

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



# OPPORTUNITY MATT3RS

COMPELLING FACTS

SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS

COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP

# Message from the President



We live in times of great flux, speed, connectivity and change.

This past year, from waves of human activism around the world, to natural and human-made disasters, to the ending of wars and the beginning of presidential campaigns, it seemed as if world events were converging at warp speed—and creating a greater and greater sense of interconnectivity.

Education is also changing. Our schools are more diverse, we use more technology, and education seems to be at the top of most agendas. But one thing hasn't changed: too many children, in too many places across our country, are left out.

If we believe the forecasts, the pace of human connectivity and information-sharing around the globe is now set to double every year. Educational opportunity needs that quickening pace, that exponential growth.

At IDRA we have been focusing on acceleration through three strategies: (1) with compelling facts, we make the case for quality schools for all; (2) by nurturing sustainable connections, we seek to produce significant results for children; and (3) in promoting courageous leadership, we aim to catalyze action and change that creates quality schooling for all. We seek to expand opportunity, for example, by partnering with African American, Latino and Native American leaders, across the south and southwest to secure children's educational rights; by preparing teachers like Tiffini Pruitt for classroom leadership; or by promoting the transformation of a region and its schools, in partnership with school, family, community and youth leaders.

One of many ways in which we continue to focus on opportunity is in our work to begin the José Angel Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program, in honor of IDRA's founder who passed away in 2011. In José's memory, this program will engage the nation's most promising researchers in investigating school finance solutions that secure excellence and equity.

We also continue to use our Quality Schools Action Framework™ across all of IDRA's work. The framework provides a comprehensive action model for developing solutions that value young people, use data, build skilled coalitions, fund schools fairly, govern schools effectively, engage students, parents and communities, and provide high quality teaching in high quality courses.

In tough economic times, there is always a tendency toward retrenchment. But when it comes to education, effective innovation and smart investment in creating quality schools that serve all children not only pay off but are the key to economic vitality for our neighborhoods and for the country.

Opportunity matters. It matters to our toddlers, learning to sound out their first words, to our middle schoolers, as they come to know polynomials, and to our high school and college graduates, as they prepare for and work hard to define their own future.

Working together, we can make the most of the opportunities that we have each been given in life. And together, we can make sure that the door is open wider for our children, and our children's children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "María Robledo Montecel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. María Robledo Montecel, *IDRA President*

"If we believe the forecasts, the pace of human connectivity and information-sharing around the globe is now set to double every year. Educational opportunity needs that quickening pace, that exponential growth."



## 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
- 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.

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# Compelling Facts:

## Making the Case for Excellent, Equitable Education

“You have been a leader on issues of civil rights and equitable educational opportunities for all students. There is no other organization or agency [in the] position to do this work.”—Velma L. Cobb, Director, Region II Equity Assistance Center, writing about IDRA’s work in equity, New York, 2011

From classrooms to state capitols, IDRA is partnering with teachers, lawmakers and school, community, business and family leaders to secure the right of every child to a high quality public education. We provide research studies, data analyses, technical assistance and training, models, best practices, and examples of equity and excellence in action—the resources that people need to take bold, effective leadership. In making the case for children’s educational and civil rights, for funding equity, and for school holding power, IDRA and our partners are working to transform classrooms, policies and systems, to create schools that work for all children.

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### Making the Case: Children’s Educational and Civil Rights

“IDRA has helped our state’s children, often in the most educationally at-risk communities, by helping us improve the provision of educational services these children deserve.”

—Dr. Andre Guerrero, Programs for Language Minority Students, Arkansas Department of Education, 2011

The right of every child to receive an education free from discrimination is at the heart of our democracy. Realizing this right demands deep commitment and extensive collaboration. IDRA’s South Central Collaborative for Equity, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, takes up the charge in partnership with school administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas (federal Region VI). The center is at the forefront of efforts to protect every child’s right to attend school, free from bias or discrimination.

Longstanding achievement gaps demand our attention: Since 1990, although overall national scores have improved, Black and Latino students score lower than White students on every assessment, and substantial achievement gaps have persisted for the last two decades.<sup>1</sup>

Last year, IDRA’s SCCE assisted states, local school districts and public schools across the region to analyze and take action to address disparities in student achievement, particularly in reading, science and mathematics, and the under-representation of minority students in gifted and talented programs. We partnered with other centers in the West, the South and the Southeast to spotlight persistent problems of inequity facing the nation’s public schools through major state and regional conferences, from the Statewide Multicultural Education Conference in Oklahoma to the Texas Association of Black School Educators conference, the Southern Minority Leadership Conference, and the Denver Native American Civil Rights conference. The SCCE worked intensively with regional Offices for Civil Rights, the Department of Justice and school boards,



superintendents, and community partners to help schools make fundamental changes in response to court-mandated charges. And the center is working with southern and southwestern communities in the midst of dramatic demographic shifts to provide leaders with the resources and technical assistance to serve all children well.

**“Your expertise has strengthened the teaching practices among every teacher in our school.”**

–**Sandy M. Doland**, Principal, Harold Keller Elementary School, Louisiana, 2011

Last year, more than 400 schools and education agencies received training from IDRA’s SCCE, focused on building local capacity to address achievement and equity gaps. In places like Louisiana’s Harold Keller Elementary School, the results are evident. Located in southeast Louisiana between Lake Pontchartrain and the Gulf of Mexico, Jefferson Parish has long been a community in change. The Parish also saw dramatic changes in its student body following Hurricane Katrina, coming to serve students who speak Urdu, Vietnamese, Korean, Arabic, in addition to Spanish, as first languages. Principal Sandy M. Doland has partnered with IDRA to leverage the cultural and linguistic strengths of all children, “valuing every student,” as she says, “without exception.” Teachers are building on technical assistance and training through IDRA’s Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal model to strengthen their work with English learners. And Keller Elementary is taking up technology integration strategies developed in partnership with IDRA to engage English learners in mathematics, reading and writing through student script-writing and video production. Under Ms. Doland’s leadership, the school has ranked in the top three Jefferson Parish campuses for several years running.

#### **Weaving the Future—Zuni Public Schools Strategic Planning to Expand Academic Achievement**

**“It was educational to learn new strategies and approaches for bringing about change in school systems.”**

–**Della Warrior**, MICA Group Project Director, Albuquerque, 2011

Surrounded by mesas, the Zuni Public School District is located about 150 miles west of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Zuni PSD serves a student community that is 99 percent Native American; almost half of students are English learners. Through a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, IDRA has partnered with the MICA Group and Zuni PSD, as the district develops a strategic plan to promote academic growth and achievement for all students that builds on and values Zuni language and culture.

Zuni Public Schools Mission: Tuwal’an demla yanse’liyahna detse’mak a:wianikwadidun’ona /  
To empower a community of learners



Through IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, schools are preventing attrition and tutors (pictured here, from Georgia and Texas) are transforming lives.

## Making the Case: Funding Equity

Money matters. To serve all children well, schools in every community need the means to hire and retain highly qualified teachers, to provide for a quality curriculum and to meet the unique needs of an increasingly diverse student body. Founded in 1974 around a core commitment to equity, IDRA continues to serve as a national resource on public school funding. Because a patchwork of state systems is not getting the job done, this past year, in testimony to the U.S. Department of Education's Equity and Excellence Commission, IDRA called for (1) an increased federal role in supporting educational funding for equity and excellence across states; (2) federal funding to amplify community and family leadership in education; and (3) a new constitutional amendment that secures education as a fundamental right.

In Texas, where lawmakers cut \$6.4 billion from public education and put off plans to improve equity for another day, IDRA has been working in partnership with MALDEF and the Equity Center as they and other coalitions bring one of the largest challenges to Texas' school finance policies in the state's history.

**“Thank you to IDRA for all of their leadership in presenting roundtable sessions across the state on Fair Funding Now! for Texas schools.”**

—**Velma Ybarra**, LULAC Texas State Education Chair, 2011

Through IDRA's Fair Funding Now! initiative, this fall we also partnered with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Mexican American School Board Members Association (MASBA) and the Texas Center for Educational Policy (TCEP) at the University of Texas at Austin, to convene school finance roundtables with hundreds of school, community and family leaders from Austin and Alamo to Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, El Paso and San Antonio. And we are providing bilingual (Spanish/English) analytical tools, policy briefings, data and resources for grassroots leaders statewide. Equipped with these tools and a compelling case for equity, school and community leaders around the state are now convening their own gatherings, calling attention to the impacts of funding cuts and underlying structural inequity, drafting resolutions that call on the state to change course, and engaging new partners in the press for fair funding. IDRA and its partners are encouraging educators and advocates across the country to push for excellence and equity. LULAC's national education office attended sessions to learn about and share the model, and NAACP asked IDRA to present on Fair Funding Now! at the Daisy Bates Education Summit in Memphis.

“At all school levels . . . students in high-poverty and predominantly minority schools have far less access to teacher quality than students in low-poverty and predominantly White schools.”<sup>ii</sup>



## SchoolFunding.Crowdmap.com

Using IDRA's [schoolfunding.crowdmap.com](http://schoolfunding.crowdmap.com), educators and grassroots leaders around the state are sharing their stories about how state budget cuts are affecting children in their district.

“Han cortado los fondos para comprar material por los clases. En una clase de ciencia, una maestra tenía que comprar los materiales para enseñar esa clase—usando su propio dinero. / Funds to buy materials for classes were cut. In one science class, a teacher had to buy the materials for class, using her own money.” Posting from Donna, Texas

“My third grader’s math specialist position was cut. He’s now spread between three schools. Ours isn’t one of them. We could really see a difference in how our daughter was improving when she was meeting with him.” Posting from Helotes, Texas



## Making the Case: Strong School Holding Power

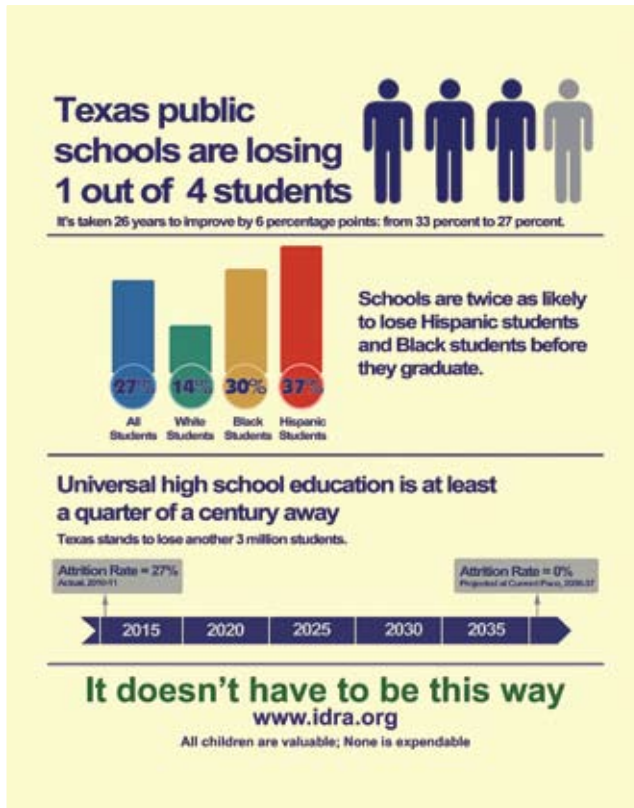
School holding power is a term used by IDRA to describe the capacity that schools and their communities have to hold on to and prepare students for graduation, college and career. IDRA is promoting strong school holding power by providing independent, longitudinal data on the magnitude and impact of attrition along with strategic solutions for preventing dropouts and raising graduation rates.

### From Dropping Out to Holding On: IDRA's 2010-11 Annual Attrition Study

The Texas attrition rate dipped below 30 percent for the second year in a row; still, 27 percent of students leave school before graduating. Alarming, graduation gaps among White and Black students and White and Latino students are wider than they were in the mid-1980s. And at the current rate, the state is on a path to losing 2.8 million more students to attrition over the next 25 years. These are among the findings that IDRA released in its latest 2010-11 Texas Annual Attrition Study,<sup>iii</sup> along with data sets searchable by county and service center region and tools to improve graduation rates.

Since 1986, when IDRA conducted the first comprehensive study of dropout in the state of Texas, IDRA's attrition study has provided independent longitudinal data and analysis that keeps the dropout issue on the front burner. Along with sharing study findings, IDRA is working with policymakers to ensure that dropout counts and reporting procedures are appropriate and accurate. Media, policymakers, researchers, communities and educators have used IDRA's attrition studies to push for changes.

Dissemination of study findings in 2011, through IDRA e-News and Graduation for All e-letters, media coverage and social networks put data in the hands of tens of thousands of people across the state. Findings provided core data for a series of place-based Education Snapshot publications that IDRA developed and presented in community gatherings in El Paso, Pflugerville, Houston and San Antonio. The cohort methodology used for the study has informed the design of national, independent research on dropout and graduation rates.



## Making the Case via Social Media

IDRA is at the forefront of using new communication technologies to spread information that spurs action. Tens of thousands of people visit IDRA's website each month, downloading timely and reliable education research, reports and data. IDRA's award-winning Classnotes Podcast series, with 99 episodes downloaded more than 143,000 times by listeners, gives teachers and administrators practical information and in-depth perspectives on best practices for English learners. IDRA's bilingual (Spanish/English) OurSchool portal provides campus, district and state level data in Texas. Structured around IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework™, the portal is regularly used in city, state, and regional gatherings throughout Texas and communities outside of Texas have asked for us to develop similarly structured data sets.

Capturing research and innovation in practice and policy, the IDRA Newsletter ensures that more than 5,000 readers have the tools they need to serve diverse learners. Through email, IDRA e-News

provides updates, alerts, resources and education news that help operationalize best practice nationally. IDRA's Graduation for All e-letter in English and Spanish provides research and models of effective partnership to a 2500+ subscriber base, with reposts often reaching an additional 20,000 to 40,000 readers. The value of IDRA's publications is reflected in "open" and "click rates," which regularly exceed rates for the sector. Dissemination is augmented with IDRA accounts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Delicious, to bring resources to school, community and family leaders via a broad range of social media, networks and bookmarking sites.

**IDRA stands for a simple proposition: that public education should serve all children equitably and well.**

### Recent Testimony and Statements

- Equal Access to a Quality Education—The Civil Rights Issue of Our Generation, keynote address by IDRA President Dr. María Robledo Montecel, Office for Civil Rights Conference, New Orleans (March 29, 2011)
- Texas School Funding Must Serve All Students Equitably, IDRA Perspectives on 2011 Texas School Funding Equity and Related Budget Issues (May 25, 2011)
- Opportunity Matters: The Call to Increase Excellence and Equity, IDRA testimony presented to U.S. Department of Education, Equity and Excellence Commission (June 8, 2011)



# Sustainable Connections:

## Producing Results for Children

Gaps in home-school connections, curricular alignment and student preparation all conspire to weaken student success from early childhood to post-secondary education. We are working with partners across the educational continuum to create sustainable connections that close these gaps, focusing on connections that span prekindergarten professional development to K–12, community and higher education partnerships.

### Connections: Children in Quality Early Learning

There is broad consensus about the importance of early learning to later academic success. Recent research brings this point home: Students who do not read proficiently are far less likely to graduate from high school—and 85 percent of low-income students in America who attend high-poverty schools are not reaching reading proficiency by grade four.<sup>iv</sup>

IDRA's bilingual early childhood curriculum, *Semillitas de Aprendizaje*<sup>™</sup> (Seedlings of Learning) emerges from IDRA's 30 years of experience in early childhood education for diverse populations, research-based early education practices, and lessons learned from IDRA's federally-funded Reading Early for Academic Development (READ) project. IDRA partnered with Head Start centers to develop a model for creating early childhood “centers of excellence.” Such centers are dynamic places for learning and growth, where children develop skills and competencies in oral language development, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge and print awareness. IDRA partnered with teachers, storytellers and illustrators to develop authentic, bilingual materials that strengthen the family-school learning partnership. From richly-illustrated, bilingual big books to a preschool math and self-concept series, and the Cartitas (“letter’s home” series), *Semillitas de Aprendizaje*<sup>™</sup> is helping teachers to foster literacy, numeracy and social-emotional development, while valuing and capitalizing on children’s home language and culture. Funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is enabling IDRA to strengthen early childhood education for children in New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The project is building home-school-community connections, sharing “knowledge and wisdom between generations, empowering children with a historical sense of who they are and increasing community ownership of education.”<sup>v</sup>



### PUBLICATIONS

#### *Semillitas de Aprendizaje*<sup>™</sup>

- Big Books, 10 stories, including *Dos Pollitas Listas ~ Two Smart Chicks*
- Math Set, 15 books, including *El Libro del Uno ~ The Book of One*
- Cartitas Series (Letters Home), 10 English/10 Spanish



In 2010 -11, in the United States and Brazil, about 6,000 children were served by IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

### Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute™

Since 1998, the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute,™ has served as the nation's premier gathering place for teachers, administrators and parents involved in early childhood bilingual education. Participants explore, assess, and reflect on research-based, effective practices that lead to children's success. They attend workshops about creating opportunities for children to develop a love for reading while they are doing mathematics, art, music and science. They visit model early childhood centers and share ideas while seeing them in action. But it is a conference with a nontraditional approach. At the institute, parent participants, instead of serving as the audience to educational specialists and "experts," present sessions on the work they are undertaking in partnership with other family leaders, teachers and administrators that is proving transformational.

### Connections: School-Family Partners for K -20 Success

IDRA's OurSchool portal is unlike other web-based school datasets. Designed around IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework,™ the portal provides actionable data and poses key questions (about student engagement, teaching quality and curriculum quality) coupled with indicators and benchmarks that communities and schools use to develop joint action plans. First developed by IDRA in 2004–05, to inform a series of regional conversations in Texas on the high school dropout issue and graduation, the portal has been central to school-family-community conversations across the state.

In San Antonio's Edgewood school district, a cadre of "Youth Tekies" used the portal to examine student preparation for college in their district through IDRA's TECNO 2.0 project, which brought together a partnership among Edgewood ISD and local, community-based non-profit organizations, including the Edgewood Family Network. Through this project, made possible with support from Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation and the federally-funded IDRA Texas PIRC, Youth Tekies then went on to help their peers navigate questions about whether they should attend college and how to apply. TECNO 2.0 served more than 1,000 low-income Hispanic and other minority 11th and 12th graders in Edgewood.

With a new grant from TG Public Benefit Program, IDRA is expanding the development of the OurSchool portal as a statewide database on college readiness, college sending and participation in developmental courses for every school district in Texas and a tool to help family, community, K–12 and higher education leaders improve academic success, particularly for low-income and minority students. IDRA's bilingual OurSchool portal helps educators and community members find out how



well their high school campus is preparing and graduating students, what factors may be weakening school holding power, and what they can do together to address them.

## Connections: Students with High-Powered STEM Teaching

IDRA works in partnership with hundreds of thousands of educators in the South and Southwest to strengthen curriculum and teaching quality for all students, including English learners. Stellar II was a multi-year partnership between IDRA, Texas State University, San Marcos CISD and the Texas Education Agency designed to improve teaching and learning in science for English learners students using IDRA's Science Smart!™ model. With the implementation of Stellar II, science became a priority across grades. San Marcos school district is now using IDRA's *Science Instructional Strategies for English Learners—A Guide for Elementary and Secondary Grades* and our seven-part *Community Engagement Series for Educators*, to support teachers, principals and administrators in home-school partnerships that increase graduation and college enrollment. We are also collaborating with instructional coaches to assess student strengths and needs, analyze data, and model lesson demonstrations.

IDRA's interactive Science Smart!™ professional development model provides teachers with scientifically-based strategies to teach scientific concepts, build critical thinking skills, and improve problem-solving abilities and processes by linking into the curricula teachers are currently using, and weaving in technology and assessment tools. The impact has been significant, with schools meeting AYP within one to two years of implementation, and teacher leadership and instructional transformation evident through classroom observations and improved student achievement. Results have shown double-digit gains in standardized tests in high school science, including one school that experienced a 25 percentage point gain in its exit-level science scores.

## Connections: Teachers with Communities of Practice

Bringing together in-person professional development with web-based networks, IDRA is connecting teachers to tools, resources and key research and networks of peers that strengthen and support their work. Through one such network, IDRA Teachers Network on Ning, teachers are invited to share effective STEM curricula, online resources for tech-savvy classrooms, and best practices for engaging diverse students in language, mathematics and science. IDRA's Teachers Network on Ning is an online home for: resources for bilingual certified, mathematics, science and ESL teachers; forums and discussions that encourage collaboration and communication among teachers on how to strengthen their classroom practice; and podcasts and live feeds that share news and resources for new teachers.

### Classnotes Podcasts

- Bilingual Stories for Young Learners –Episode 80
- IDRA Annual La Semana del Niño Early Childhood Educators Institute™ –Parent Institutes for Education–Episode 89

# Courageous Leadership:

## Catalyzing Action and Change

Change, particularly at a time of recession and polarization, takes courage. IDRA is working to foster, nurture and amplify the kind of courage that builds opportunity for all children. We are partnering with schools and universities to prepare a new generation of administrators and bilingual teachers, ready to inspire and lead change. We are collaborating with community- and faith-based organizations and family leaders to strengthen their impact as education partners and advocates. And we are engaging youth as leaders through programs that value their energy, contribution and perspective.

### Courageous Classroom Leadership

“Because of the assistance provided by IDRA, the Ector County ISD community has come together like never before to embrace the future.”

—Hector Mendez, Superintendent of Schools, Ector County ISD, Texas, 2011

IDRA has teamed up with more than twenty K–12 schools and universities across Texas to prepare a new generation of skilled, effective teachers to lead and innovate in schools that need them most. Through our Transitions to Teaching programs, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, we and our partners recruit, prepare and train effective new teachers in math, science, bilingual/ESL and special education fields. And through coaching, mentoring, in-person and online networks, we are building the kinds of professional communities that nurture classroom success and campus leadership. Our Teachers for Today and Tomorrow (T<sup>3</sup>) project, a “grow-your-own” model, is preparing effective teachers in bilingual/ESL and STEM subjects through a comprehensive, rigorous and accelerated curriculum and support system. The Caminos project addresses the critical need for effective bilingual special education teachers. And Math and Science Smart (MASS) selects and prepares mid-career professionals as middle and high school math and science teachers with an ESL supplemental endorsement for high-need Texas school districts.

### Coaching and Mentoring and Professional Development to Lead

No matter how well prepared, for the brand new teacher, the first year on campus can be tough. IDRA’s coaching and mentoring model, which pairs novice and seasoned teachers, helps new teachers not only to survive but to take up leadership as advocates for all students’ success. Mentors are trained in culturally-proficient coaching to help new teachers respond to highly diverse classrooms, and in the process they become trusted advisors, role models and co-teachers. At the same time, IDRA provides coaching, in-class demonstrations and training that strengthens teacher efficacy. Through professional sessions, *platicas*, for teachers, we cover strategies for working with second language learners, classroom management and hands-on content area instruction. IDRA also prepares mentors to work with the new teachers through classroom demonstrations, co-teaching, identifying mentoring needs, engaging students and effective parent engagement.

### Partners in Promoting Teacher Efficacy and Leadership this Past Year

- K–12: Dallas ISD, Eagle Pass ISD, Ector County ISD, Edgewood ISD, Fort Worth ISD, George Gervin Academy, Harlandale ISD, Higgs Carter King Charter School, Houston ISD, Lamesa ISD, Lubbock ISD, Pasadena ISD, Pearsall ISD, Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD, Plainview ISD, Poteet ISD, Presidio ISD, and Rio Grande CCISD

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“I truly feel blessed to get the opportunity to help others and change the world, one learner at a time—not just every once in a while—but every single day.”—**Tiffini Pruitt**, as she prepares to become fully certified through IDRA’s Texas MASS program.

- University: Alamo Colleges, Laredo Community College, Our Lady of the Lake University, Tarleton State University, Texas Woman's University and University of North Texas, St. Thomas University, Texas Tech University, Texas State University San Marcos

### In 2011, through IDRA Programs

- **48** highly-qualified bilingual/ESL and STEM teachers were hired by high-need school districts, through T<sup>3</sup>
- **75** highly-qualified bilingual and special education teachers were hired by high-need school districts, through Caminos
- **111** candidates became teachers of record in secondary math and science classrooms in high-need school districts, through MASS

Coaching and mentoring also is at the core of IDRA's Math Smart! model. Designed to help schools improve mathematics learning and close achievement gaps in highly diverse districts, Math Smart! builds on teachers' strengths to deepen their content knowledge and help them to capitalize on the unique cultural and linguistic strengths that students bring to the classroom. Achieving significant academic gains through Math Smart! implementation in three school districts, IDRA operated the third year of a three-year partnership with Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD to implement Math Smart! with teachers in three high schools. From 2008 to 2011, schools saw a 13 percent improvement in student passing rates for all three schools. In Memorial High School, the 10th grade improvement was 40 percent.

## Courageous Community Leadership

**"There has not been a moment in our recent history when college education has been as crucial to the success of our communities as the present time. Neither has there been a time when succeeding in a post-secondary educational system has been as difficult for Valley students. In these difficult contexts, we welcome the imagination and the ingenuity of IDRA and their work for equal education for all."**

—Michael Seifert, Equal Voice Network, Texas, 2011

It is a perfect storm. In the Lower Rio Grande Valley, in South Texas, a wave of new education funding cuts has crashed into a history of structural neglect. In the spring of 2011, Texas' legislature cut more than \$170 million dollars from public schools serving children in Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy and Starr County—depriving resources from a region where 40 percent of students are lost annually to attrition.<sup>vi</sup>

At the same time, a growing, powerful network of community-based organizations is building a movement of families along the U.S.-Mexico border—and partnering with schools—to press for change. Funded by the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Equal Voice Network-Rio Grande Valley is a network of community- and faith-based organizations working in severely economically distressed communities in South Texas. With a grant from the foundation, IDRA is partnering with these community organizations to provide capacity-building support—from strategic planning and policy analysis, tools for evaluation and development of web-based networks and communications, to leadership development curricula.

IDRA has partnered with the cross-sector EV-RGV Education Working Group, for example, to foster family and community advocacy and leadership for school improvement. Together, we developed key information for families on how new high school graduation requirements could impact their children's chances to go to college. We convened and supported community forums that provide families with the data on high school graduation, college-sending rates and education resources in the Valley, to support their advocacy on behalf of their own children and children across the region.

This year, IDRA is working with EV-RGV to provide leadership training curriculum, to train community leaders in education advocacy and to provide policy tools for the network's education advocacy campaigns. We will also conduct network assessments for the South Texas and the Mississippi Delta regions.

IDRA's *Abogar* ("advocate") project, funded by the Kresge Foundation, leverages our work with community organization networks. The project emerged from organizational assessments and comprehensive environmental scans of needs in Central and South Texas. Through *Abogar*, IDRA is partnering with community-based non-profits in South Texas, to strengthen their capacity—through organizational development, program development, collaboration, community engagement and evaluation of effectiveness—to decrease poverty rates in the region.

## Courageous Family Leadership

“When the woman gets educated, the whole family gets educated. Parents who participate in our PTA then approach their school with much more confidence. They are much more ready to talk with school [partners] asking more questions and seeking solutions. Our community is more informed and more assertive.”

—Interview with **Eva Carranza, Emilia Vega, Angelica Nava** and **Carmen Vargas**, leaders of the nation’s first PTA *Comunitario*, founded by ARISE and IDRA, Texas, 2011

Millions of dollars have been invested in initiatives that urge families to care more about education. The problem is that a lack of caring is not the problem. Across decades of experience and work with thousands of families whose children attend high poverty schools, we have found that families care deeply about their children and their children’s future. What *is* often missing is a better way for schools and families to partner so that everyone has a seat at the table. IDRA’s Family Leadership in Education Model aims to capture this approach. In implementing the model, we have found that five practices are crucial:

1. **Focus on accountability**—working around quality data on the core issues that impact children, families and schools can improve the quality of teaching and learning and the policies that impact property-poor schools.
2. **Communicate in a language that is understood**—all gatherings, workshops and training should be conducted in participants’ first language. Simultaneous translation is most effective.
3. **Communicate and participate authentically**—trust comes not from a set of abstract overhead slides, but authentic, participatory, personal and shared experiences in which participants take on real, current challenges affecting children in their schools.
4. **Build technology bridges**—when made navigable, web-based school data, webinars and other technology tools are extraordinarily powerful resources – and students can build language and technology bridges that connect home and school.
5. **Promote leadership through local organizations**—community-based peer and *promotora* models through which parents connect with other parents in the community yield far greater results than traditional volunteering.

The founding of the country’s first PTA *Comunitario*, through a partnership between the community-based ARISE Centers and IDRA, puts these practices in action. PTA *Comunitarios* gather family leaders in Texas’ poorest communities in homes, converted to small community centers. First started in the ARISE South Tower Center two years ago, PTA *Comunitario* meetings are bringing families together to examine Texas education policies and their implications for children’s access to advanced placement, dual credit and pre-algebra courses; the state’s education budget; and college readiness strategies. Family members hosted a dinner for school administrators to talk about shared concerns—and the district’s superintendent promised to bring principals into the conversation at their next community supper. In 2011, Proyecto Juan Diego also partnered with IDRA to start a second PTA *Comunitario*, and *promotoras* in Brownsville Community Health Center’s Mano a Mano program are adding education outreach to their work in health.

The idea that parents don’t care is a myth. When families are treated with dignity and respect, they become the strongest long-term advocates for a quality public education for all children.

“At the heart of its model, and evident throughout its training, is IDRA’s recognition of parents’ invaluable contribution to their own children’s education and development.”

—From *Engaging Parents in Education: Lessons from Five Parental Information and Resource Centers*, Innovations in Education, 2007 <sup>vii</sup>.

**IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center** 2011 marked the completion of the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. From 2006 to 2011, the PIRC served as a home and comprehensive, statewide resource for multicultural, multilingual parent leadership that strengthens family school partnerships to increase student success.



Through PTA *Comunitario* in South Texas, ARISE is building a sustainable model of family leadership.

Major accomplishments of the IDRA Texas PIRC include:

- Provided assistance to parents across the state, offering information and support to 30,000 parents, especially parents with children who attend low-performing schools.
- Helped high-need districts to implement parent involvement, working with 87,000 school leaders, teachers, counselors and parent liaisons.
- Collaborated with early childhood education programs to improve prekindergarten programs and preschoolers' success, partnering with HIPPY program, Head Start, Even Start and families through more than 700 training, technical assistance, conferences and workshops.
- Provided technical assistance and training for Title I parent involvement personnel in the most rural parts of Texas, collaborating with the Texas Education Agency and school districts, from Arlington ISD, Canyon ISD, and Deer Park ISD to Perryton ISD, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, Valley View ISD, among others.
- Shared key data and best practices on multicultural, multilingual family involvement, through webinars, e-letters, social media and networks, articles, and publications, workshops and conferences, reaching tens of thousands of people in Texas and nationally.
- Convened the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Parent Institute,<sup>™</sup> bringing together families from around the state to present on effective school-family partnerships.
- Worked in-depth with community-based organizations to found the country's first PTA *Comunitario* organizations that are engaging family and youth in the poorest communities as partners and leaders in school reform.



Scan this code to hear four leaders of the nation's first PTA *Comunitario* (in Spanish)

## Courageous Youth Leadership

Learning to Lead ~ Leading to Learn: the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

"I have discovered that when my tutees see that I am doing well in school, they also strive to do well. This has been an extremely good motivator for me. I never dreamed that I could possibly make a 3.8 grade point average. Thanks to those young children, I am a much better person than ever. It makes me feel as though anything is possible."

—**Kayla Rugg**, Cumberland County Schools, N.C., winner, 2011 Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program National Essay Contest. Ms. Rugg began attending college in fall 2011 with \$100,000 in scholarships.

IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is a dropout prevention program with a twist: middle and high school students who are considered to be at risk of dropping out are engaged as tutors of younger children. In being valued and called to take up this new role, students rise to the occasion. And, in serving as tutors, mentors and role models, Coca-Cola VYP students feel more connected to school and more engaged in their classes: Ninety-eight percent of tutors stay in school. Started in 1984 with a grant from Coca-Cola USA to IDRA, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has given thousands of youth a chance to feel valued, to lead and to achieve. To date, it has been implemented 550 schools and has impacted 160,390 students (32,078 tutors and 128,312 tutees) in Brazil, the United Kingdom, the United States and Puerto Rico. In the United States, during the 2010–11 school year, the program served 1,828 students in 22 secondary and 22 elementary schools in six school districts in three states: Georgia, North Carolina and Texas. In Brazil, implemented in 18 cities, across eight states, the program served 4,164 students.

### Pathways to Graduation

“IDRA's ongoing efforts to convene and link stakeholders is helping communities and multisector collaboratives to promote and develop pathways to graduation and beyond for minority and low-income students. It is IDRA's commitment to build and nurture relationships between black and Latino communities that stands out especially in an area of the country where demographic shifts can actually divide rather than unite.”

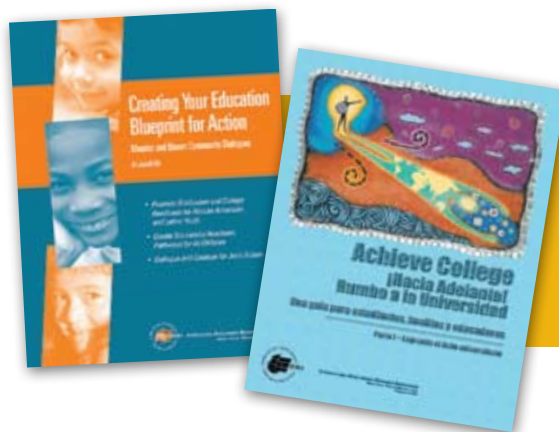
–Yazeed Moore, Program Officer, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Michigan, 2011

Through IDRA's Pathways project, funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, we are partnering with schools and community- and faith-based organizations in the South to promote cross-race dialogue and youth leadership that improves graduation rates and college access. Pathways builds on IDRA's Mendez Brown Community Blueprint Dialogues, which gathered cross-sector Latino and African American leaders in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Mississippi to consider questions of educational access, equity and outcomes in light of landmark court rulings (*Brown vs. Board* and *Mendez vs. Westminster*), and develop joint action to close the gaps. In each of these community gatherings, youth shared their views about the promises of civil rights rulings and how they can be fulfilled. In Canton, Mississippi, we are deepening this work, through Lazos, a cross-race youth leadership initiative. Through leadership training and the power of documentary photography, the project will engage youth to reflect on and recommend ways to improve graduation rates and college access for diverse students in their district.

Pathways community and school partners are using IDRA publications, *Creating Your Education Blueprint for Action—Mendez and Brown Community Dialogues—A Launch Kit* and *Achieve College - ¡Hacia Adelante! ~ A Guide for College Access*, as they carry forward this work.

#### Classnotes Podcasts

- Principal on Creating a College-Going Culture—Episode 86
- A New Model for Community Engagement in Education—Episode 91
- Parents Using Data to Improve Schools—Episode 92



#### PUBLICATIONS

- *Creating Your Education Blueprint for Action—Mendez and Brown Community Dialogues—A Launch Kit*
- *Achieve College ~ ¡Hacia Adelante! ~ A Guide for College Access*



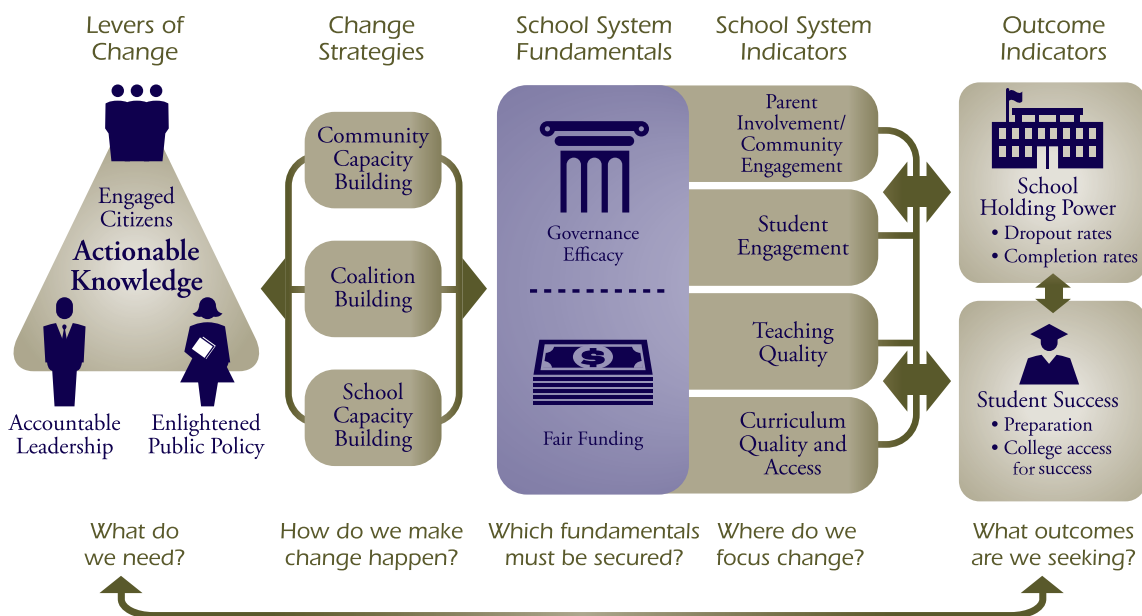
## Opportunity Matters: A Framework for Action

“The Quality Schools Action Framework speaks to the need and possibility of engaging citizens, leaders and policymakers around high quality data that call all of us as members of the community to act, to establish common ground, to strengthen education, and finally and most importantly and fundamentally, to align our values with our investments in the school system.”<sup>viii</sup>

With two outcomes in mind—graduation and student success—IDRA’s Quality Schools Action Framework™ is an empirically-based model that we and our partners use to shape effective, collaborative work on behalf of all children. Whether providing compelling facts (“actionable knowledge”) to spur action; connecting and building capacity among school, community and coalition partners to leverage change; or promoting courageous leadership that secures educational equity and excellence, the framework speaks both to what is needed—and what is possible.

In framing change and forging opportunity for all students, we are grateful to our partners whose dedication is an inspiration to us all.

### Quality Schools Action Framework™



**IDRA's Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework** contains additional illustrations of the framework in action. (Publication available through [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org).)

### References and Endnotes

- i. Hemphill, F.C., & A. Vanneman. *Achievement Gaps: How Hispanic and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NCES 2011-459) (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Vanneman, A., & L. Hamilton, J. Baldwin Anderson, T. Rahman. *Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NCES 2009-455) (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2009).
- ii. Fuller, E. Study on the Distribution of Teacher Quality in Texas Schools (Austin, Texas: Association of Texas Professional Educators, Fall 2010).
- iii. Johnson, R. *Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2010-11 - High School Attrition Continues Downward Trend-Universal High School Graduation is Still a Quarter of a Century Away* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, November 2011).
- iv. Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, 2011
- v. W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Educated Kids/Strategies [December 2011]. <http://www.wkff.org>
- vi. Johnson, R. *Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2010-11 - High School Attrition Continues Downward Trend-Universal High School Graduation is Still a Quarter of a Century Away* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, November 2011).
- vii. U.S. Department of Education. *Engaging Parents in Education: Lessons From Five Parental Information and Resource Centers* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2007).
- viii. Robledo Montecel, M., & Goodman, C.L. (eds). *Courage to Connect-A Quality Schools Action Framework* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2010).

# Statement of Financial Position

August 31, 2011

	2011
<b>Assets</b>	
Total current assets	\$ 1,522,786
Assets designated for development and research	14,439,432
Other assets	188,597
<hr/>	
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>16,150,815</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	
Total current liabilities	70,876
Net assets—undesignated	320,973
Net assets—designated for development and research	14,439,432
Net assets—temporarily restricted	1,319,534
<hr/>	
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$ 16,150,815</b>

# Statement of Activities

Year Ended August 31, 2011

<b>Support and Revenue</b>	
Foundations and governmental	\$ 3,873,742
Program Revenue	1,179,276
Interest and other	232,941
<hr/>	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>5,285,959</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Program services	4,072,423
Management and general	27,253
<hr/>	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>4,099,676</b>
Change in net assets	1,186,283
Net assets, beginning	14,893,656
<b>Net assets, ending</b>	<b>\$ 16,079,939</b>

The Statement of Financial Position as of August 31, 2011, and Statement of Activities for the year ended August 31, 2011, 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 improving equal 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 our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.

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