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Dear Friends of IDRA:

I write to officially introduce myself as IDRA's new President & CEO and to express my sincere gratitude for your support of IDRA. I have led the organization for just over one month and have already had the fortune of meeting with hundreds of you - from teachers, business leaders and community partners to students, superintendents and senators. Those connections have been fruitful, and we are excited to announce several new initiatives very soon!

As IDRA begins a new chapter, I find it meaningful to look back at IDRA's powerful history already written. 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 advocacy, 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 its open house in January, IDRA 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, 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
IDRA President & CEO

P.S. Follow [@IDRAedu](#) on Twitter, and visit [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to see some of our work in action.

March 8, 2019

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

We are committed to the IDRA valuing philosophy, respecting the knowledge and skills of the individuals we work with and build on the strengths of the students and parents in their schools.