IDRA NEWSLETTER

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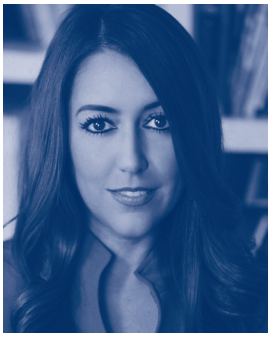
New IDRA CEO Carries on IDRA's Legacy and Future

by Celina Moreno, J.D.



For almost half a century, IDRA has promoted equal educational opportunities for all students, regardless of background. In that time, two visionary leaders have led IDRA: Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel and IDRA's founder, Dr. José A. Cárdenas. I am honored to stand on their shoulders and build upon their legacies. I am also proud to work every day, surrounded by an expert staff that is unapologetic in its students-first approach to strengthening neighborhood public schools.

As a San Antonio native, I love the Spurs and Head Coach Gregg Popovich. When I think of Coach Pop's leadership – how he cultivates each player's diverse talents to develop a winning team – I think of IDRA's unmatched dynamism in bridging expertise in public policy, research, community engagement and teacher training to ensure all students graduate prepared to succeed in college. And, at IDRA, we play to win. We know that our democracy and economy depend on winning and that students deserve no less.

While the long-standing IDRA mission will not change with a change in leadership, we know we must continue to adapt to today's challenges. Our nation has witnessed unprecedented attacks on public schools and the students they serve. The trend goes like this: First, certain well-funded interests and policymakers starve schools of funds by decreasing the share of education costs paid by states. Then, those same policymakers demonize and undermine public schools, without offering any meaningful resources or systemic solutions to address the problems. Finally, some of those same policymakers seek to privatize public schools by siphoning taxpayer dollars toward private entities that are not held as accountable and that often receive more per-student funding than students attending public schools in low-income neighborhoods.

Together, we must hold the line and keep the public in public education. These mounting challenges require us to sharpen our skills and expand our reach across the nation and in the highest levels of government. They compel us to unify and strengthen our coalitions. And, most of all, the challenges demand that we build capacity and amplify the voices of the communities most underserved and most impacted by this troubling trend.

At our open house a few weeks ago, we hosted Dr. Mike Flores, the first Latino chancellor of San Antonio's community college system. He said it beautifully. Quoting Paulo Freire, he artfully described IDRA's philosophy: "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity,

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"IDRA will continue to work with our allies in the civil rights community to protect students and strengthen education by drawing on our unique ability to bridge policy, with practice, with teacher and principal training, and, most importantly, with community engagement, because families must be at the table."

– Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA President and CEO

(New IDRA CEO Carries on IDRA's Legacy and Future, continued from Page 1)

or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

That same philosophy that centers on self-determination and valuing the assets students and families bring to schools – for example, their resilience or bilingualism – is the philosophy that must guide policymakers in Congress and state houses when crafting public policy. The people most impacted by laws are not the problem; rather, they hold the policy solutions to improve their lives and effect generational change for themselves and our society.

At IDRA, we look forward to working with you to both strengthen and hold accountable public schools to ensure every child receives an excellent education that prepares them for college and life. ¡Adelante!

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

Meet Morgan Craven – IDRA's National Director of Policy

This year, the IDRA Newsletter will continue to highlight our staff's varied and diverse talents and backgrounds. Morgan Craven, J.D., is IDRA's new national director of policy and is a leading expert in school discipline, policing in schools, and school safety. At IDRA, she develops leadership within communities, schools and policymaking bodies to advocate policies that ensure educational opportunity for every child, with special emphases on students of color and low-income, English learner and recent immigrant populations.

Morgan is from Atlanta and loves to travel the world. She has twice lived in South Africa. And she has lived on the U.S. West Coast where she studied international relations at Stanford University and on the East Coast as a law student at Harvard Law School, where she met her husband.

As a mom of two young Black and Latino boys, Morgan focuses her work on creating the type of school environment she wants for her sons – not a place that feels like a prison or that limits opportunities for people who look like them, but rather a safe and nurturing place set up for their success.

Morgan brings over a decade of experience in research and providing legal advice on issues of equity, particularly education access, school discipline, and systemic and structural inequities. Morgan recently served as the director of Texas Appleseed's School-to-Prison Pipeline Project, where she led successful local and statewide campaigns to address the practices and systems that push children out of school and into the justice system. For example, because of her work and that of the coalitions she led, Texas has significantly limited school suspensions for children in second grade and younger, and several cities have repealed their harmful juvenile curfew ordinances.

Prior to joining Texas Appleseed, Morgan served as a briefing attorney to former Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson and as a staff attorney at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) in San Antonio. At TRLA, she represented students with disabilities in special education and school discipline cases as well as individuals and families in housing and public benefits cases.

Morgan has served as an advisor to the Essie Justice Group, an organization that harnesses the collective power of women with incarcerated loved ones to end mass incarceration's harm to women and communities. Morgan was a researcher for the Everest Project, an initiative that looks at how women executives are effective at leading change and innovation in their companies.

Morgan received the Center for Public Policy Priorities' 2018 Future of Texas Award, which is given to a visionary young leader who has made a demonstrable and valuable impact on Texas.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. 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.

The IDRA Newsletter (ISSN 1069-5672, ©2019) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children across the United States.

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Red Flags Wave in Proposed Changes to Title IX

Gender Equity in Schools Needs Diligence not Relaxation

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

A young woman walking across a college campus after dark holds her keys in a tight grip knowing she might have to use them in self-defense. A female high school freshman is accosted by two popular upperclassmen girls because she seems "too manly." Several gay freshmen know to stick together in the school hallway when the bell rings in case they get harassed by some of the jocks. A varsity basketball player brags to friends at an after-game party about having grabbed several cheerleaders and gotten away with it. When someone relays the bragging to the coach, the response is, "Boys will be boys."

Does that mean that boys can abuse and harass girls because that's the "natural" way human beings are? Is it acceptable that macho young men chastise gay young men? Is it acceptable that young women who consider themselves "straight" harass another young woman because she appears to be lesbian?

Race Equity – Gender Equity

Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 made segregation and institutionalized racism illegal, recognizing how wrong they are and how damaging they are to large numbers of students in our schools. Many communities reacted with anger about the interruption of a racist pattern explained away by the assumption: "Whites will be Whites."

This bias assumes one group is superior and that the two groups must be kept apart. The traditional way for human beings to be with each other in schools began to shift dramatically, and we are still working to achieve that integration and humane balance.

While the battle to give women the vote at the beginning of the 20th century addressed ballot-box segregation and injustice, it did not address gender inequity in other critical areas. Several decades after *Brown vs. Board*, the Title IX amendment to federal education policy in 1972 began to throw a comparable light on gender and sexual identification injustices in our schools. Title IX is the federal law that prohibits gender-based discrimination in education.

The law states that girls must have the opportunities previously available only to boys. The relationships among young men and women had to be examined for patterns that supported abusers and inhibited victims from redress. The abuse and harassment of girls and women in schools requires vigilance, support and strong legal steps where necessary. It continues to be an under-reported issue. Victims are either afraid or embarrassed to report an incident. Perpetrators need a strong and consistent institutional response. Those who bring the issue to light need protection and encouragement rather than doubt over their accusations.

IDRA's work with K-12 schools, such as through the IDRA EAC-*South*, equips them to prevent and respond to issues of bullying and harassment, including gender- and LGBTQ-related incidents. Schools must to be proactive in providing professional development for teachers to deal with these issues as they arise.

In higher education there is much less involvement of professors in the lives of the students than in K-12 education. Young women and LGBTQ students, for example, are much more at risk of being abused, with less direct intervention and support from faculty and staff. The college atmosphere is a more fluid and less controlled context in unsupervised living quarters and social events, without the presence of parents or educators.

IDRA Response to Proposed Rule Changes

Currently, the U.S. Department of Education has proposed changes in the rules for how schools handle sexual assault allegations. IDRA does not support any proposed rule that reduces protection of those vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and that increases the freedom of abusers. Any

(cont. on Page 4)

Creating obstacles for victims to safely report grievances will only have a further chilling effect.

WEBSITE **See IDRA's comments on the proposed Title IX changes: https://idra.news/commentsTIX**

IDRA EAC-*South*

For more information about the IDRA EAC-*South* or to request technical assistance, contact us at 210-444-1710 or eacsouth@idra.org.

Additional resources are available online at http://www.idra.org/eac-south/

funded by the U.S. Department of Education

(Red Flags Wave in Proposed Changes to Title IX, continued from Page 3)

loosening or softening of the rules and regulations around Title IX issues could open the flood-gates for abusive behaviors that have been stemmed, in part, by the evolution of Title IX guidelines.

During the public comment period, IDRA submitted a list of concerns based on our 45 years of working with educators, parents and children in underserved communities in Texas and across the nation. Our concerns include the following.

- The proposed changes to the definition of *sexual harassment* will make it harder for the people experiencing real, harmful harassment to seek help and redress. Instead of being able to report unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, students will have to endure harassment until it becomes "severe, pervasive and objectively offensive," a standard that will likely expose students to significant trauma and effectively deny them access to education in violation of Title IX.
- The trial-like process that has been proposed to address harassment complaints (allowing for cross-examination, access to evidence for the accused, party advisers, and creating a higher burden of proof) threatens to exacerbate trauma and runs counter to the purpose of Title IX, which was specifically designed to protect students from gender-based discrimination.
- The proposed changes will prevent schools from investigating off-campus harassment and will create strict and unnecessary reporting rules that may limit the ability of student survivors to report abuse.

IDRA's research and fieldwork around gender equity indicate that, overwhelmingly, the experiences and voices of girls and young women are minimized by a patriarchal mainstream culture that negates the contributions of women in education and leadership positions. Already, 63 percent of sexual assaults go unreported to police, and on college campuses specifically, more than 90 percent of sexual assault cases go unreported (NSVRC, 2015). Creating obstacles for victims to safely report grievances will only have a further chilling effect (see the CDC National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 2015).

Recommendations for Creating Safe Environments for All Students

IDRA's comments listed a set of recommendations as well, including the following.

- Set clear, detailed and visible policies and procedures that systematically and explicitly detail what constitutes sexual harassment, sexual bullying, sexual misconduct, gender-based harassment and sexual abuse.
- Conduct environmental monitoring, creating a safe environment and culture that enlists everyone in assessing risk and identifying locations of potential risks.
- Establish clear, visible steps of where and who students can go to seek help and guidance, such as the Title IX campus coordinator or counselor.
- Create an environment and culture where students and educators alike will not fear retribution for speaking up.
- Train faculty and staff to ensure they know what to look for and how to respond.

School Technical Assistance

The IDRA EAC-*South* is one of the four federally-funded equity assistance centers designed to help school districts build capacity to confront educational problems occasioned by race, national origin, sex and gender, and religion. In addition to assisting schools and state agencies address issues related to sexual harassment and abuse, we provide training and technical assistance on:

- Underrepresentation of girls or students of color in advanced science and math courses.
- Overrepresentation of boys for school discipline, especially exclusionary disciplinary practices.
- A disparity in resources placed into male versus female sports.
- Bullying and harassment of students who have self-identified or are perceived as being LGBTQ.
- Other activities, programs and services that treat students differently and inequitably based on sex and/or gender.

More information and resources are online at www.idraeacsouth.org, where school leaders in the U.S. South can also request services.

Schools must be havens of safety and learning for all, but especially those for whom it has not been safe before. Clearly, this is a concern of many across the country as over 100,000 comments were submitted in response to the proposed Title IX rule changes. All students have a legal, moral and ethical right to be protected. Policies and practices must ensure this.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey.

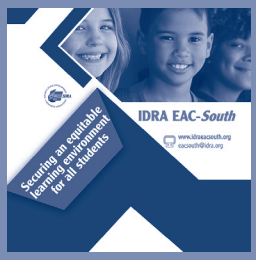
IDRA. (2019). IDRA Lists Concerns with Proposed Amendments to Title IX Gender Equity Regulations, statement. San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association.

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2015). Statistics about Sexual Violence.

Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., is an IDRA senior education associate and directs IDRA Education CAFE work. Comments and questions may be directed to him via email at contact@idra.org.

Learn more about the IDRA EAC-*South*

Going on five decades of success in helping schools, IDRA's capacity-building technical assistance, training and professional development has assisted hundreds of schools and districts in addressing civil rights-related complaints and equity issues.



IDRA's equity assistance center (EAC) provides free or low-cost technical assistance to schools in federal Region II: Washington, D.C., Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Fill out our intake form online to see how the IDRA EAC-*South* may best serve your school. www.idraeacsouth.org

IDRA Priority Policy Issues for Texas in 2019

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. For over 45 years, IDRA has strengthened and transformed public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.

Fair Funding that Ensures Equity and Excellence for All Students

- All state and local aid made available for public schools should be funded through equalized formulas.
- Efforts to reduce recapture must be done equitably.
- State aid for students served in bilingual education or compensatory education programs should be increased to 40% of regular program costs.

Why?

The quality of children's education should not be determined by the neighborhood where they happen to live. In the 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, especially for low-income and English learner (EL) students. Research indicates that compensatory education and EL education costs in Texas average about 40 percent over regular program costs. However, over 35 years ago, the state set funding far below recommended levels for those students, and those funding formulas remain unchanged.

Fair Discipline that Keeps Children in Safe Schools

- Ensure school safety and foster positive school climates by providing critical funds and supporting research-based programs and school-based professionals, like counselors and social workers.
- Eliminate harmful, unnecessary exclusionary discipline and policing practices inside schools.
- Make sure the same high-quality curriculum is available in all schools to all students, including those removed from their regular classrooms.

Why?

In Texas, students of color, boys, and students with disabilities are much more likely than their peers to be punished in school and have interactions with school police. In 2017-18, Black Texas students were suspended over four times more than their White classmates, even though Black students are not more likely to misbehave.

Pushing students out of the classroom results in missed learning time and an increased likelihood of justice system involvement. Punitive discipline practices also compromise student success and campus safety. To improve student outcomes and make schools safer, the state must ensure access to research-based school climate programs, provide training opportunities for educators and other school personnel, and increase the number of school-based counseling and mental health professionals.

Policies that Keep the Public in Public Education

- Public money must have public oversight and must not be diverted to private interests.
- There must be no further expansion of charter schools and limited public funds for facilities should not be siphoned off for charter schools.

Why?

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 further segregate students and do not result in improved learning.

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DOWNLOAD **See IDRA's policy agenda with links to resources: https://idra.news/IDRApolicy19**

(IDRA Priority Policy Issues for Texas in 2019, continued from Page 6)

Effective Accountability that Puts Children First and Supports Schools

- The state's accountability system should be supportive, moving away from rigid, punitive structures.
- The state should collect some valid testing data and other performance measures to enable it to hold schools accountable for student achievement with data disaggregated by sub-groups.
- School accountability should be achieved by sample testing, saving millions of state tax dollars and simultaneously reducing the misuse of tests.
- The state accountability system must contain "opportunity-to-learn metrics," including resource allocation, college preparation and teacher quality.

Why?

We must make sure our schools are doing an excellent job with all students, and disaggregated data helps us know where to focus improvement efforts. Sample testing makes it unnecessary to test all students to ensure schools produce good results and can prevent misuse of testing data in holding students back or preventing them from graduating. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act also gives Texas a chance to focus on improving struggling schools through asset-based approaches rather than punishing them.

Texas should drop its A-F accountability grading system and avoid 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

- No single measure should be used to make high-stakes decisions for promotion or graduation.
- The state should continue to graduate students who prove their well-rounded academic qualifications to independent graduation committees (IGCs).

Why?

Reliance on a single measure fails to consider 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 other academic achievements, including grades, projects, college readiness measures and teacher recommendations. IGCs remain a viable option.

Instruction for English Learners that Ensures Success

- Laws requiring bilingual education programs in elementary schools must remain, and exceptions must be strongly discouraged. And ELs in secondary schools must have access to teachers who are trained in EL instruction.
- The state should modify its procedures for monitoring EL performance by disaggregating EL performance data for each level of schooling.
- New immigrant students, including refugees, equally deserve a high-quality education.

Why?

With their potential for bilingualism, EL students 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 middle and high school EL students, many of whom only get 45-minute ESL classes each day, do poorly on several metrics. That 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 that Expands Opportunities

- Texas' high school curriculum should prepare all students for college with high-quality, rigorous courses.
- Students should not be tracked into low-level courses nor into different diploma routes or graduation plans.
- In-state tuition rates for all Texas students, including undocumented immigrant students, must remain.
- Funding for need-based financial aid, including the Texas Grant Program, must be increased.
- College tuition must be re-regulated, but state aid also must increase to help fill the void.
- Texas should not make changes to its Top 10 Percent Plan.

Why?

Schools should not make pre-college decisions on behalf of students or track them into low-level courses that limit career options, and 14-year-olds should not be forced to make choices that will impact them the rest of their lives. High schools must ensure all students receive a rigorous course of study that prepares them for college. Research on the 21st century workforce indicates most jobs will require some level of education beyond high school. Employers need employees who are life-long learners prepared to adapt to a rapidly changing workplace. Models based on preparing one group for college and a second for immediate work are outmoded.

Re-regulation of high tuition rates is desperately needed, but the state should adequately support the state's colleges and students needing assistance. In-state tuition rates for immigrant students and the Top 10 Percent Plan have increased the diversity of students applying for and enrolling in Texas universities and increased the number of high schools sending students to Texas' top schools.

For questions, contact our National Director of Policy, Morgan Craven, J.D., at morgan.craven@idra.org

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https://idra-resource.center/SFdashboard

IDRA Texas School Attrition Study, 2017-18

The Attrition Rates for Poor Students is 29 Times Higher than for other Texas Students

IDRA releases additional analysis in its annual attrition study finding that Texas schools, particularly those in low-wealth districts and large urban areas, are more likely to lose students who are poor than students who are not.

Key findings:

- About **six out of 10 students** in Texas public schools are identified as economically disadvantaged. **Texas has more students in poverty than 21 states have people**.
- Attrition rates are **higher in property-poor districts** and large urban areas.
- Texas ranked **second nationally** in on-time graduation rates of economically disadvantaged students with a rate of 86.0 percent. But Texas **ranked 10th** in graduating another large subgroup of students: English learners with a rate of 73.7 percent.
- The school district groups with high attrition rates include **large urban school districts** (e.g., Austin, Dallas, Houston), suggesting that average property-wealth districts could benefit from increased funding that would be generated by increasing compensatory and English learner funding weights.

"Being poor or minority means you are more likely to be in an underfunded school with teachers who are not well prepared, and you are more likely to be affected by policies and practices that don't work effectively to keep students in school through graduation. Underfunding of public schools overall and lack of adequate support for educating special populations is harming poor students, who are our largest group of students."

– Researchers Roy Johnson, M.S., and Charles Cavazos

REPORT INFOGRAPHIC **See IDRA's attrition study and infographics: https://idra.news/IDRAatrn18w**

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