

## Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.

Ms. Cortez is a senior researcher and medical anthropologist, bringing 24 years of experience at Intercultural Development and Research Association, directing its Division of Research and Evaluation for eight years, managing all of the organization's research and evaluation activities, including the evaluation of the College Assistance Migrant Program, comprehensive audits of bilingual education and ESL programs at the district level, evaluations of IDRA projects such as Creative Collaboratives: Empowering Immigrant Students and Families Through Education, its Comprehensive Center that served over 1,100 school districts in Texas, Alianza—a model bilingual education teacher preparation program that was unique in its binationality and innovations and ENLACE--collaborations that resulted in more Hispanic youth getting into college and graduating.

Ms. Cortez leads IDRA's design and development of research-based programs and products, and also serves as project director of IDRA's Marguerite Casey Foundation efforts in evaluation capacity building. Ms. Cortez brings her experience in project management, designing staff development, and providing technical assistance that has resulted in the strengthened capacity of twelve community-based organizations to evaluate their work in a way that continuously informs, ensures accountability, and builds knowledge among staff. She also serves as the external evaluator for IDRA's South Central Collaborative for Equity.

Her tenure at IDRA has brought innovations in research methodology, technology, survey design and development, rigorous protocols, and

The large, urban school district had acknowledged it had a critical problem: it was losing one third of its students before they graduated from high school. Educators, parents, people from the community came together to come up with a solution. They enlisted IDRA's help and Cortez helped them see what they hadn't seen before: the schools would never begin to solve the problem if they focused on *dropout prevention*—they had to shift their thinking about *graduating all* of their students. Cortez moved them from trying to “fix” children and families to changing schools and seeing that they were no “at risk” students, only students who needed excellent and equitable education, guidance, and an unwavering commitment to their success. At year's end, the district had begun its graduation plan for every child.

critical transformations in reporting methods. Her expertise in qualitative research led to the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods in IDRA's designs.

Ms. Cortez coordinated IDRA's national study of successful bilingual education programs, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, the national evaluation of the Improving America's School Act conferences, and the Audit of the Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department of the Tucson Unified School District. Having led IDRA's development of the groundbreaking rubric for the study of successful bilingual education programs, Cortez was invited by the USDE to train program staff in using the rubric for program assessment.

Ms. Cortez' directed IDRA's partnership with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities with Clemson University and the Education Development Corporation. She also directed IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, an internationally-recognized dropout prevention program, as well as ACCESS—a K-16 project funded by the Ford Foundation to increase Latino students' access to higher education.

As a medical anthropologist, she has been affiliated with the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSC-SA) for the past twenty-seven years where she is an adjunct clinical professor in the Department of Medicine, Division of Clinical Epidemiology. Ms. Cortez has researched, taught, and published extensively on cross-cultural medical ethics, specializing in death and dying and has served as co-investigator of several research studies in the areas of cardiovascular disease and advance directives. Her medical work has resulted in enlightened policies and practices for advance directives in Texas, using cultural understanding to help educators and health care providers value the inherent assets of children and their families.

She was one of the first Hispanic women graduates of the University of Notre Dame and received her master's degree in medical anthropology from Case Western Reserve University.