



NEWSLETTER

AZALAS • June 2025

The Art of LEADERSHIP

“A successful person finds the right place for himself. But a successful leader finds the right place for others.”

- John C. Maxwell



DR. MARVENE Lobato

Executive Director, AZALAS

The Arizona Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (AZALAS) is proud to highlight the 2025–2026 cohort members of the Four Corners Latinx Leadership Academy (4CLLA), the ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy (SLA), and the Principals Leadership Academy (PLA) in our June newsletter.

Each of these programs offers comprehensive training for Latino professionals aspiring to top educational leadership roles, providing valuable opportunities for professional development, mentorship, and networking. Together, they continue to empower Latino educational leaders to strengthen their skills and drive meaningful change within their communities.

Dr. Marvene Lobato

Servant leadership is all about making the goals clear and then rolling your sleeves up and doing whatever it takes to help people win. In that situation, they don't work for you, you work for them.

- Ken Blanchard

FOUR CORNERS LATINX LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



Co-hort #6



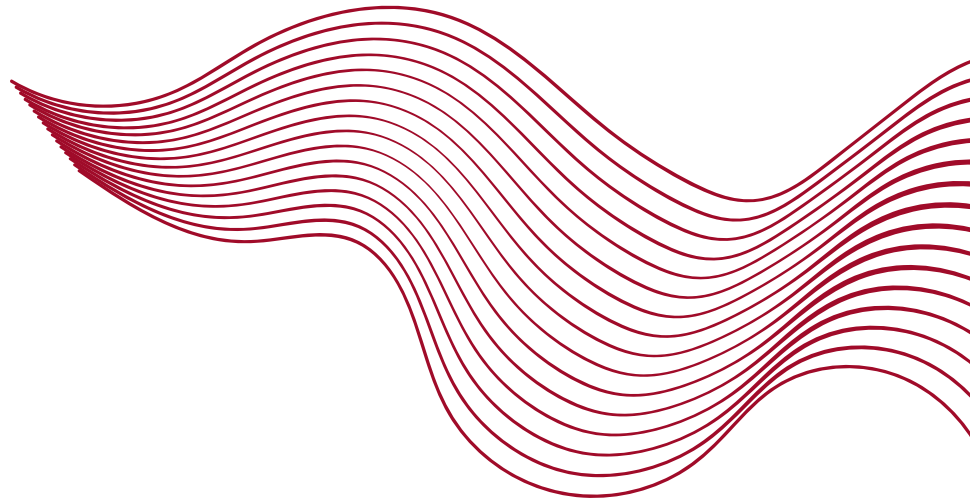
DR. RON Cabrera

Executive Director, 4CLLA

ABOUT 4CLLA

The Four Corners Latinx Leadership Academy (4CLLA) is a collaborative initiative that unites educational leaders from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah to reshape the narrative surrounding Latinos in education.

The academy offers professional development sessions aimed at strengthening the leadership abilities of Latinx administrators at both the school and district levels. Its core mission is to promote cross-state collaboration and develop equity-focused leadership practices. Participants gain practical tools to support equitable decision-making that benefits students, staff, and families. Additionally, the program fosters valuable networking opportunities among cohort members.





MARTHA

Celia Alonso

Career and Technical Education Teacher:
Biomedical Science Program
Douglas Unified School District #27

ABOUT MARTHA

Martha Celia Alonso is a dedicated and accomplished educational leader with over 15 years of experience in secondary education, specializing in career and technical education (CTE) and student leadership development. Currently serving as a CTE and science teacher at Douglas High School, she leads the Principles of Biomedical Science course and has been instrumental in establishing a highly successful HOSA chapter, empowering students to excel at state and international levels.

A first-generation college graduate, Martha holds an Education Specialist degree in Organizational Leadership from Grand Canyon University, a Master of Education in K-12 Leadership from American InterContinental University, and a Master's degree in Secondary Education from Northern Arizona University, where she also earned her Bachelor's degree in Athletic Training.

Beyond the classroom, Martha has taken on numerous leadership roles, including department chair for CTE, vice-president of the Arizona HOSA Board of Directors, and president of the Douglas Education Association. Martha has been widely recognized for her service and impact, earning honors such as Arizona HOSA Advisor of the Year (2024), Top 15 Finalist for Arizona Teacher of the Year (2024), and Cochise County Teacher of the Year Finalist. She is passionate about equity-driven education and is committed to inspiring and elevating Latinx students and future educational leaders across Arizona and beyond.

Personal Note: Martha is an avid traveler who spends any available time traveling the world. Hobbies include planning the next trip and geocaching.

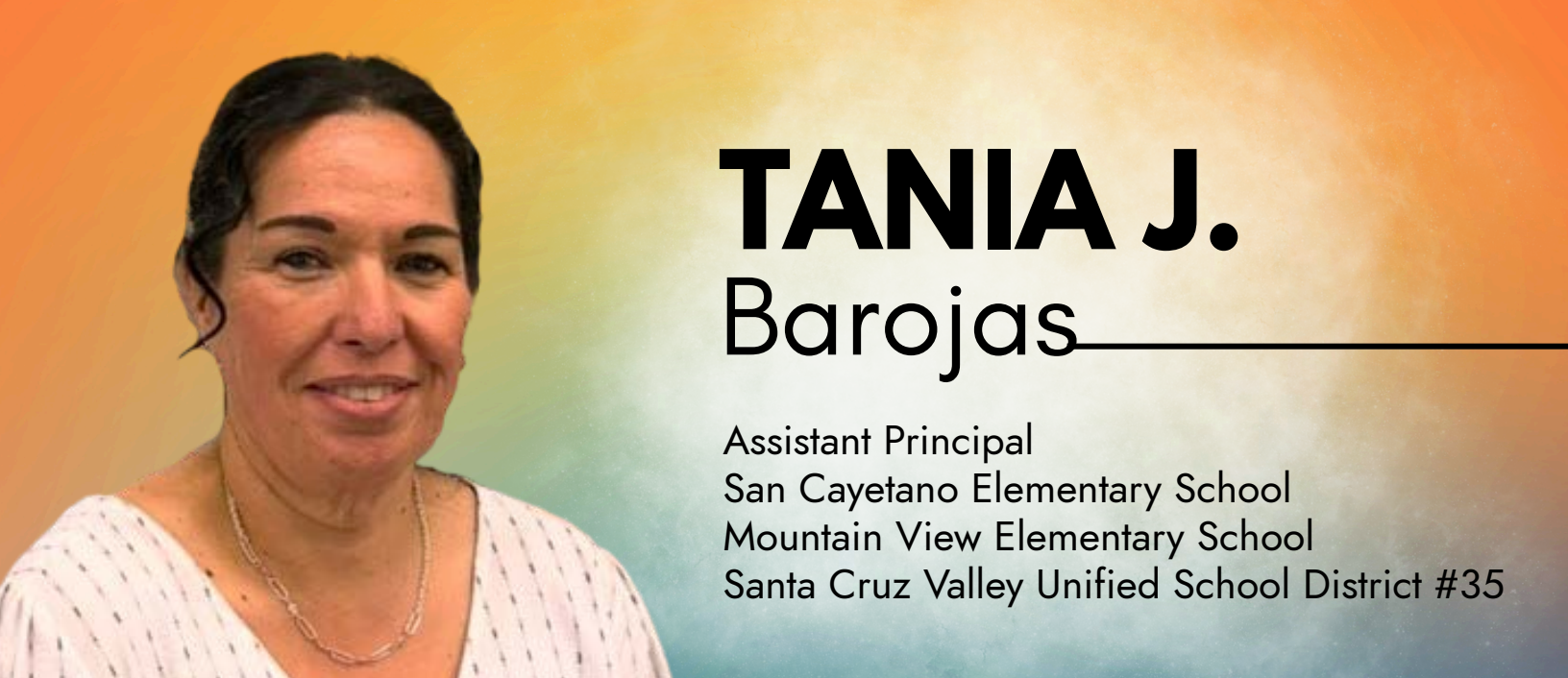


The Four Corners Latinx Leadership Academy provides an exceptional opportunity to gain mentorship, skill development, and strategic leadership experience that will help bridge this gap. I am eager to collaborate with other aspiring leaders across Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah to develop the tools necessary to lead with impact, promote culturally responsive practices, and serve as a beacon of empowerment for underrepresented communities.

Participation in this program would help me refine the leadership strategies necessary for executive-level positions, and it would also enable me to make meaningful connections with mentors and fellow visionaries who can guide and support me as I advance in my career. I am committed to being a changemaker who uplifts and advocates for the next generation of Latina leaders in education.

Thank you for considering my application. I am excited about the possibility of contributing to and learning from this transformative leadership experience.

Martha Celia Alonso



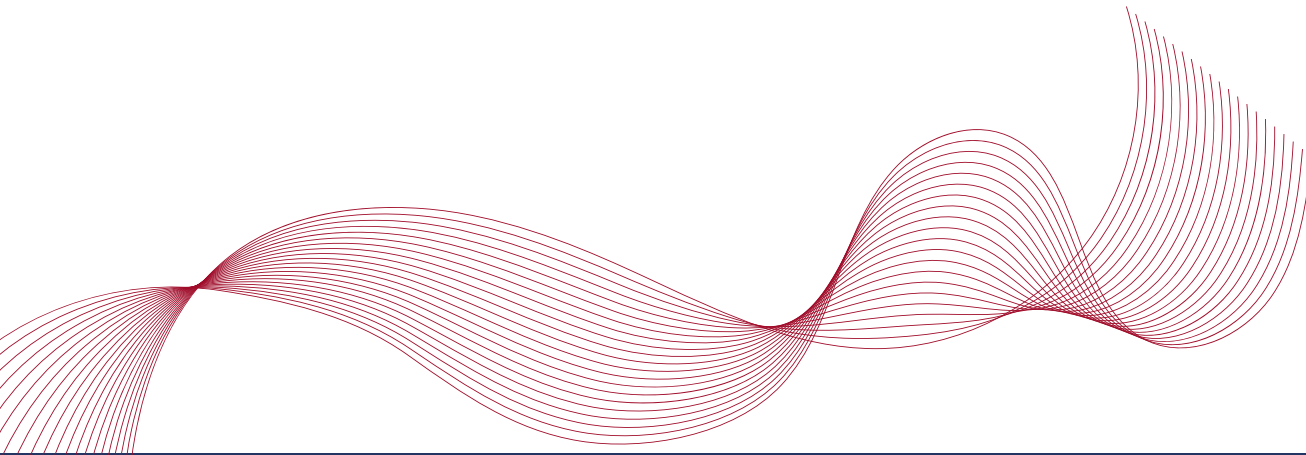
TANIA J. Barojas

Assistant Principal
San Cayetano Elementary School
Mountain View Elementary School
Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District #35

ABOUT TANIA

As a dedicated educational leader with a deep commitment to equity, advocacy, and representation, I am particularly drawn to the opportunity to collaborate with fellow leaders from the Four Corner states to address the disparity in leadership representation for Latino/a aspiring leaders.

With 26 years of experience in education, including my current role as an assistant principal serving two campuses, I have been guided by a belief in the transformative power of leadership that reflects the communities we serve. Throughout my career as both a classroom teacher and school administrator, I have worked closely with students, staff, and families—building relationships rooted in trust, advocacy, and empowerment. While I have been privileged to support and guide others, I have also witnessed the systemic barriers that prevent many talented Latino/a educators from accessing leadership pathways at the site and district levels.





This opportunity aligns closely with my personal mission to advocate for increased access, mentorship, and visibility for underrepresented leaders. I am especially interested in learning and applying strategies for systemic leadership—understanding the structures, processes, and approaches that are essential at the executive level. Equipping myself with these skills will not only support my own growth but will allow me to serve as a resource and mentor for others within my region.

Collaboration with leaders from across the Four Corner states is an exciting prospect. I believe that shared experiences, regional partnerships, and culturally responsive leadership practices can provide a rich foundation to uplift and support aspiring Latino/a leaders. I am eager to contribute to and learn from a network committed to making lasting and impactful change.

I am confident that my experience, dedication to equity, and commitment to educational leadership make me a strong candidate for this opportunity. I welcome the chance to be mentored, to mentor others, and to strengthen the pipeline of diverse leadership in our schools and districts.

Tania J. Barojas



LORENZO Cabrera

Principal
Franklin Police and Fire High School
Phoenix Union High School District

ABOUT LORENZO

Lorenzo Cabrera is a dynamic educational leader with over 25 years of experience in education and two decades of experience in school administration. As the proud principal of Franklin Police and Fire High School, Lorenzo is recognized for creating a high-achieving educational community rooted in strong strategic and purposeful leadership, building meaningful connections, relationships and community partnerships.

Throughout his career in Phoenix Union High School District and Tolleson Union High School District, Lorenzo has been instrumental in developing and implementing best practices in student achievement, strategic vision and culture and climate. His leadership has directly contributed to earning numerous accolades both in Tolleson Union and Phoenix Union, including becoming Phoenix Union's first Blue Ribbon School, and Phoenix Union's first A-rated school, a Gold Medal Beat-the-Odds School and a consistent US News & World Report Best High School honoree. In his early educational career, he was recognized by USA Today as an, "All USA Teacher Team," member to his pioneering work in alternative education through Tolleson's James A. Green Continuing Education Academy.

Lorenzo is a transformational leader, a systems-level thinker whose administrative experience is matched by his deep commitment to student achievement, leadership, relationship-building and mentorship. He has led transformative initiatives across all levels of education, from credit recovery programs and adult education to positive school culture, vision and student achievement initiatives. His early work as a teacher and program coordinator laid the foundation for a lifelong dedication to second chances, building meaningful relationships and student-centered growth.

Lorenzo truly believes that relationships and heart are at the core of education. He often says, "You cannot begin to teach students until you begin to reach students." This philosophy speaks volumes about his commitment, dedication, and passion for every student who walks through his school's doors. His student-centered approach, rooted in meaningful connection and trust, has shaped his school culture and climate where student achievement, community, and belonging to the Franklin Family go hand in hand.

A proud graduate of Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University, Lorenzo holds a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education and a Master's in Educational Leadership. His leadership is grounded in student achievement, strategic vision, and a deep sense of purpose. His legacy continues to shape his school community and excellence in Arizona.



I view the academy as a unique opportunity to deepen my leadership capacity, expand my professional network, and reflect critically on my leadership practice. The professional development offered through Four Corners will be instrumental in advancing my professional growth—particularly by enhancing my ability to think systemically, lead with cultural responsiveness, and make data-informed decisions. These are all skills that will strengthen my effectiveness as a leader and align directly with my district’s priorities for student success.

I am particularly excited about engaging in targeted learning experiences, peer collaboration, and mentorship opportunities that will challenge and stretch my current leadership lens. I am confident that these experiences will not only refine my leadership practice but also energize and elevate the work I do in service of students, staff, and the broader community.

Moreover, I believe that my extensive background in leading schools and my community uniquely positions me to contribute meaningfully to the cohort. I hope to bring my lived experience, leadership insights, and commitment to equity and quality education into the learning space, while remaining open to growth and feedback. Participating in Four Corners will empower me to take the next step in my leadership journey, while reinforcing my alignment with my district’s mission, strategic priorities, and core values.

Lorenzo Cabrera



REBEKAH Cabrera

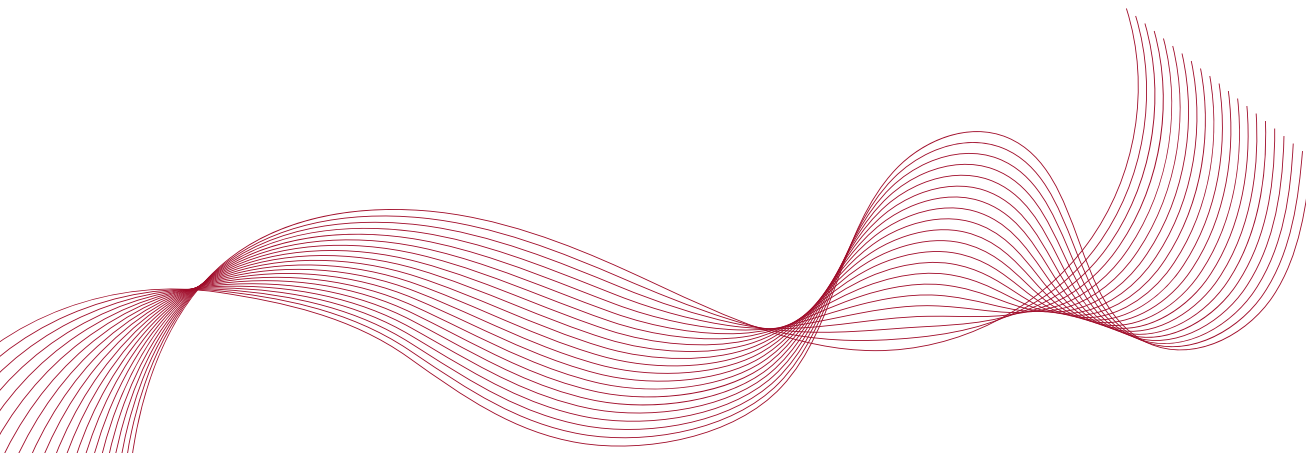
Director of Human Resources
Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District

ABOUT REBEKAH

With over 19 years of PreK-12 educational experience, Rebekah Cabrera is a passionate and accomplished educator and leader dedicated to student growth, instructional excellence, and systemic improvement. Currently transitioning from director of Human Resources to Principal at Coatimundi Middle School for Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District #35, she brings a wealth of experience in school administration, curriculum development, and strategic planning.

Her accomplishments include directing district-level initiatives such as board policy revisions, international teacher recruitment, and facilitating evaluation reforms through the Portrait of a Teacher Task Force. She is also a recognized voice in Arizona education. She is featured in the Arizona Daily Star and honored with distinctions such as SCV35 District Administrator of the Year, Teacher of the Year for both site and district, and a longstanding A+ School of Excellence Judge.

Rebekah Cabrera holds a Superintendent Certification from the University of Arizona and dual Master's degrees in Educational Administration and Early Childhood Education from Northern Arizona University. Her extensive service includes leadership on numerous local boards and professional affiliations, reflecting a deep commitment to education, equity, and community engagement.





If accepted into the program, I am eager to contribute my experiences, learn from mentors and peers, and grow into a leader who represents with pride and actively works to make a meaningful impact. I aim to deepen my understanding of the unique challenges faced by Latinos in our community and educational systems. By participating in professional development opportunities and being part of this academy, I will gain the necessary tools to advocate more effectively for policies and programs that address these needs. I plan to attend workshops, conferences, and networking events focused on Latino issues, cultural competence, and leadership development. This will help refine my advocacy skills and strengthen my ability to support initiatives that foster community engagement and empowerment. With the right tools and experiences, I will be a more effective and impactful leader.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to share more about my journey and aspirations through the formal application process.

Rebekah Calhoun



EFRAIN Orna-Filerio

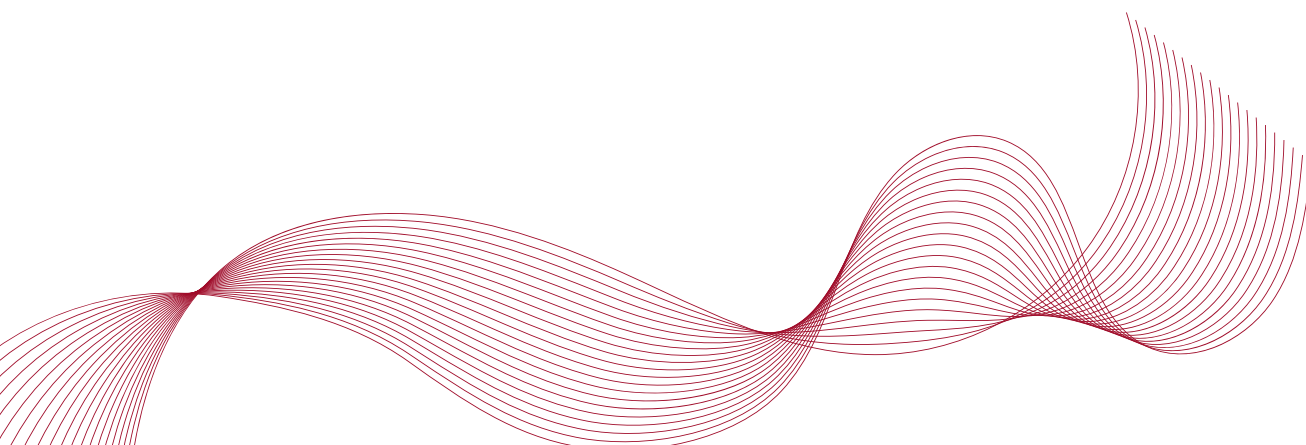
CTE Coordinator
Tolleson Union High School District

ABOUT EFRAIN

Efrain Filerio was raised in the small town of Dateland, AZ, in East Yuma County. Dateland is where his upbringing instilled the values of hard work, community, and educational equity, which continue to guide his work in education today. With 14 years of experience in education, including the past 6 years at the district office supporting CTE teachers across the school district, he has cultivated a passion for leadership and instructional excellence. He currently serves as the CTE Coordinator at Tolleson Union High School District.

Efrain holds a Bachelor's in Secondary Business Education from Arizona State University, a Master's in Special Education from Arizona State University, and a Master's in Educational Leadership and Administration from Grand Canyon University.

His career began as a Business educator at Alhambra High School, where he worked closely with students to prepare them for success in the business world. He is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Education Leadership to further enhance his ability to lead and impact educational systems.





As I pursue my doctorate in education, the leadership development offered through the Four Corners Latinx Leadership Academy will deepen my practice and provide a critical space for reflection, collaboration, and action. I am committed to translating what I learn into tangible outcomes, whether by designing inclusive curricula, leading strategic planning initiatives, or coaching site leaders to support equity in CTE classrooms.

I am deeply inspired by the academy's mission to uplift Latinx leadership, and I am confident that my passion, experience, and drive align with its goals. Thank you for considering my application. I welcome contributing to and growing within this empowering leadership community.

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RAUL Rascon

Principal
Somerton Middle School Somerton
School District No.11

ABOUT RAUL

Raul Rascon is a deeply committed educational leader who currently serves as a first-year principal at Somerton Middle School. With over a decade of service in the Gadsden Elementary School District, Raul has earned a reputation for his unwavering dedication to educational excellence, student achievement, and collaborative school leadership.

Raul's career in education began as a substitute teacher and evolved into a dynamic teaching role in junior high science. His innovative teaching practices and ability to connect with students led to widespread praise from colleagues and administrators alike. As his leadership potential became increasingly evident, Raul advanced to the role of mentor teacher, master teacher, and then as an assistant principal following the career pathways. In these roles, he supported instructional improvement through coaching, professional development, and teacher evaluation, making a lasting impact on teacher efficacy and student outcomes. Raul also served as an assistant principal and athletic director at San Luis High School, where he played a key role in fostering school spirit, supporting student-athletes, and strengthening the connection between academics and extracurricular engagement.

Raul holds a Master of Education in Educational Administration from Grand Canyon University, a Bachelor's degree in Special and Elementary Education from Arizona State University, and an Associate degree in Elementary Education from Arizona Western College. He is certified in Arizona as a Professional Principal (PreK–12), Special Education (K–12), and Elementary Education (K–8), with approved areas in middle grades general science and structured English immersion.

Above all, Raul Rascon is known for his integrity, vision, and heart. His readiness for leadership at the principal level is underscored by years of hard work, intentional growth, and a deep-rooted belief in the power of connection, equity, and education.



Participating in the Four Corners Latinx Leadership Academy would allow me to sharpen my skills by engaging with like minded peers and mentors who share my values and aspirations. Over the next few years, I aim to lead transformational change at the new campus and team that I lead and also at the district level sharing this experience to strengthen educator development pipelines, and uplifting the voices of our students and families. I see this program as a key lever in deepening my leadership capacity to advocate, influence, and build bridges across systems.

I am especially drawn to the academy's focus on culturally responsive leadership and policy impact, which aligns with my desire to mentor aspiring educators and contribute to shaping leadership pathways for those underrepresented in educational administration. Through the knowledge, networks, and reflection fostered in this cohort, I hope to grow into a stronger, more strategic leader who not only serves but transforms the communities I care deeply about.

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DR. MARISA Salcido

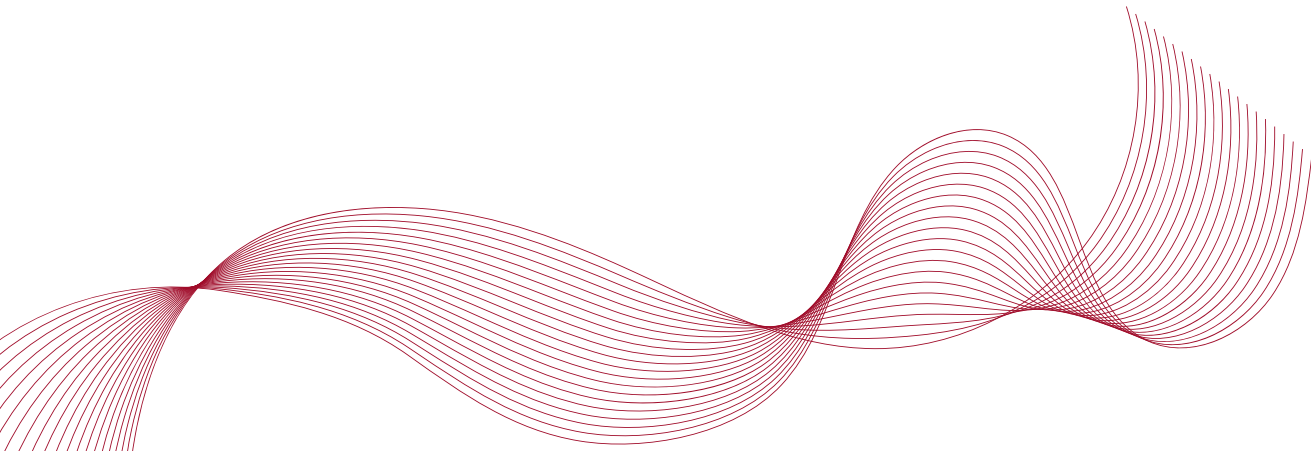
Principal
Lynn Urquides Elementary
Tucson Unified School District

ABOUT MARISA

Dr. Marisa Salcido is a proud Tucson native with over 23 years of experience in education. She began her journey as an elementary teacher and has since served as a learning supports coordinator and an elementary school principal. Her work is rooted in a deep belief of equity, community, and creating opportunities for every student to succeed.

Marisa earned her Bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Arizona and her Master's and Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University. Most recently, she completed her doctoral program while balancing leadership, learning, and family life.

When she's not working, Marisa loves spending time with her family and getting away to the outdoors—especially for a good camping trip. Her personal and professional journeys are both driven by a passion for service, learning, and connection.





Over the next 3 to 5 years, I aspire to grow into a district-level leadership role where I can influence broader educational policies, mentor emerging leaders, and design sustainable systems that support equity and excellence across schools. I am particularly interested in expanding my impact in the areas of principal mentorship, equity centered decision-making, and community partnership development. The Four Corners Latinx Leadership Academy aligns seamlessly with these goals, offering high-impact learning experiences that I believe will help me refine my leadership identity, strengthen my advocacy, and build capacity to lead at scale.

Participation in this leadership program will also allow me to learn alongside a cohort of like-minded professionals who are equally committed to driving positive change. I am excited about the prospect of engaging in deep reflection learning from diverse perspectives, and collaborating on innovative solutions to some of the most pressing challenges in education. Furthermore, I am confident that the knowledge and skills I gain through this program will be immediately applicable to my current work and will also lay a strong foundation for my continued growth as a visionary leader.

I am fully committed to the mission of this leadership program and eager to contribute meaningfully to its learning community. I welcome the opportunity to continue this journey of growth and to serve as a catalyst for educational transformation in the years ahead.

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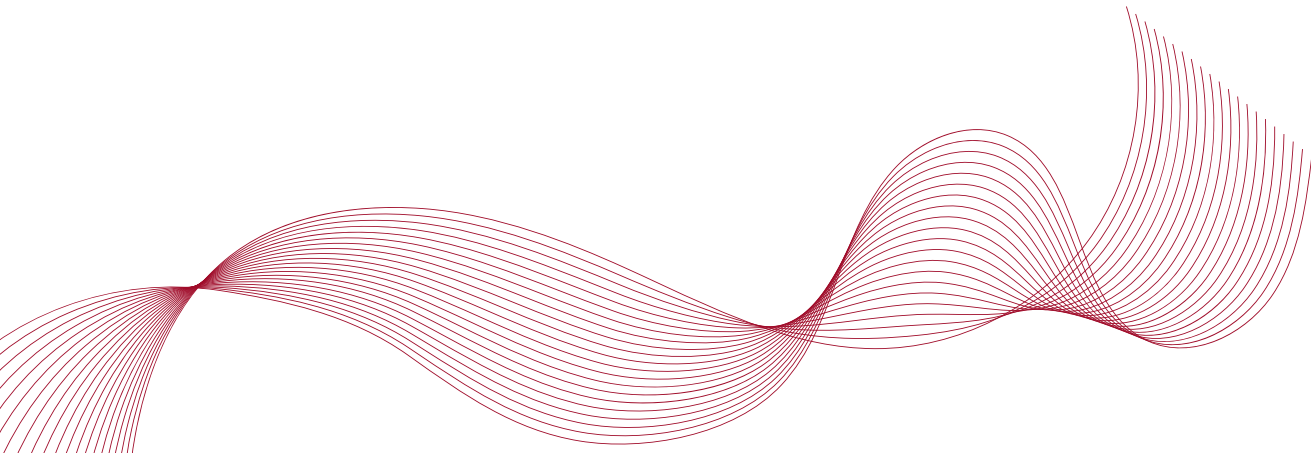
JENNIFER Smith

Academic Behavior Support Specialist (ABSS)
Los Amigos Tech Academy
Sunnyside Unified School District

ABOUT JENNIFER

My name is Jenn Smith and I am incredibly honored to join Cohort 6 of AZALAS Four Corners. With 14 years of dedicated service in Sunnyside Unified School District, I currently serve as the academic behavior support specialist at Los Amigos Tech Academy—a role that functions similarly to an assistant principal position at the elementary level. My journey in education began as a primary classroom teacher, where I spent 11 years before transitioning into leadership as an instructional coach, and now into my current support role. I'm deeply passionate about advocating for our community and believe wholeheartedly that our students can and will succeed when given the right support and opportunities.

Outside of work, I'm a proud mom of three amazing kids and enjoy hiking in my free time. My current goal is to become a principal within our district, where I can continue to lead with purpose and amplify the strengths of our students and staff.





I've been fortunate to collaborate with teachers, support curriculum planning, and take part in restructuring our master schedule, which contributed to improved outcomes on AASA and AZELLA assessments. These experiences have reminded me how powerful collaboration can be in moving a school forward. I've also supported with testing coordination and helped write our School Improvement Plan; always with student needs and equity in mind.

My heart has always been with students who need us to see them, hear them, and advocate for them; especially those from marginalized backgrounds. Whether through home visits, behavior supports, or simply being a consistent adult on campus, I try to show up in ways that create safety and connection. I care deeply about our multilingual learners and their families and work to ensure that they feel welcomed and supported in every space they enter.

As a Latina educator and aspiring school leader, I'm continually learning what it means to lead with compassion, purpose, and a lens of equity. I believe this leadership academy will help me continue that learning while preparing me to better serve my community. I don't have all the answers, but I care a great deal and am committed to doing this work the right way—alongside others who feel the same.

Jennifer Smith

ALAS-SLA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Superintendents Leadership Academy (SLA)

*Dr. Hector Montenegro &
Dr. Patricia Garcia Co-Directors*



The Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) Superintendents Leadership Academy (SLA) for 2025-2026 will be co-directed by Dr. Patricia Garcia and Dr. Hector Montenegro. Since the SLA recognizes the multifaceted and demanding responsibilities of superintendency and the need for greater diversity in leadership positions, the SLA program is rooted in experiential learning and high-level networking to better prepare future leaders to apply their professional skills and knowledge to address current issues of school districts throughout the nation. The SLA develops leadership competencies through direct engagement with school districts and opportunities to learn from the experiences of current superintendents. Key topics include:

- Leadership and the Superintendency: Building Your Team
- Building a Strong Governance Team: Relationship with the Board
- Political and Educational Issues Confronting Today's Superintendent
- Getting Ready for the Next Step: Preparing for the Superintendency and Building Strategic Engagement
- Building Community Support: Relationships with Families, Staff, Media, and Labor Organizations
- Preparing for your First Superintendency: The Right Fit
- Management and Operations of the District: Human Resources and Talent
- Leading Learning and Instruction

These topics offer a valuable platform for participants to further develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills, to analyze case studies, discuss the root causes of issues, evaluate different courses of action, and make recommendations following rigorous group discussions. By engaging in this learning experience, participants are advancing the development of practical decision-making skills and implementation strategies.

The structure of each agenda is intended to diversify their interaction with other members of the cohort in a manner that brings out the best in their interpersonal skills while allowing them to stretch the limits of their abilities to create a more interdependent, caring and inclusive cultures in current work and future leadership positions. Through strategic partnerships with educational organizations and leadership groups, participants are introduced to a broader community of peers and mentors, expanding their access to resources, opportunities, and support. Frequently, cohort members express their appreciation and gratitude for the many opportunities to not only grow their professional network, but to also expand their social connections.

MARIO Castro

Director of Career & Technical Education
Sunnyside Unified School District

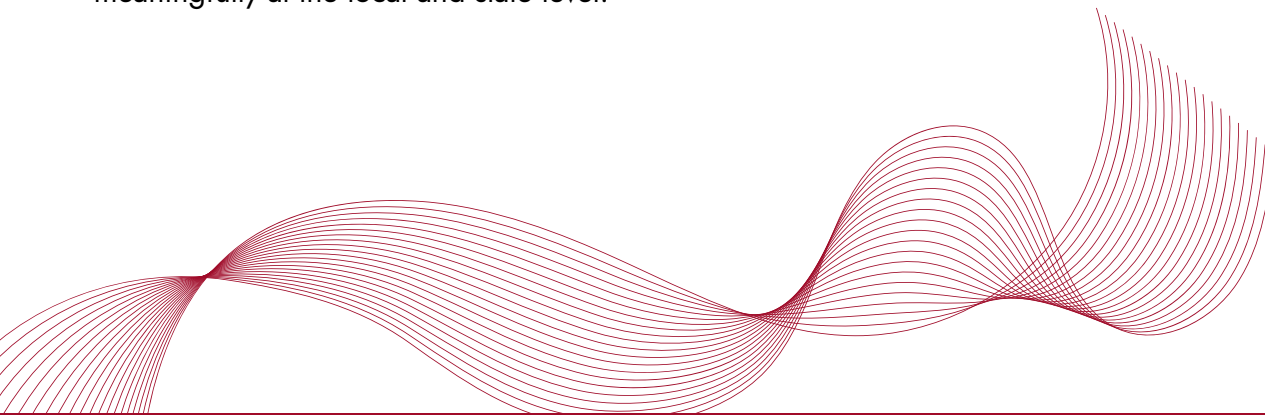


ABOUT MARIO

I'm excited to share that I've been accepted into the 2025–2026 ALAS Superintendent's Leadership Academy. It's a true honor to be selected for such a prestigious program, and I'm both humbled and energized by the opportunity to learn, grow, and lead alongside some of the nation's most dedicated and visionary educational leaders.

Throughout my career as an educator and administrator, I have focused on building inclusive, student-centered programs that prioritize equity, access, and excellence. Currently serving as the Director of Career & Technical Education in the Sunnyside Unified School District, I lead efforts to design and sustain innovative programs that prepare students for success in college, career, and civic life. My leadership approach is rooted in collaboration, cultural responsiveness, and a firm belief that every student deserves high-quality learning opportunities that reflect their strengths, identities, and aspirations.

Participating in the SLA will not only strengthen my own leadership capacity—it will also directly benefit the students, educators, and families I serve. The academy's focus on systems-level thinking, policy influence, and strategic planning will help me bring fresh insight and best practices to our district's efforts in expanding equitable access to high-quality programs and improving outcomes for historically underserved communities. Furthermore, the opportunity to engage with a national network of leaders will enrich my ability to contribute meaningfully at the local and state level.





"It is an honor and privilege to compose this letter of recommendation for Mr. Mario Castro, who has held the position of career and technical education director at the Sunnyside Unified School District since 2022. With nearly 24 years of experience in education, Mr. Castro has devoted his professional life to nurturing young minds and guiding fellow educators. He has demonstrated his leadership prowess in various educational capacities, including roles as principal at a Pima JTED Central Campus, assistant principal at Desert View High School, and a Sunnyside Unified technology coach.

Having worked alongside Mr. Castro as a professional colleague for numerous years, I've had the privilege of witnessing his involvement in various community, school, and district initiatives. From my vantage point, Mr. Castro's organizational acumen and adeptness in communication with colleagues, students, teachers, staff, and parents are truly exceptional. His work ethic is commendable, and his commitment to attentive listening and prioritizing the well-being of students underscores his effectiveness in his role.

Mr. Castro's leadership approach is best characterized as collaborative. He actively solicits input from others and conducts thorough research to ensure well-informed decision-making. His choices consistently prioritize the welfare of students above all else. Mr. Castro excels in identifying the potential in others, delegating tasks accordingly, and providing diligent oversight while holding individuals accountable for their actions. His exceptional talent for inspiring and harnessing the strengths of his colleagues truly sets him apart as a leader."

José Gastelum, M.Ed.
Superintendent
Sunnyside Unified School District

MS. ROBYANN Dominguez-Musil

Director of Talent Recruitment
Littleton Elementary School District

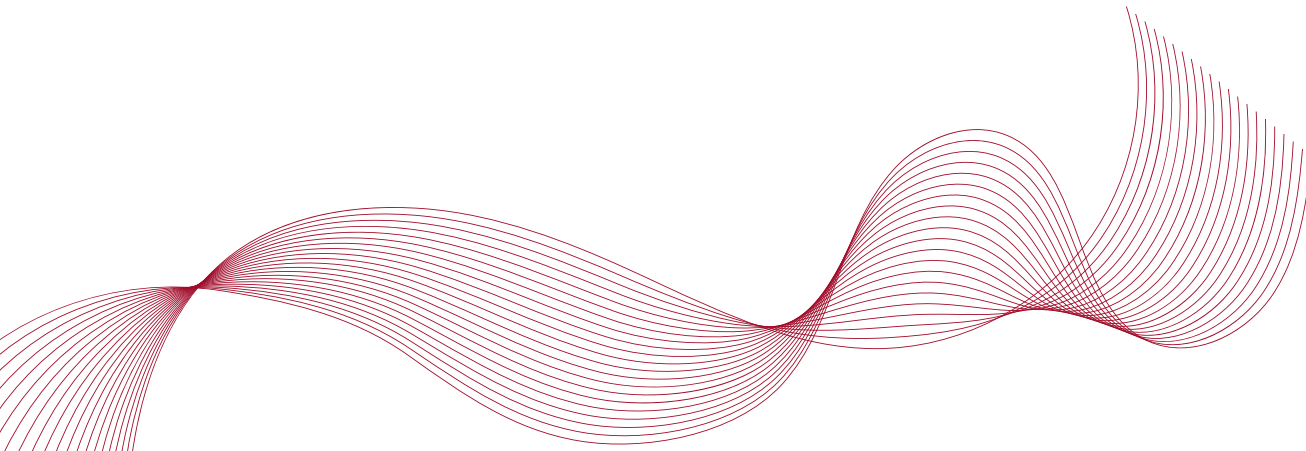


ABOUT ROBYANN

I am grateful to be accepted into the ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy (SLA). Participating in this prestigious program is a privilege, and I am eager to further develop my leadership skills to better serve my school district and the Latino community.

Throughout my career, I have demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. Additionally, I have had the privilege of serving biliterate students, ensuring they receive the support and resources necessary to thrive academically. My work with English Language Acquisition programs has equipped me with the skills to develop and implement effective strategies for biliterate students, fostering their language development and academic success.

Participating in the SLA is of immense value to me as a leader and to my school district. The academy's focus on preparing leaders to address the unique challenges faced by Latino students and communities aligns perfectly with my background, skills, and dedication. I am excited about the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded professionals to drive positive change in education. The knowledge and experiences I gain from the SLA will enable me to implement innovative strategies and best practices within my district, benefiting our students and community.





"Robyann has demonstrated her ability to direct and manage our Human Resources Department in our highly diverse elementary school setting. She has a high level of energy and determination, as well as the skills to learn quickly and analyze difficult and complex situations. Her ability to work and succeed as a leader in Littleton is a testament to her emphasis that all students are capable of learning with no exceptions. I have been very impressed with her commitment to equity, excellence, and closing achievement gaps for all students.

It is without reservation that I support her for the ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy. Her passion for improving public education and long-term commitment to public education is admirable. I am confident that Ms. Robyann Dominguez-Musil will exemplify the mission of ALAS to improve and expand opportunities for emerging school system leaders to assume high-level roles in high-poverty and minority-serving school systems."

Jeffrey J. Smith, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Littleton Elementary School District #65

GENESSEE Montes

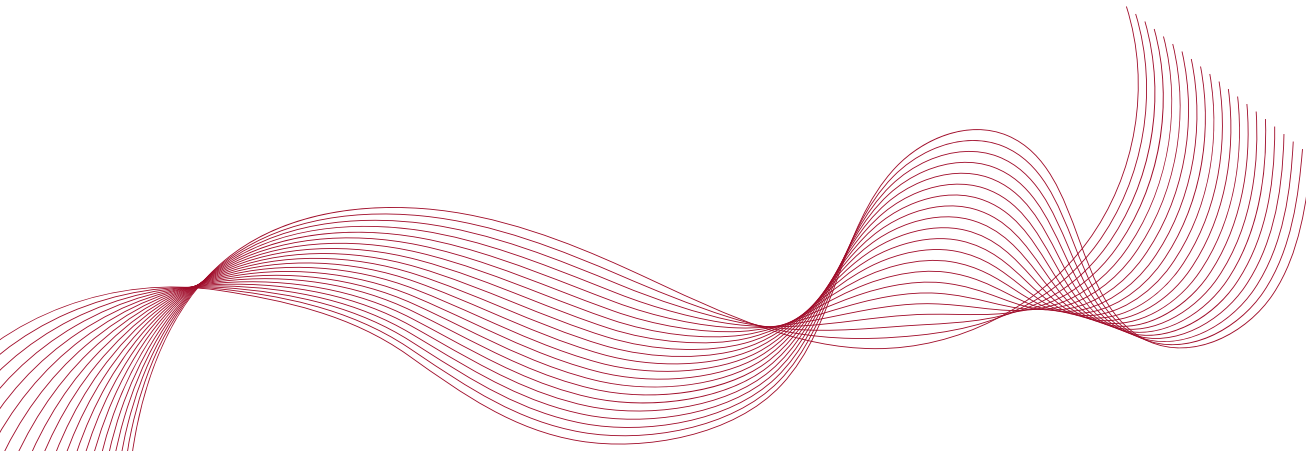
District Principal Coach
Mesa Public Schools



ABOUT GENESSEE

As a dedicated and driven educational leader, I am ready to take the next step in my professional journey with an aim to impact education at a systems level. My purpose is clear: to lead and support those in education to center students' needs in every decision they make. In the next three to five years, I intend to become a Superintendent who works collaboratively with all stakeholders to close opportunity gaps and develop students into well-rounded, thriving members of society.

Joining the Superintendents Leadership Academy would be an honor and a strategic step toward the realization of my goals. It will allow me to refine my leadership identity, build the systems thinking necessary for district leadership, and strengthen my ability to lead with both empathy and strategic foresight.





"It is my pleasure to recommend Ms. Genessee Montes for consideration in the ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy. In her role as a principal coach with Mesa Public Schools, Genessee has demonstrated a consistent commitment to educational leadership and a thoughtful approach to supporting school administrators. Her experience in district-level leadership, combined with her dedication to serving diverse student populations, aligns with the Academy's mission to prepare leaders for school systems emphasizing Latino and historically marginalized youth.

Genessee brings a reflective and steady presence to her work. She approaches challenges with a collaborative mindset and is open to feedback, which has allowed her to build constructive relationships across various educational settings. While she continues to develop in areas such as strategic decision-making and navigating complex political landscapes, her willingness to engage in professional growth opportunities positions her well for the comprehensive learning environment offered by the SLA."

Sincerely,

Dr. Matt Strom

DR. ROSALINDA Rodriguez

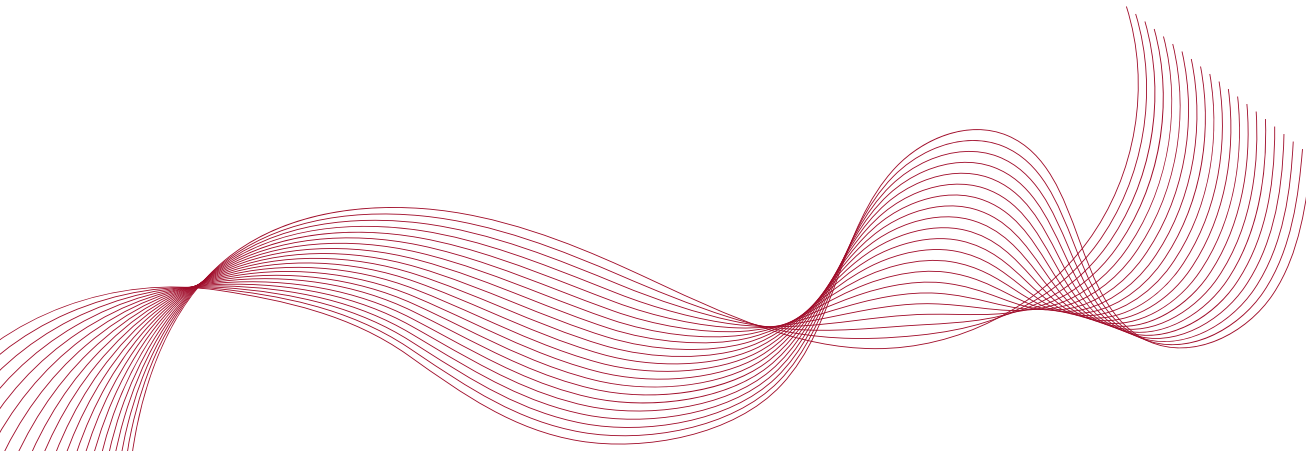
Director of Multicultural Curriculum
Tucson Unified School District #1



ABOUT ROSALINDA

The ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy holds immense value for me because of the organization's commitment to culturally responsive leadership and its emphasis on creating a sense of belonging—a feeling of "familia" that I have found nowhere else. As a graduate of the Four Corners Leadership Academy, I experienced firsthand the incredible support for developing Latino administrators, which has been vital for my work with our students. I aspire to bring that same sense of belonging to all students, particularly in diverse school settings. The SLA's comprehensive approach to mentoring, networking, and leadership development will provide me with the necessary tools to navigate the challenges of a superintendency and advocate effectively for equitable educational opportunities.

I bring to the SLA a strong interest in collaboration, transparency, and a desire to empower each other. I am eager to contribute to the vibrant learning community within the academy and learn from esteemed colleagues and mentors. I am looking forward to paying it forward by continuing to be an active member of AZALAS and supporting other current and future leaders.





“Dr. Rodriguez has consistently demonstrated the ability to lead and manage effectively whether at a school site or district department. She immediately develops a sense of community and a clear vision to guide her employees. When she stepped in as director of the Multicultural Curriculum Department, she took the time to get to know the department’s purpose, origin and documentation that has driven the activities of the department. She built on this purpose and the department’s previous work to bring her staff together to articulate a vision and mission for the department and to communicate this vision with stakeholders to expand the work of the department. In a short time, she has exponentially expanded the footprint of her department.

One of Dr. Rodriguez’s greatest strengths is her high level of energy, determination, and perseverance. As the director of the Multicultural Curriculum Department, she was faced with the challenge of an understaffed and underfunded department. She didn’t let this stop or compromise the quality of work. She worked with building leaders and teachers to increase the value of the department’s ability to contribute to high levels of student achievement. Through her advocacy, analytical and problem-solving skills she was able to increase her staff and resources in the department to effectively address challenges and implement impactful solutions.

Furthermore, Dr. Rodriguez is deeply committed to ensuring that all students—particularly those from historically marginalized communities—receive a high-quality education. Her work reflects a steadfast dedication to equity, excellence, and closing achievement gaps, aligning seamlessly with the mission and vision of the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS). Her passion for improving public education and her long-term commitment to PK-12 education make her an invaluable asset to any educational organization.”

Heidi A. Aranda
Senior Director of Curriculum and Professional Development
Tucson Unified School District

ALAS-PLA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



MONICA Mesa

Assistant Superintendent, Elementary East Area
Mesa Public Schools

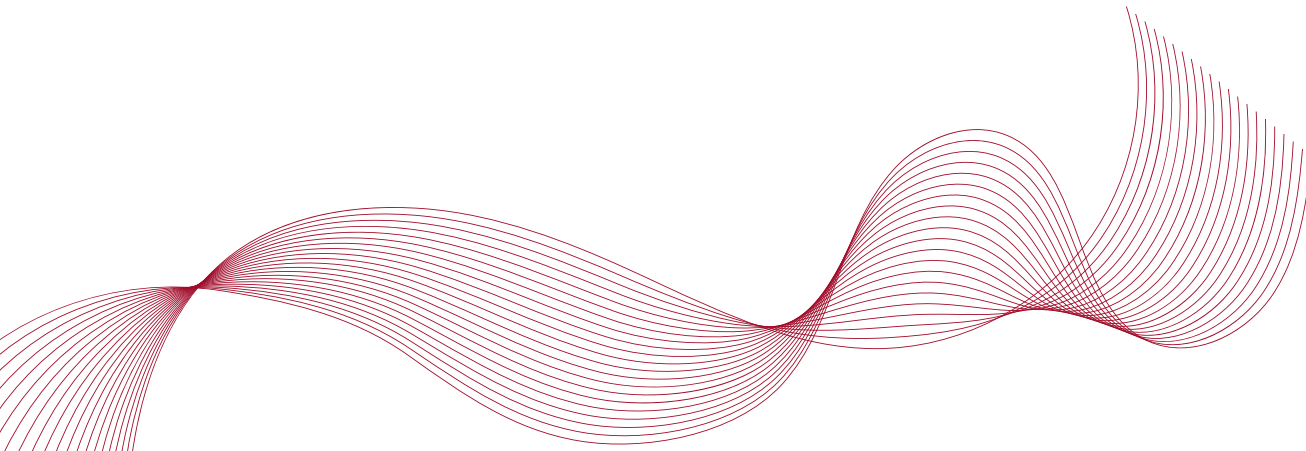


Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) National Principal Leadership Academy – Cohort V

The Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) National Principal Leadership Academy is a nationally recognized leadership development program designed to prepare aspiring and early-career principals to lead with equity, cultural responsiveness, and instructional excellence. This yearlong experience combines virtual sessions and an in-person capstone, offering participants a dynamic blend of theory, reflection, and real-world application.

Throughout the program, participants engage in learning experiences that explore leadership identity, prepare them for the principalship, and provide practical opportunities to analyze real-world problems of practice and participate in mock interviews to sharpen their readiness to lead.

We are proud to introduce the members of Cohort V—a group of exceptional educators selected for their vision, passion, and commitment to student success. As they progress through this transformative program, these leaders will be equipped to create schools where all students, families, and staff thrive.



DR. BRISA M. Lagunas

Principal, Academy of Fine Arts and Industry
Trevor G. Browne High School
Phoenix Union High School District



ABOUT BRISA

Currently, I serve as the academy principal for the Academy of Fine Arts and Industry at Trevor G. Browne High School, where I lead innovative programs that promote student engagement, expand career pathways, and foster community partnerships. In just one year, I successfully grew our club offerings from 35 to 62, launched new collaborations with feeder schools, and introduced quarterly guest speaker events to expose students to diverse professional journeys. These initiatives reflect my passion for creating inclusive, student-centered environments where all learners can thrive.

Previously, as an assistant principal, I led school-wide efforts that reduced our dropout rate from 6.5% to 1.72%, implemented impactful family engagement workshops, and guided discipline reforms that strengthened school climate. I have served in multiple leadership roles—overseeing instruction, student support, assessment, and advisory programs—and currently act as our school’s Title IX coordinator and investigator.

My participation in the AZALAS Aspiring Leaders Cadre, LISTO Academy, and the Four Corners Leadership Cadre has further inspired my commitment to equity and policy-driven leadership. The ALAS Principal Academy represents a powerful opportunity to deepen this work—developing my capacity to influence systems, elevate Latino leadership, and advocate for culturally responsive practices.



“Dr. Brisa Lagunas has been a valued member of our Phoenix Union educational community for many years. In the time Dr. Lagunas has been with Phoenix Union, she has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities, a deep commitment to our students academic and personal growth, and an unwavering dedication to Phoenix Union’s mission and values. Her professional contributions have been invaluable as she has served on numerous committees and is currently responsible for the campus-wide advisory and attendance committees. I strongly believe that she will bring the same level of dedication and expertise to her role as an academy principal.

I have every confidence that Dr. Lagunas will bring energy, passion, and a strong sense of purpose to the role of academy principal. She has a deep understanding of instructional strategies and a commitment to continuous improvement. She has also demonstrated the ability to inspire both students and colleagues to reach their full potential.”

Leticia Avalos
Leadership Coach, Leadership Division
Phoenix Union High School District

FRANCISCO Contreras

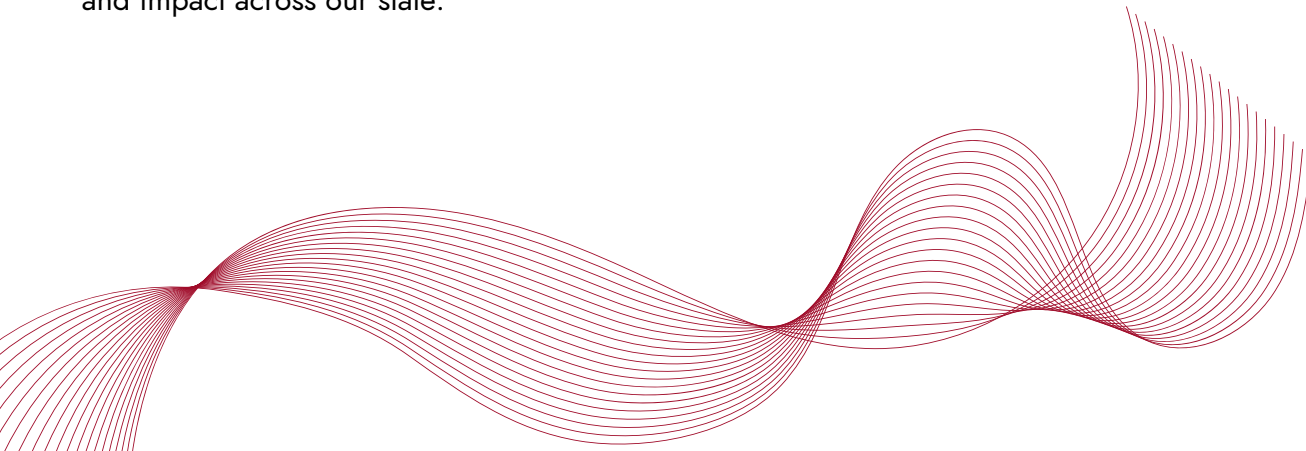
Instructional Leader, Career and Technical Education
Maryvale High School



ABOUT FRANCISCO

Throughout my career, I have led with integrity, service, and a deep commitment to uplifting historically underserved communities. At Maryvale High School, I have advocated for gender equity in athletics through Title IX compliance, mentored classified staff pursuing certification, and championed culturally responsive practices that reflect the needs of our diverse student body. I also bring leadership experience from the Arizona Army National Guard, where I developed communication teams and led with a mission-focused mindset that continues to shape my work in education.

The Principal Leadership Academy represents a transformative opportunity for me to further develop as a systems-level leader. I see PLA as more than a professional development program, it is a space to grow alongside other Latino leaders who are driving change in their schools and districts. The academy's focus on mentorship, advocacy, and equity-driven leadership aligns closely with my values and long-term goals, particularly my desire to transition into district-level leadership roles where I can elevate Latinx representation and impact across our state.





“Frank is a natural leader who exemplifies the spirit of equity, innovation, and student-centered leadership that ALAS seeks to develop through its academy. At Maryvale, he has served as the instructional leader of our Career and Technical Education (CTE) team, where he has led collaborative efforts to strengthen academic pathways, mentor new educators, and align our programs with workforce readiness goals. His impact is not confined to the classroom, he has also led as a coach, professional development facilitator, and advocate for inclusive practices across our school.

What distinguishes Frank is his ability to lead with both courage and compassion. As a veteran of the Army National Guard, he brings discipline and mission-focused leadership to every initiative. As an educator, he remains grounded in culturally responsive practices and a strong belief in the potential of every student, particularly those from historically underserved communities. His commitment to equity, integrity, and collaboration make him an ideal candidate for a national leadership development experience.

Frank’s vision, humility, and unwavering dedication to public education are exactly what we need in the next generation of school leaders. I have no doubt that he will contribute meaningfully to the ALAS National Principal Leadership Academy and apply its lessons to improve the students and communities he serves.”

John Doherty, Principal
Maryvale High School
Phoenix Union High School District



Leadership

*is about making others better as a result of
your presence and making sure that impact
lasts in your absence.*

Make it a great day!

Tracy Harris

