

Newsletter

AZALAS • FEBRUARY 2025



The Arizona Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (AZALAS) is proud to highlight the Four Corners Latinx Leadership Academy (4CLLA) and the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) Superintendent's Leadership Academy (SLA) in our February newsletter.

The 4CLLA collaborative initiative brings together educational leaders from the four corner states, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, working to create a new narrative for Latinos in education. The academy provides training sessions designed to enhance leadership skills for Latinx administrators at both the site and district level. The primary goal of the 4CLLA is to foster collaboration among the four states and cultivate a leadership approach centered on equity. Through this program, participants gain tools to make decisions that benefit students, staff, and families, with a focus on equity in all aspects of leadership. The sessions are designed to provide networking opportunities for all cohort members.

The ALAS SLA continues to be a leading force in the development of Latino leadership in education. The program addresses the critical need to recruit, mentor, and prepare the next generation of superintendents who will serve Latino communities across the nation. As the premier leadership academy, the ALAS SLA is committed to ensuring the advancement of Latino leaders at the highest levels of education. The ALAS SLA seeks individuals with the potential to be transformational leaders. The program provides the tools, resources, and mentorship needed to excel in district leadership, empowering participants to make a lasting impact on the communities they serve.

We are featuring bios, headshots, and testimonials from our current 2025 4CLLA and SLA cohort members, showcasing their unique contributions to education and leadership. We invite those interested in becoming part of the 2026 4CLLA to email a letter of interest to: Dr. Marvene Lobato, Marvene.Lobato@azalas.org. Those interested in applying for ALAS SLA will find application information at ALASEDU.org. The 4CLLA and ALAS SLA continues to be a critical opportunity for Latinx educational leaders to grow and inspire future generations.

Dr. Marvene Johato Executive Director



Christina Boston is the Director of Multilingual and Multicultural Education for Tolleson Union High School District (TUHSD), overseeing English Acquisition, World Language, and Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) programs. With 26 years in education, she has served as a teacher, instructional coach, principal, and district leader. She is a member of ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy Cohort XIV, La Banda. She proudly serves as a board member for AZALAS and co-chairs the 2024 AZALAS Conference. Passionate about equity, cultural relevancy, and multilingual education, she advocates for inclusive practices that support student success.

Being part of ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy Cohort XIV, La Banda, has been a transformative journey, surpassing my expectations in leadership growth. This experience has deepened my understanding of transformational leadership, equity-driven decision-making, and crisis management. Engaging with top educational leaders nationwide has provided invaluable insights into policy implementation, inclusive school cultures, and fostering community partnerships. It has been an incredible honor—from learning directly from superintendents facing real-world challenges to actively engaging in relevant and timely discussions that shape the future of education. I wholeheartedly encourage my peers to apply for SLA Cohort XV and experience this level of professional growth and impact.

Delia Castro

San Luis High School Assistant Principal Yuma Union High School District



Delia Castro is a dedicated educator with 25 years of experience. A proud product of public education and a first-generation college graduate, she was inspired by her math teachers to pursue a career in education, teaching mathematics for 14 years.

Mrs. Castro currently serves as the Academics Assistant Principal at San Luis High School. She finds inspiration in collaboration, echoing Mother Teresa's words: "I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things." She values meaningful connections with students, parents, and staff, actively listening to their ideas and empowering them to succeed.

Being a cohort member of the 2025 4CLLA has been an incredibly enriching experience, allowing me to connect with and learn from diverse educators across all four states. The opportunity to network with colleagues during our sessions has been both meaningful and enjoyable, fostering a strong sense of camaraderie and trust.

Behind the scenes, the dedication of our directors has been invaluable—they have created a welcoming and well-structured experience, ensuring we learn from outstanding presenters. Through this journey, I have not only expanded my professional network but also gained mentors who support my growth and amplify my impact within our communities.

Mario E. Castro

CTE Director
Sunnyside Unified School District



Born and raised in Tucson, AZ, I graduated from Pueblo High School before attending Carleton College, where I studied Media Arts—a passion sparked by my involvement in Pueblo's CTE Warrior News program. After college, I returned to Tucson and launched Blue Devil News at Sunnyside High School, a CTE student-run media program inspired by my own high school experience. My career evolved from teaching to technology integration, leading me to pursue a Master's in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University, which opened the door to administrative roles, including Assistant Principal at Desert View High School and Principal at Pima JTED. Now, as Sunnyside Unified's CTE Director, I am honored to support incredible programs and educators dedicated to preparing students for college, careers, and their communities.

Participating in the 4 Corners Latinx Leadership Academy has been an incredibly valuable experience. It has provided me with a wealth of knowledge about the challenges facing nearby regions and the innovative strategies and methodologies being used to address them. The opportunity to connect with other leaders has been just as impactful—each person brings a unique perspective shaped by their own experiences, making our discussions richer and more insightful.

One of the most important lessons I've taken away is that strong leadership takes many forms, each shaped by its circumstances. Being a good leader means recognizing and learning from those who demonstrate leadership in different ways. The personal connections I've made through this academy are invaluable, reinforcing that leadership is not just about guiding others but also about listening, learning, and adapting.

I am deeply grateful to AZALAS and its leadership for providing this opportunity for us to grow, learn from one another, and strengthen our collective impact as Latinx leaders.

Ondrea Estrada

Middle School Science Teacher
21st Century Program Coordinator
Douglas Unified School District #27



Ondrea Estrada is a dedicated educator from Douglas, Arizona, where she was born and raised. With a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and over 10 years of teaching experience, she currently serves as the 21st Century Program Coordinator at Joe Carlson Elementary School and teaches 8th grade Science at Paul Huber Middle School. Throughout her career, Ondrea has embraced various roles, including ELA-ELL Teacher, Teacher Mentor, Athletic Coach, Leadership Committee Member, Saturday Migrant Program Tutor, Afterschool Enrichment Tutor, and Summer School Teacher. She holds multiple certifications and has been nominated for Teacher of the Year twice, in addition to receiving the Impact Grant for her Master's degree.

At the heart of Ondrea's approach is her unwavering belief in the power of teacher support to unlock student potential. She creates a warm and welcoming environment where students feel valued and inspired to reach for their dreams. Ondrea is deeply committed to empowering educators to ignite a passion for learning in their students, and she believes that every child deserves the opportunity to thrive academically and emotionally.

As a member of the 2025 4Corners Latinx Leadership Academy (4CLLA), I have greatly appreciated the high-quality professional development sessions offered by the Academy. This experience has not only enriched my knowledge but has also provided me with the invaluable opportunity to connect and network with fellow cohort members who share a similar journey of growth and development. The tools and resources I have gained through the Academy have been instrumental in enhancing my existing leadership skills. I am truly grateful for the support and camaraderie fostered within this community, which has significantly contributed to my personal and professional growth.



Bhavana Gupta is an experienced ELA Instructional Coach and Esports Coach who loves helping students succeed through literacy, innovation, and leadership. With 25 years of teaching experience, she prepares students for college and careers while mentoring teachers in effective English instruction. Her experience teaching in India and the USA and working in a border town with a largely Hispanic population has given her a rich, multicultural perspective that enhances her approach to education.

Being a cohort member of the 2024-25 4CLLA has been an invaluable experience. I have had the chance to learn from amazing educational leaders from four different states. Each person brings unique experiences that have helped me grow as a leader. This program has given me valuable opportunities to hear their stories, share challenges, and improve my leadership skills meaningfully.

The strong sense of community in our cohort has been key to building great professional relationships. My peers' support and inspiration have made a big impact.

The leadership sessions, along with real-world insights from my colleagues, have strengthened my ability to lead with confidence and a clear vision.

Deedrick Martinez M.A, M.Ed

Executive Director of Student Services and Extended Learning Isaac Elementary School District #5



I am a bilingual, energetic educator with a proven track record of driving transformational, results-oriented success across multiple K-12 school districts. My passion lies in fostering collaborative and accountable systems that enhance both student academic achievement and overall wellness development. Through strategic leadership, I have successfully implemented district-wide initiatives that improve operational efficiencies and elevate educational outcomes at both the site and departmental levels. My experience spans two or more K-12 school districts, where I have led transformational change to create sustainable systems of success. I hold a Certified K-12 School Superintendent Degree and a Principal's Degree in Educational Leadership, with expansive experience in Educational Leadership and a strong emphasis on Transformational Systems of District Departments.

Participating in the Superintendent Leadership Academy and being part of La Banda 14 has been an incredibly rewarding experience both professionally and personally. This journey has provided me with invaluable insights, leadership growth, and a strong network of dedicated educators. The collaboration and shared learning have deepened my commitment to serving students and communities. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn alongside such passionate leaders. I highly encourage others to participate in this transformative experience and join a network that truly makes a difference.

Karla Martinez

Assistant Principal
Tucson Unified School District



Karla Martinez serves as an Assistant Principal at Pueblo High School in South Tucson. With 18 years of experience in education, she taught English in both Arizona and Hawaii, gaining valuable experience working with diverse student populations. Throughout her career, Karla has held various leadership roles, including Dean of Students, MTSS Facilitator and Interim Assistant Principal, consistently demonstrating her commitment to education excellence and student success.

Participating in the 4 Corners Latinx Leadership Academy was impactful in so many ways. It broadened my perspective on equity-driven leadership and provided me with practical strategies to create meaningful change. I was able to engage with accomplished and influential leaders that reinforced my commitment to advocating for our Latino students. Lastly, it strengthened my professional network of school leaders that I can lean on.

On Tuesday, February 11, 2025, the Tucson Unified Governing Board appointed Karla Martinez as the Mansfield Middle Magnet School Principal for the upcoming school year.

Sierra Caulfield McAllister

Principal, Frank Borman Elementary
Cartwright School District



Sierra is a proud native of Arizona with over 20 years of service in public education, primarily in Phoenix. She has dedicated the last six years to serving as a principal, after several years of experience as an assistant principal, all within the Cartwright School District. As the first person in her family to attend college, Sierra is deeply committed to advocating for young people and ensuring they have access to opportunities that can transform their lives. Growing up in central Phoenix, she attended Creighton School District and North High School in the Phoenix Union High School District. Sierra's journey is a testament to the power of education and the impact of a supportive community.

Being a member of the 2025 4 Corners Latinx Leadership Academy cohort has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me this year. Beyond the invaluable networking opportunities and the chance to connect with fellow educators serving similar populations, this experience has truly broadened and challenged my perspective. It has encouraged me to explore new approaches for supporting my campus, scholars, and community, pushing me to grow both personally and professionally. The insights and connections I've gained have been transformative, and I'm excited to apply what I've learned to make a lasting impact.

Monica Mesa

Assistant Superintendent, East area schools Mesa Public Schools

I have been an educator in Arizona for 30 years, beginning my career teaching Bilingual Education in a low-income district in West Phoenix. I earned my Master's Degree in Educational Leadership in 1996 and became a school administrator in 1998. Since then, I have served as an Assistant Principal, Principal, Principal Coach, and University Instructor. I am the Assistant Superintendent for East Elementary Schools in Mesa Public Schools, Arizona's largest district, overseeing 27 schools and ensuring high-quality educational experiences for all students. My leadership has been recognized with the 2017 Principal of the Year award, and I led Keller Elementary to earn the A+ School of Excellence designation in 2015. As a Principal Supervisor, I play a key role in coaching school leaders and have been instrumental in creating the district's Leadership Development Pipeline to support and empower principals.

My participation in the ALAS Superintendent Leadership Academy has broadened my leadership skills, providing relevant learning and experiences that have deepened my understanding of board governance and the specific responsibilities of the superintendency—opportunities I may not have otherwise had. Additionally, the academy has allowed me to build valuable collegial relationships with peers nationwide who share the same goal of self-development for the superintendency.

Beyond my career, my most cherished role is being a mother to two adult children—one a recent ASU graduate now pursuing a graduate degree, and the other set to graduate in December. I love spending time in nature, especially hiking. I am pursuing a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University, reflecting my dedication to continuous learning and leadership development.



As a child of a single mom with a 3rd grade education, I have learned the value of learning and grit when trying to pursue a goal. As my mother taught me, I do not have to be the most likely to do something, I just have to do it. This is what allowed me to survive the harsh upbringing in my neighborhood, the Duppa Villa housing projects and caused me to become a very passionate educator and school principal with deep roots in Phoenix, Arizona. Further, growing up as a product of a Guatemalan mom, who left her homeland in the search of a better future, I have witnessed firsthand the rapid growth of my city by beautiful multiple Latin American cultures, that have expanded Phoenix's suburbs and allowed for the rise in English language learners. This unique background not only fuels my commitment to serving children who share similar experiences, but serve as a mirror of the impact they can have in the future. Also, I am honored to have attended ASU and NAU for Undergrad, Master's and Doctoral programs. This is a dream for the 13 year old Geovanni in East Phoenix, knowing that during this time he was in the mist of a chaotic environment that could have led him to different paths. As an educator, I have had the honor of serving in multiple capacities in schools throughout Phoenix. I have served as 8th and 9th grade biology teacher at a charter school, as well as teacher of 3rd -8th grade in our public school system, both as a bilingual educator and math teacher. These wonderful experiences have allowed me to grow in my leadership skills, blessing me with the opportunity to serve as principal from 2007 to the present. In addition, I have been blessed to teach at the community college level, as well as our public and private universities in Arizona. I am currently a principal in my own community of Goodyear, Arizona where I get to experience our families as their local school leader and as their neighbor. It is through this lens that I carry myself in a manner that is authentic to me, so that there are no discrepancies in who I am.

Lastly, I am also proud father of 2 young men and a little girl. Along with my wife of 24 years, we are currently guiding my two boys at my old alma mater, ASU – I am proud to say that one is studying to become an engineer, while the other is following in dad's footsteps to become a school teacher. Observing them and watching my little girl grow and be her best is always humbling since it is my honor to be their parent. In closing, I mentioned that my origin was one of being the product of the Duppa Villa projects in East Phoenix, along with being raised by a single mom with a 3rd grade education. This was done purposefully in order to acknowledge the great pride I have in both. I am grateful for both. Had anything been different, I would not be the person I am today.

Dear 4CLLA Partners and Allies,

I am writing to express my deep gratitude for the incredible impact the Four Corners journey has had on me, both personally and professionally. This experience has been transformative, broadening my perspective, strengthening my leadership, and connecting me with an inspiring network of individuals who share similar experiences and values. Personally, Four Corners has introduced me to a remarkable group of colleagues who have become more than just professional connections—they are a source of support and encouragement. The relationships I have built through this journey have reinforced my sense of belonging and validation in the work I do. A powerful moment for me was when one of my colleagues cheered me on as our school was recognized with the Golden Bell Award for the state of Arizona. His presence and encouragement reminded me of the strength of this community and the genuine investment we have in each other's success.

Professionally, this experience has pushed me to reflect on my path and explore new possibilities. After 17 years as a principal, the thought-provoking conversations and questions from my Four Corners colleagues led me to an important realization—others saw leadership potential in me that I hadn't fully acknowledged in myself. Their belief in me has sparked new aspirations and a deeper understanding of my own growth.

Beyond the professional and personal growth, the opportunity to travel and immerse myself in different states and cultures has been eye-opening. While we may share similar ethnic backgrounds, witnessing the diversity within Hispanic communities across the country has been both enriching and humbling. It has also deepened my curiosity about my own state's history and the systemic inequities that continue to impact our communities. I am incredibly grateful for Four Corners and the opportunities it has provided. Thank you for fostering an experience that challenges, inspires, and strengthens leaders like myself. This journey has left an indelible mark on my life, and I look forward to continuing to grow alongside this incredible community.



Born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, I am the proud child of immigrant parents from Sonora, Mexico who came to the United States in pursuit of a better life. As the youngest of two siblings, I was raised in a single-parent household, where I witnessed firsthand the strength, resilience, and sacrifices of my mother. Her unconditional support shaped me into the person I am today, and everything I do is a tribute to her love and hard work.

For nearly 20 years, I have devoted my career to education, working in Title I schools to serve students and families in underserved communities. My passion for education goes beyond the classroom—I believe in the power of leadership to create meaningful change. Through my roles as both a teacher and administrator, I have strived to advocate for equity, inspire future generations, and build strong, supportive school communities.

At the heart of my work is a deep commitment to service. I am dedicated to ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has access to opportunities that will help them thrive. My journey is not just about professional success—it is about honoring my mother's sacrifices and making a lasting impact on the lives of those I serve.

Being a member of the 2024-2025 AZALAS 4 Corners Cohort has been an amazing experience that has profoundly impacted my journey as an educational leader. This program has allowed me to collaborate with talented and inspiring educators from across Arizona, Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico, each bringing unique perspectives and experiences that have helped me grow professionally. Through this experience, I have gained confidence in my leadership abilities and have been inspired to take the next step in my career by applying for a principal position. The camaraderie and relationships built in this program are truly unbelievable. The cohort has become an instant family network of like-minded, passionate individuals who uplift and support one another in our roles.

I am grateful for the knowledge, connections, and inspiration this leadership program has provided. It has reinforced my commitment to serving students and communities while equipping me with the tools and confidence to lead with purpose. I feel incredibly grateful and blessed for the opportunity to be part of the AZALAS 2024-2025 4 Corners Cohort.

Martin Perez, Jr.

Associate Director for Support Services in Operations
Isaac School District #5



Martin Perez, Jr., a former educator and PreK-12 school administrator, now serves as associate director for Support Services in Operations at Isaac School District #5. Driven by a commitment to systemic change, finalizing his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University that examines Culturally Responsive District Leadership.

Being part of the 4 Corners Latinx Leadership Academy (4CLLA) has strengthened my commitment to dismantling systemic barriers impacting our education system. The Academy's emphasis on familia and mentorship has transformed my journey, providing expert guidance that has fueled my leadership development. I highly recommend applying for the next 4CLLA cohort to experience transformative growth and join a powerful network committed to advancing equity and social justice in education.



Allysa is a passionate and committed principal serving in the same school district where she grew up, bringing her journey full circle. With 16 years of experience in education, she began her career as an instructional aide and worked her way up through roles as a teacher, instructional coach, and administrator. A proud wife to an incredibly supportive husband and mom to a beautiful 6-year-old daughter, she balances her professional dedication with her love for family. Her mission is to inspire students and educators alike, fostering a community that values growth, resilience, and lifelong learning.

Being part of the 2025 4CLLA cohort has been a transformative experience. The collaboration, shared insights, and focus on equity-driven leadership have strengthened my ability to lead with clarity and impact. This network of visionary leaders has provided invaluable support, and I am grateful for the lasting growth it has brought to my journey.

Theresa Trujillo

Principal, Raul H. Castro Academy of Fine Arts
Cartwright Elementary School District



Theresa Trujillo is a dedicated educator with 24 years of experience, originally from New Mexico. She has built both her home and career in the Phoenix area, where she passionately advocates for quality public education. As the Principal of Raul H. Castro Academy of Fine Arts fosters a collaborative culture that prioritizes student success by developing strong, data-driven teachers who love what they do. Theresa believes that by empowering educators with the right tools and support, every student can thrive. Committed to continuous learning and inclusive leadership, she remains devoted to shaping schools where all learners are valued and inspired to achieve their full potential.

2025 AZALAS has provided a transformative learning experience, encouraging deep reflection on our leadership styles while equipping us with the skills to think systemically. Learning from experienced leaders has not only offered invaluable strategies but has also served as a powerful inspiration to continue advocating for a quality education for all children, especially those from diverse backgrounds.

—AZ 4CLLA— COHORT GRADUATES

2020-21 - COHORT 1

CARTWRIGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Sandra Cobos

Lynette M. Matthews

NOGALES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #1

Venesa Marie Garcia

PHOENIX UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Elizabeth M. Gonzalez

SANTA CRUZ VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #35 Dagoberto Lopez

TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bernadette Rosthenhausler- Espinoza

VISTA GROVE PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Deedrick Martinez

2021-22 - COHORT 2

CARTWRIGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Leticia Castro Melanie Cobos SANTA CRUZ VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #35

Jorge Moreno

TOLLESON UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Christina P. Valenzuela

2022-23 - COHORT 3

CARTWRIGHT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Juan Medrano Christine Ramirez SANTA CRUZ VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #35

JIsela Brown Mary Slaydon

NOGALES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Santosh Kumar

TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Jennifer Contreras

PHOENIX UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Brisa Lagunas

—AZ 4CLLA— Cohort Graduates

2023-24 - COHORT 4

VANESSA ALEGRIA-RIVAS

Assistant Principal, Calabasas School Santa Cruz Valley USD

LETICIA ANAYA

Assistant Principal, Kofa High School Yuma Union High School District

JONATHAN CHAVEZ

Principal, Calabasas School Santa Cruz Valley USD

GUILLERMO HEREDIA, ED.D.

Director of Human Resources Cartwright Elementary School District

CARLOS F. PEREZ, ED.D.

Executive Director of Safe Schools and SEL Cartwright Elementary School District

ANEELA PRADHAN

Teacher Mentor Mentee Coordinator & ELL Program School Coordinator Nogales Unified School District

DR. ROSALINDA RODRIGUEZ

Principal, Wheeler Elementary School Tucson Unified School District

FRANK ROSTHENHAUSLER I

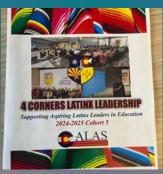
Principal, Pueblo High School Tucson Unified School District

Gallery

















Gallery











Gallery



























Latinx Leadership Academy 2024/25

4 CORNERS



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Entering its sixth year (2025/26), the 4 Corners Latinx Leadership Academy is a unique yearlong 8 session leadership seminar series, bringing together the leadership expertise from four ALAS (Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents) regional affiliates--AZALAS (Arizona), CO-ALAS (Colorado), ALAS de Nuevo México (New Mexico), and ALAS-U (Utah).



Scholarship PROGRAM

2025

ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

The Arizona Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (AZALAS) is happy to announce our annual High School Scholarship program for graduating high school seniors. If selected, a scholarship in the amount of \$1,500.00 will be provided to students who will be attending a higher institution of postsecondary education during the 2025- 2026 school year.



QUESTIONS?

Contact:

Tracy Harris Administrative Assistant tracy.harris@azalas.org

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a graduating high school senior
- > One parent must be of Hispanic heritage
- > Possess a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5

Scholarships will be awarded at the discretion of the Scholarship Committee and are contingent upon high school graduation, as well as proof of acceptance to a higher institution of postsecondary education. (Check will be mailed following receipt of your first semester schedule at your college/university.)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Sunday, March 31, 2025 NOTE: Incomplete application packages will not be accepted. Family members of AZALAS Scholarship Committee Members are ineligible to apply.

APPLICATION PROCESS

For scholarship consideration, visit https://forms.gle/rfmwcou1tMQ8DAzC9 to complete the application AND submit the following:

- Letter of recommendation from a school counselor, teacher, coach, minister or other school official
- A typewritten essay (500 words or less). The essay must be written in the applicant's own words and elaborate on the following: How has your Latino heritage influenced your life's goals, mission and desire to impact the world?
- A high school transcript (a scanned unofficial transcript)

Submit all documents by the deadline of March 31, 2025.



Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others. 99

- Jack Welch