA's 50th anniversary in 2023 and celebrate its commitment to education equity and excellence. The resolution was filed by Sen. José Menéndez and co-authored by Sen. Judith Zaffirini and Sen. Roland Gutierrez. See the resolution and video: <https://idra.news/50thTxSenResolutionW>.



A team of IDRA staff were present to receive the Texas Senate resolution.

TABE Advocate Award

The Texas Association for Bilingual Education honored IDRA with the Joe J. Bernal TABE Community Advocate Award. Now more than ever, IDRA remains committed to supporting bilingual education through policy, research, celebrating our emergent bilingual students and supporting our bilingual teachers. The award was particularly special since its namesake, Dr. Bernal, is a former IDRA board member.



Lizdelia Piñón, Ed.D., IDRA's bilingual education and bilingual special education specialist, and Joanna Sánchez, Ph.D., senior policy researcher

Media Coverage Highlights

A number of media outlets featured IDRA and our 50-year legacy. Here are some headlines. The full list and links to stories are online here: <https://www.idra.org/50th>.

- IDRA President and CEO Celina Moreno | ¡Nosotros! with Elaine Ayala
- Commentary: Civil rights icon Dolores Huerta, 93 and 'still raising hell,' by Nancy M. Preyor-Johnson, San Antonio Express-News



Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA President & CEO, and Morgan Craven, J.D., national director of policy, advocacy and community engagement

- 50 Years of Strengthening Education in SA, Nation, by KABB-TV Focus on South Texas
- Podcast: Knowledge is Power: 50 Years of Advancing Education Equity with IDRA, by Scott Atnip, Weekly Witness by Texas Impact
- IDRA 50th Anniversary with host Martha Tijerina, CTSA Catholic Television of San Antonio
- A 50-year-old court case still shapes Texas school funding today, by Camille Phillips, Texas Public Radio
- Latinas in Education, ¡SALUD!, KLRN-TV
- Bridging the Gap – KDRY Radio, San Antonio
- How YOU can impact education policy – Empowering student voices, The Nicest Nick
- "This is our legacy" — Commemorating 50 years of the fight for school finance equity in *Rodríguez vs San Antonio ISD*, Texas Public Radio: Fronteras



Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., IDRA senior education associate

Bold Legacy, Bright Future – IDRA's 50th Anniversary Gala

In November, our anniversary gala brought together over 300 educators, policymakers, researchers, students and advocates from across the nation for a celebration of five decades of advocating excellent and equitable public schools for all students. It was a special evening to pay tribute to IDRA's bold legacy and to look to a bright future for the young people for whom, and with whom, we do this work.

Held at the Red Berry Estate in San Antonio, guests were greeted with the music of student mariachis from Judson and South San Antonio ISDs. Chuck Cureau, Spurs in-arena host and SeaWorld public relations manager, served as emcee. Dignitaries shared their messages of congratulations. Bexar County Judge Peter Sakai presented a proclamation (see Page 6) and San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg sent a video message (see Page 3).

In his opening remarks, the Honorable Juventino "Tino" Guerra, IDRA Board of Directors chair said: "José Cárdenas' legacy lives on in the countless lives that have been transformed by IDRA's work. He ignited a flame that has continued to burn so brightly under the leadership of President Emerita Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, and now President and CEO, Celina Moreno."



Dolores Huerta, Co-Founder of United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez

Dr. Robledo Montecel shared her reflections: "IDRA is itself an innovation. Our evolving and growing ability to work strategically and in real-time across research, policy and practice is crucial. IDRA will continue to create innovations that disrupt the failure of schools to educate all students. We are, at our core, faithful to children: All children are valuable; none is expendable."

With the support of our sponsors, we welcomed students representing various areas of our work, including special guest speakers. High school freshman, Kaleb Dunn, spoke about his experience as an inaugural IDRA

VisionCoders student, "This program really inspired me to go into the technical field."

University student, James Wilson, added: "IDRA was there for the Georgia Youth Justice Coalition when we started building our advocacy presence, and the backing and promotion that IDRA provided us did more than help us – it legitimized our presence and solidified our standing in Georgia's advocacy space."

Celina Moreno announced the new name of IDRA's Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel Gadfly Award, for Dr. Robledo Montecel's continued dedication to IDRA and its mission. IDRA was pleased to name Dolores Huerta as the first recipient of that award. She is the founder and president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation and co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America with Cesar Chavez. IDRA commissioned an original *alebrije* gadfly for Ms. Huerta by artist Paul Blas Tomas of San Pedro Canonos, Oaxaca.



In her keynote remarks, Ms. Huerta stated: "Everything that you're fighting for... is absolutely crucial. Every single person here deserves a quality education... In school, what do we do? We read about history. We talk about history. We write about history. But when we become activists, we make history. That is what you have done. IDRA has made history. We have to expand that to every single person. We can make it happen. Yes, we can!" Then, Ms. Huerta led the audience in a "Si Se Puede" chant.

The evening closed with a toast by Dr. Carmen Tafolla, State Poet Laureate of Texas in 2015. Videos, photos and the event program are available online at: <https://idra.news/GalaInfo>.

Thank you to our 50th Anniversary Gala Sponsors!

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Focus: 50th Anniversary – Year in Review



January 21, 2024 • U.S. Supreme Court Ruling Lau v. Nichols • 50th Anniversary

The *Lau v Nichols* U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1974 defined the right of emergent bilingual students to equal access to a meaningful education.

IDRA founder Dr. José Cárdenas testified in the case and then assisted the Office for Civil Rights in the development of the *Lau Remedies*, the first guide for schools about serving emergent bilingual students.

In January 2024, we will honor the ruling's anniversary, its impact for students and what it means for today.

**IDRA is co-hosting a commemorative webinar via
Claremont Graduate University
School of Educational Studies**
January 22, 2024 • 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm CT

Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA President & CEO, will speak alongside the *Lau* plaintiff lawyer, school superintendents, policy experts and academics. They will discuss the policy and practice implications of the ruling through to today.

Co-Sponsors: CABE • Californians Together • Center for Equity & Bilinguality in Education Research at San Diego State University • Center for Equity for English Learners at Loyola Marymount University • Children's Equity Project at Arizona State University • IDRA • NABE

 <https://idra-resource.center/Lau50Event>

*achieving equal educational opportunity for every child
through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college*