



1988  
ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF LATINO  
ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

# NEWSLETTER

September 2025



# CELEBRATING 37 YEARS

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HONORING OUR ROOTS: ELEVATING OUR FUTURE

NOV 2-3



*Message from the*  
**EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR**

**A**s we look ahead to fall, AZALAS is proud to highlight the upcoming Annual Statewide Conference in November, an event that unites educational leaders from across Arizona. This conference brings together educators, leaders, and advocates who are committed to advancing equity, leadership, and excellence in education for all students. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Conference Committee members whose dedication and expertise are guiding the planning of this year's program. Their commitment ensures that the conference will provide meaningful professional development, thoughtful dialogue, and opportunities for collaboration among educational leaders.

In this issue, we are honored to recognize the Conference Committee and their service in making the Annual Conference a success. Their leadership reflects the heart of AZALAS serving our communities while supporting the next generation of Latino administrators and superintendents.

We invite all members and colleagues to save the date, November 2-3, 2025 and register as an early bird by October 10, 2025 to join us in November for this valuable conference.

*Dr. Marvene Lobato*

*“Leadership is  
listening, serving,  
and lifting  
others up.”*

*- Dolores Huerta*







1988

ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF LATINO  
ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

*Thank you  
to the 37th Annual  
Conference Planning  
Committee*

*Your dedication and collaborative spirit have made all the  
difference. Thank you for your hard work!*



# Vanessa

## Alegria-Rivas

Assistant Principal

Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District. #35

### **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I feel very fortunate to have been part of AZALAS in so many ways. From completing the Aspiring Leaders Program and graduating from the 4 Corners Latinx Leadership Academy to attending the annual conference year after year, each experience has filled me with inspiration and hope. What I treasure most are the connections I've made—meeting and learning from incredible leaders who have opened doors and encouraged me along the way. These relationships led me to the honor of serving on the committee and contributing to its subcommittees, an opportunity I value deeply.

### **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am truly excited to be serving on the Table Decorations and Art subcommittees! Contributing to a conference of this magnitude, working alongside my dedicated colleagues, and proudly representing our district at Santa Cruz Valley is a tremendous honor. What inspires me most is the collaboration with such talented teams to bring our theme, Raíces y Alas, to life through meaningful art and beautiful centerpieces. I look forward to seeing our shared vision unfold in a way that will inspire and uplift everyone who attends.

### **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

My hope is that every attendee leave this conference empowered, inspired, and determined to pursue their ongoing professional journey.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

To set ambitious goals, envision themselves in new leadership roles, and embrace the belief that they can—and will—become an assistant principal, dean, principal, superintendent, or excel in any leadership capacity they aspire to. Their potential is limitless, and the journey begins with the steps they take, inspired by attending this conference. ¡Sí se puede!



# Adriana

*Alvarado Parsons*

Director of Communications  
Glendale Elementary School District

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired to join the Arizona Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents Marketing Committee because I believe in advancing opportunities for Latino professionals to lead change and represent all Arizona students.

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I was inspired to join the Marketing Committee because I believe in advancing opportunities for Latino professionals to lead change and represent all Arizona students. Being part of the Marketing Committee allows me to help amplify AZALAS' vision to support Latino leaders who care deeply about the success of Arizona students. I am also energized by the collaboration with the members of the Arizona School Public Relations Association.

**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope every participant leaves the conference inspired by unity and collaboration and I'm thrilled to add that the AZALAS partnership with the Arizona School Public Relations Association continues to grow. Our two organizations' missions align and we look forward to even more enhancements to our collective work.

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Embrace your voice and share your story. You are leading and inspiring the next generation of Latino leaders and students to discover their passion and purpose. Surround yourself with a professional family who shares your values and stay rooted in Arizona's vibrant Latino community.



# Javier *Baca*

Chief Information Officer  
Pima County

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I joined the Conference Committee in appreciation for our organization and what it accomplishes for Arizona educational leaders.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

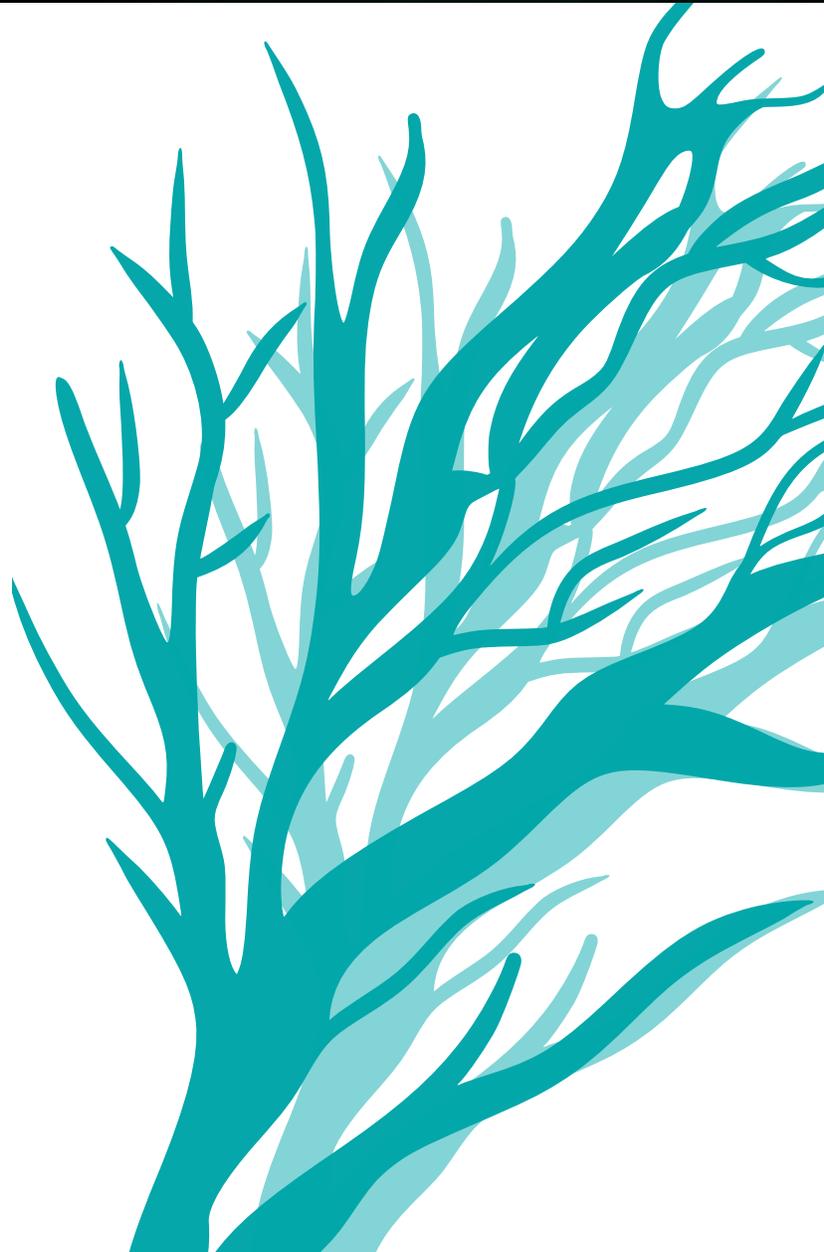
I'm currently serving on the the following committees: Breakout Sessions, Awards, and Scholarships. I have seen the increase in quality over the years and am excited to see AZALAS continue to grow in influence.

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees will be inspired to serve our communities with a shared commitment to providing the best opportunities for our students.

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Seek out and leverage mentors—there are many who want to help you grow.





# Tania Barojas

Behavioral Coach  
Mountain View Elementary/Santa Cruz #35

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired to get involved with AZALAS because it represents a celebration of our Latin roots and the pride we take in who we are. AZALAS is also a great opportunity to grow as a Latin leader, learning from and collaborating with others who share a passion for educational equity and leadership. Joining the Conference Committee felt like a meaningful way to showcase the strength, resilience, and richness of our community and district, especially as part of a border town. It's a chance to highlight the unique perspectives and contributions we bring to education while working together to inspire and support the next generation of leaders.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am currently serving on the Table Decoration Committee and the Art Committee. Being part of the Table Decoration Committee is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the vibrant colors and rich folklore of our Latin roots. It also helps set the tone for the conference in a meaningful and visually engaging way. The Art Committee is equally exciting because it provides students with a platform to express their pride in being Latino and to share their culture through creativity. Both committees allow me to celebrate and elevate our heritage while involving our students in a way that makes them feel seen and valued.

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees leave this year's conference feeling inspired and empowered to honor where they come from while taking bold steps to shape the future of education. I want them to gain practical strategies to promote student agency, amplify student voices, and create learning environments where every student feels a sense of ownership and belonging. Finally, I hope they leave with a deeper understanding of advocacy, equity, and the power of policy, so they feel confident navigating and influencing the systems that affect our students. My goal is for every attendee to return to their schools and communities with renewed pride in their heritage, fresh ideas, and a commitment to elevate the next generation.

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

My advice to aspiring Latino leaders is to never forget where you came from. Every experience—both good and bad—has been a lesson that shaped you into the leader you are becoming. Leadership is a journey of continuous growth, and it's important to stay grounded, embrace the human side of the work, and lead with humility. Our strength as leaders comes from honoring our roots while using our experiences to uplift and inspire others.



# Christina

# Boston

Director of Multilingual & Multicultural Education  
Tolleson Union High School District

### **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee because of my deep commitment to serving multilingual and multicultural communities. AZALAS represents leaders who are dedicated to equity, access, and advocacy for Latino students and families, which aligns closely with my own values and work in education. The conference is a powerful space to connect, collaborate, and share strategies that truly impact the success of our students. By serving on the committee, I saw an opportunity not only to give back to an organization that has supported me, but also to help create meaningful professional learning and networking experiences for others who share this mission.

### **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am currently serving on the Registration Subcommittee. What excites me most about this work is the opportunity to welcome colleagues and partners from across the state and beyond to the AZALAS Conference. Registration is often the very first interaction participants have with the event, and I take pride in helping create an experience that feels organized, welcoming, and reflective of our AZALAS values. It is rewarding to know that our committee's work helps set the tone for a successful conference filled with connection, learning, and inspiration.

### **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I am most excited about the Connections with the Comadres sessions, where female superintendents share their personal success stories. These conversations are powerful because they not only highlight the diverse journeys of women in leadership, but also provide inspiration and practical lessons that others can carry into their own paths. The opportunity to learn from their experiences and wisdom is truly motivating, and I look forward to the encouragement and sense of possibility these sessions always bring.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

If I could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, it would be to embrace your voice and your cultural identity as strengths, not obstacles. Our lived experiences give us unique perspectives that can shape more inclusive schools and empower our communities. Stay grounded in your purpose, seek out mentors and networks like AZALAS, and never underestimate the impact of your presence at the decision-making table. Representation matters, and your leadership can open doors for those who come after you.



# Jonathan *Chavez*

Principal, Calabasas School  
Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District #35

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I became involved with AZALAS because I am passionate about supporting students and creating opportunities for Latinx leaders to make a meaningful difference in our schools and communities. I believe in empowering school leaders and helping to build pathways that allow them to positively impact the communities they serve.

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am honored to serve as the 2025 Conference Co-Chair and thrilled about the incredible event we're creating for our attendees, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our entire committee.

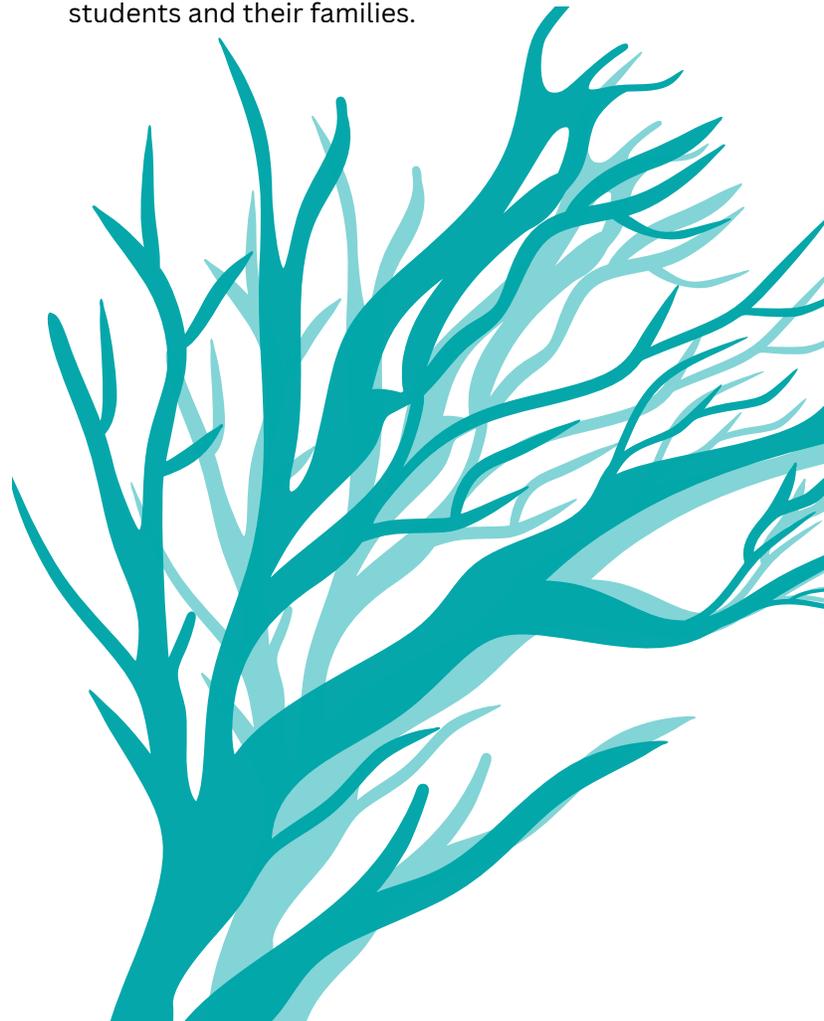
**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

My hope is that everyone leaves feeling inspired and ready to take on the important work ahead—in our schools, as well as in their personal and professional lives.

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Always strive to serve a purpose. Each of us has so much to offer our students and school communities. Many of our students look to us, as Latino leaders, for

inspiration and guidance as they work toward their dreams. It is our responsibility to support them, encourage their passions, and remind them that with dedication and hard work, they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. Our communities are counting on us to be true champions for our students and their families.





# Monica *Delgado*

Assistant Principal  
Calabasas School and Coatimundi Middle School/SCV #35

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I've been inspired to join AZALAS and the Conference Committee after attending the conference for three years, consistently gaining invaluable knowledge and insights. This experience has not only fueled my passion for leadership but also instilled in me a desire to give back to an organization that has had such a profound impact on my professional growth. As a proud Latina and aspiring district leader, I'm eager to contribute to the committee and continue to support and empower my Latin community through education and leadership development.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I'm currently serving on table decorations and breakout sessions. I joined the Table Decorations Committee to add a creative touch to our events and ensure that our gatherings are visually appealing and reflective of our conference's theme: Raices y Alas: Honoring Our Roots, Elevating Our Future. I'm excited to bring my ideas and skills to create beautiful and welcoming decorations that enhance the overall experience for our guests. The reason I joined the Breakout Sessions Committee is because I'm passionate about sharing knowledge and expertise through engaging and interactive sessions. I am

excited to help curate and plan sessions that cater to diverse interests and needs, and provide attendees with valuable takeaways and networking opportunities.

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

As a proud Latina and school leader, I hope attendees of this conference will take away a renewed sense of purpose and empowerment to drive positive change in their own school communities. Through my experience with this organization, I've gained invaluable knowledge, mentorship, and support that has inspired me to pursue leadership roles and make a meaningful impact. I hope attendees will leave feeling motivated, connected and equipped with the tools and confidence to lead with authenticity and passion, just as I have been fortunate enough to do.

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Empower yourself by embracing your unique voice and perspective. Remember that your experiences and identity are strengths, not weaknesses. Lead with authenticity, compassion, and resilience, and never forget the impact you can have on the lives of your students, colleagues, and community.



# Hector *Estrada*

Director of Teaching & Learning, Secondary  
Mesa Public Schools

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

What inspired me to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee is the community, the network, and the opportunities for growth and connection.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

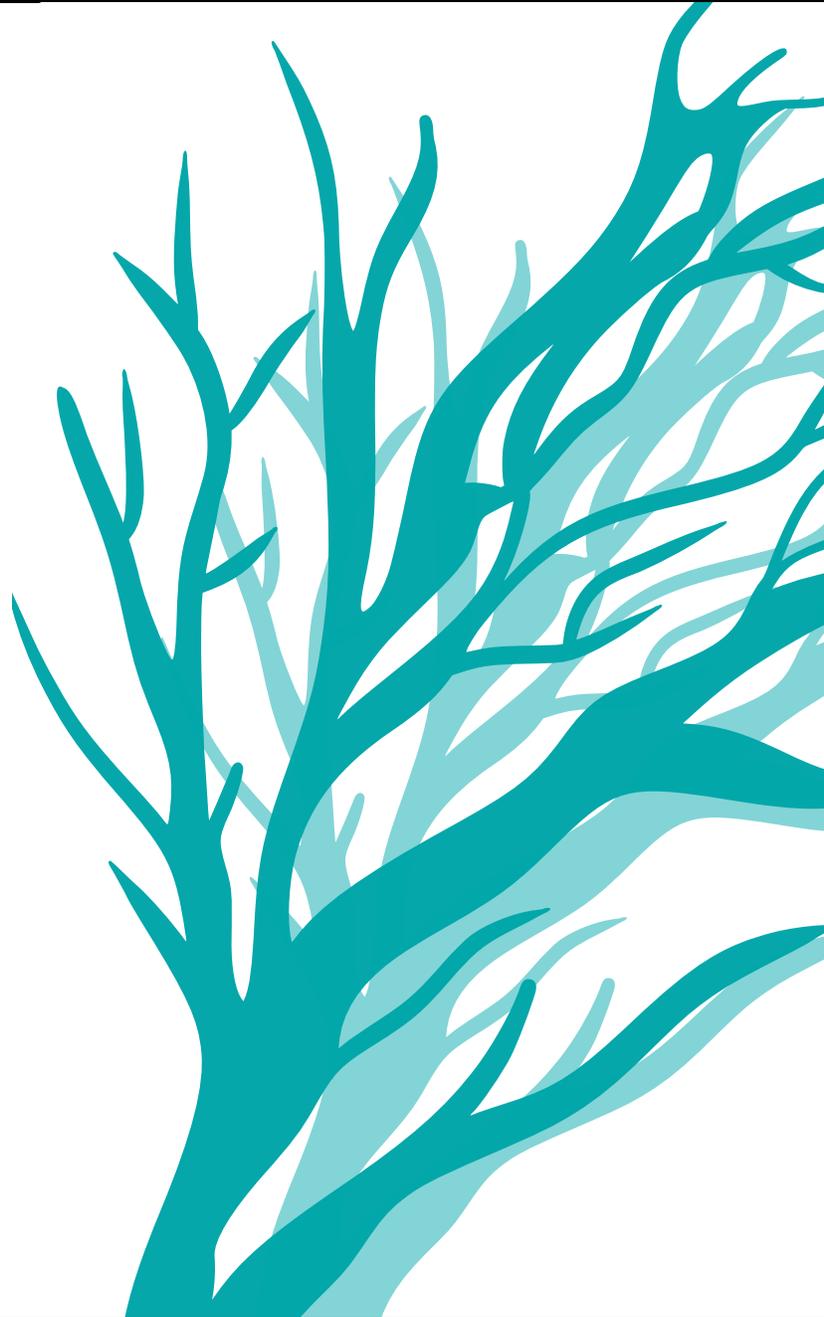
I am currently serving on the Student Performance Subcommittee! I'm excited to showcase students from around the state as a critical reminder of our why, students first!

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees will take away the importance of community and advocacy!

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Building authentic relationships is of the utmost importance, you must invest in the root to bear the fruit. As you build relationships, ensure that you create voice equity with your teams by leaning into co-creating which will yield shared responsibility.





# Anthony *Fimbres*

Business Manager  
Buckeye Union High School District

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired with the opportunity to be part of a network that uplifts Latino leaders. I wanted to surround myself with people who share the same passion for equity, representation, and student success. For me it was both the ability to learn from experienced peers and open doors for others not yet involved.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

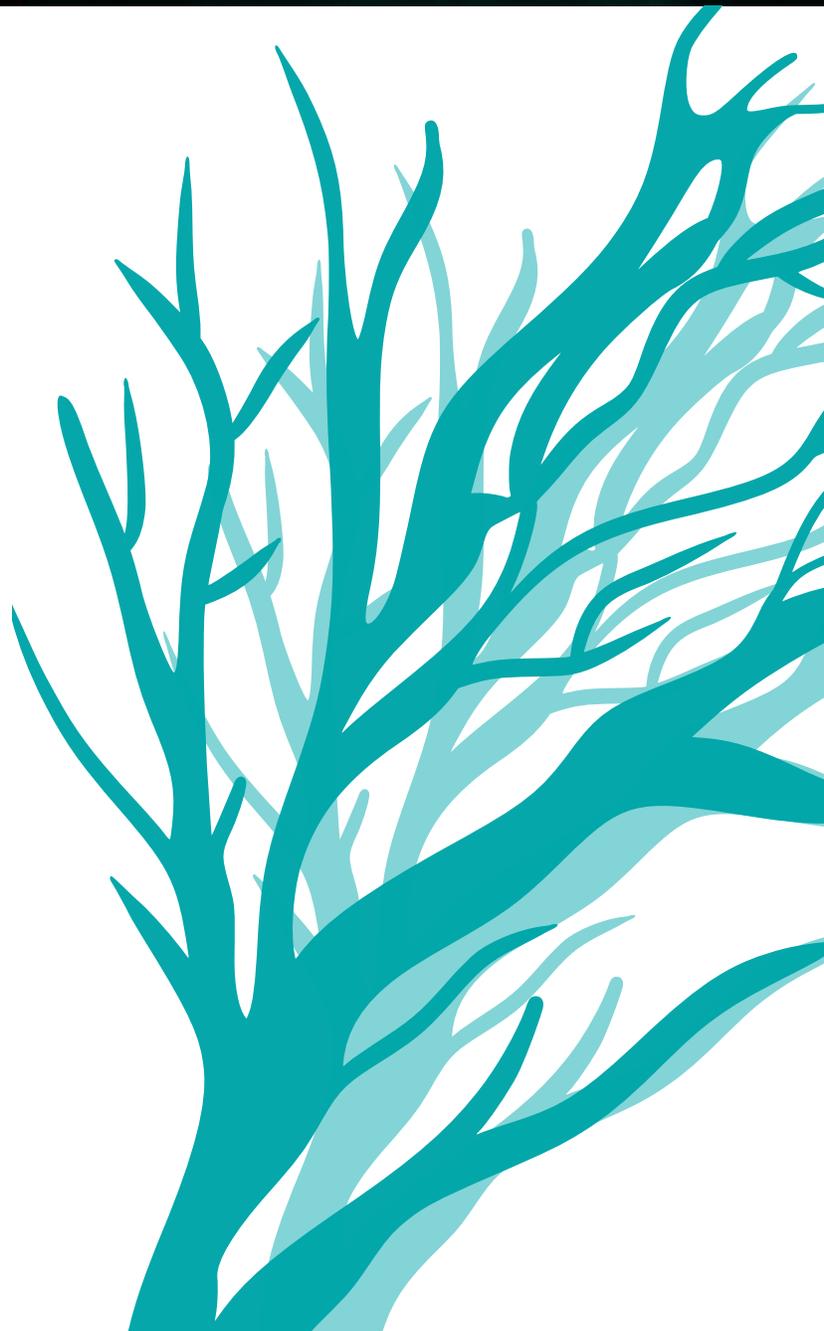
Swag, Marketing

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees walk away feeling empowered and connected, knowing they are not alone. I want them to gain a lasting connection with purpose and continue advocating for our students and communities.

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Never forget that your voice and perspective matters. Representation in education is powerful and the students you serve need to see themselves reflected in leadership. Stay rooted in your culture, lead with authenticity, and always lift others as you climb.





# Joann

# Fimbres

Chief Financial Officer  
Pendergast Elementary School District

### **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

The inspiration to become a member of AZALAS and take part in the Conference Committee, including chairing the 2023 Annual Conference was driven from the great work and support that the association and its members provides and does on a daily basis for our students, staff, community, and our culture. As a member of the National ALAS, an alumni of the Superintendents Leadership Academy, and award winner of the 2024 Central Office Administrator of the Year, I credit this to the great support that many leaders within AZALAS has and have continued to provide to me. A large percentage of the students that we serve are Latino/Latina, and it is a wonderful thing to have a community of leaders that support them with their education, the skills and tools to prepare them for their future, and educators and leaders that look like them.

### **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am currently serving on the Art and Table Decoration subcommittees. As a past conference chair, I know the importance and hard work of

each of the committees and appreciate the dedication and commitment of each committee member. What excites me about this volunteer work is the opportunity of giving back and supporting in the beauty of the work that we do. It's a celebration of educators and leaders, honoring culture in art and table decor.

### **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

The hope is that all attendees enjoy the opportunity of being around "Familia", networking, energizing one another through professional development and the breakout sessions.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Create your network, meet others from districts around the state, and learn from them. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and take those opportunities for further growth within this association and others. Remember education is continual, even those who have been in education for a great number of years continue to learn. Support one another. You've got this!



# Gabriel

*Gamino Guerrero*

Director of Community Relations  
Alhambra Elementary School District

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee because of the organization's commitment to uplifting and supporting Latino leaders in education. I believe in the power of representation, mentorship, and collaboration, and AZALAS provides a platform to amplify those values. Being part of the Conference Committee also gives me the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way, helping to create spaces where educators can connect, share ideas, and inspire one another to continue making a difference for students and communities.

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am currently serving on the Marketing Subcommittee. What excites me most about this work is the opportunity to showcase the incredible efforts of AZALAS and highlight the impact of our events and initiatives. I enjoy finding creative ways to engage our community, spread awareness, and ensure that more educators and leaders know about the resources and support available through AZALAS. It's rewarding to be part of a team that helps amplify the mission and reach of the organization.

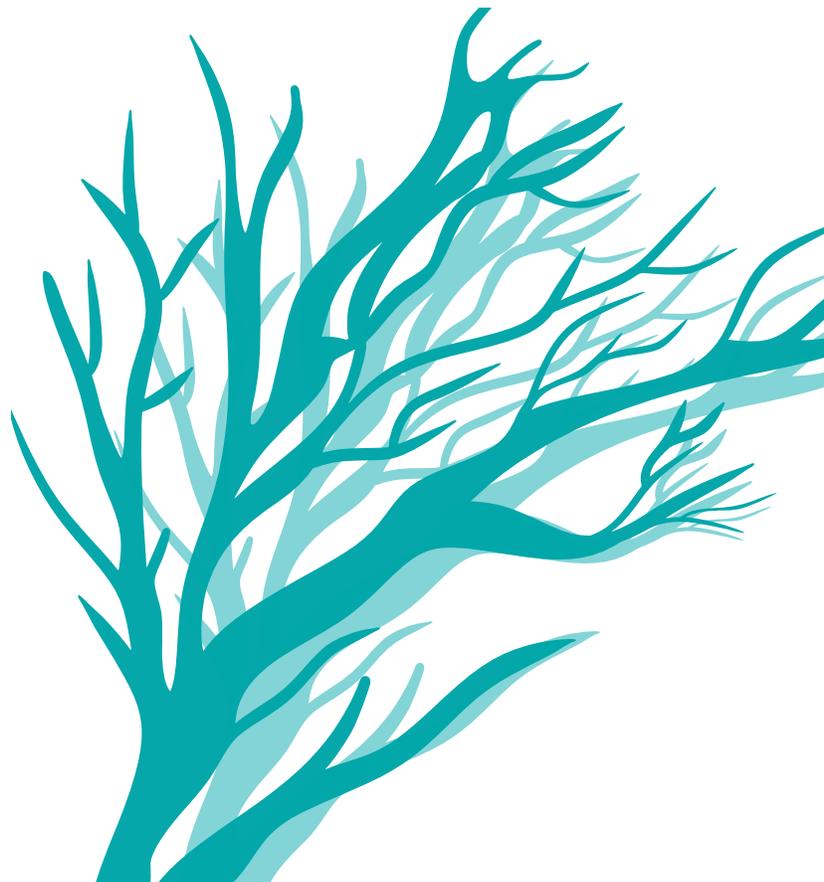
**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees leave this year's conference feeling inspired, connected, and empowered. My goal is for them to walk away with new ideas, practical

strategies, and meaningful relationships that they can bring back to their schools and communities. Most importantly, I hope they feel re-energized in their work as leaders and reminded of the positive impact they have on students and families every day.

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

My advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education is to embrace your voice and your story. Stay true to your values, find mentors, and remember that your perspective can inspire and make a lasting impact.





# Dagoberto López

Principal  
Rio Rico High School @ SCV35

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I have always been passionate to work with other educational leaders in our state to learn with them and move our educational systems forward.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am one of the Co-Chairs and have loved working with Mr. Chavez, my counterpart, as we have collaborated with all of the committee members. I also enjoy working with our Compadres subcommittee to set up the superintendent's panels.

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope that the attendees from this year's conference leave feeling motivated and inspired to go back to their schools and districts. Specifically, motivated to move the work of creating and sustaining student-centered learning communities which put ALL learners at the center of their systems, structures and budgets.

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Stay engaged with organizations/associations like AZALAS which promote educational leadership across our state AND ensure that your reasons for leading always remain at the core of everything they do. Regardless of the role or position, keep our learners at the center of their work, always!





# Albert *Magallanes*

Director of Information Technologies  
Sunnyside Unified School District

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee by the organization's dedication to supporting Latino students and professionals in Arizona.

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

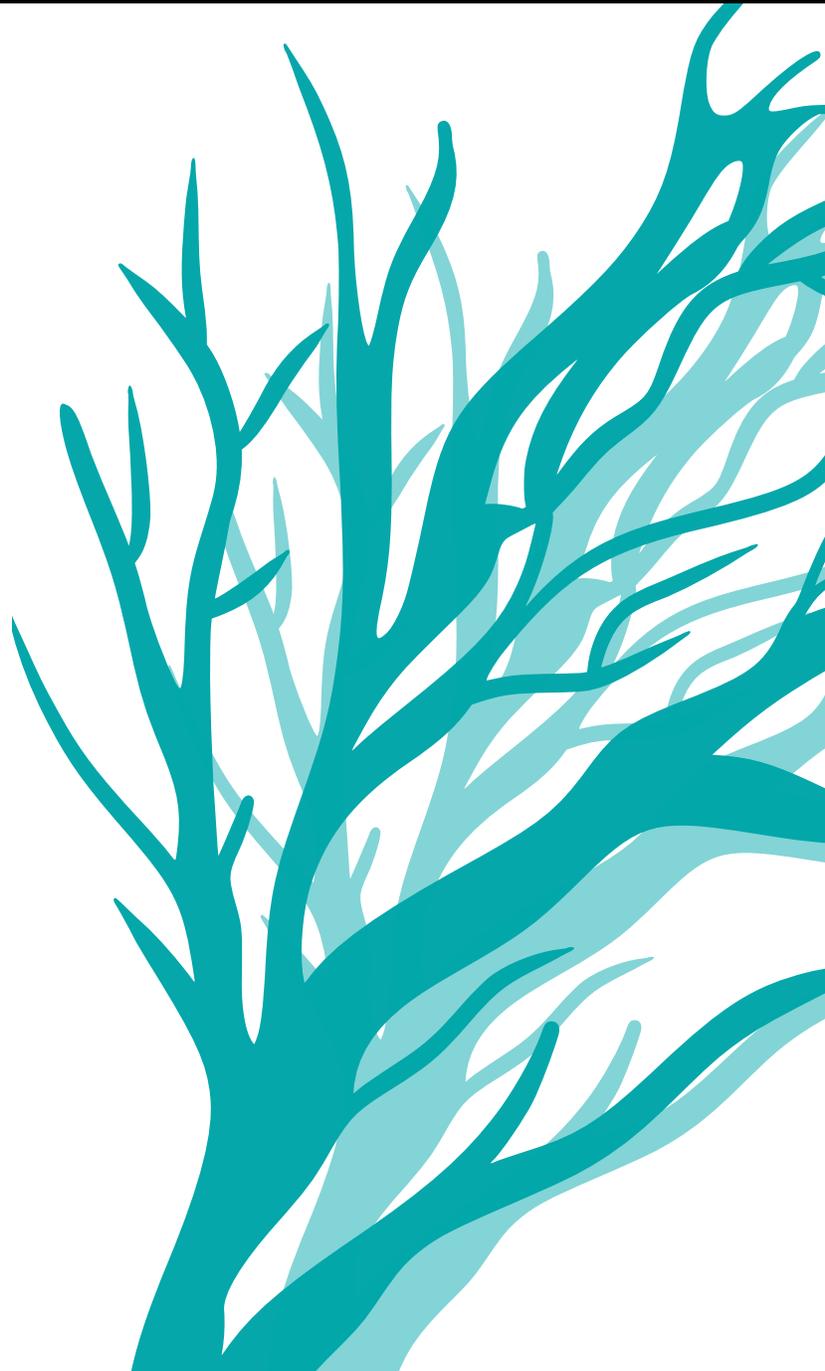
I am currently serving on the Technology Subcommittee.

**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

Better sense of understanding how to best serve our Latino students and community

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Don't forget where you came from.





# Karla

# Martinez

Principal  
Mansfeld Middle Magnet School  
Tucson Unified School District

### **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired by AZALA's mission to uplift Latino leaders and create pathways for equity in education. Joining the Conference Committee allows me to give back to an organization that has provided invaluable mentorship, support, and opportunities for my personal and professional growth.

### **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

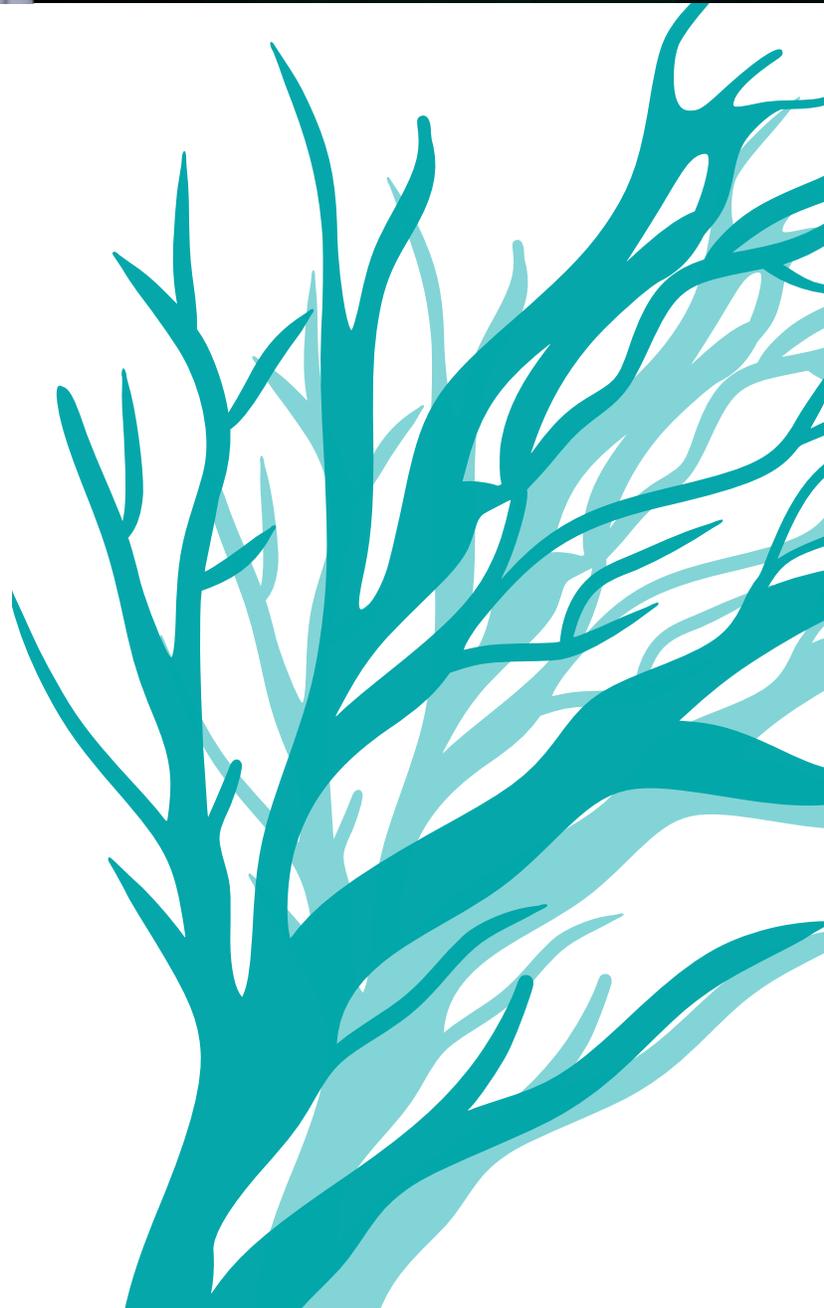
I am currently serving on the Scholarship Committee. What excites me the most is the opportunity to support aspiring or current Latino leaders pursuing advanced degrees by providing resources and recognition that empower them to continue their studies, expand their impact and increase representation in educational leadership.

### **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

My hope is that attendees leave feeling inspired, connected and empowered. I want them to walk away with practical strategies to create a lasting impact in their communities.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

My advice is to lead with love, humility and purpose. Never forget that your voice and presence matter. When others see you in leadership, they see possibility. As Latino leaders, we open doors not just for ourselves but for the next generation.





# Larry *Martinez*

Retired Administrator

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

Paying it forward. We have all been supported in our quest to serve students and staff. When we can give back and make difference, hopefully we can continue the cycle of "Paying it Forward."

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

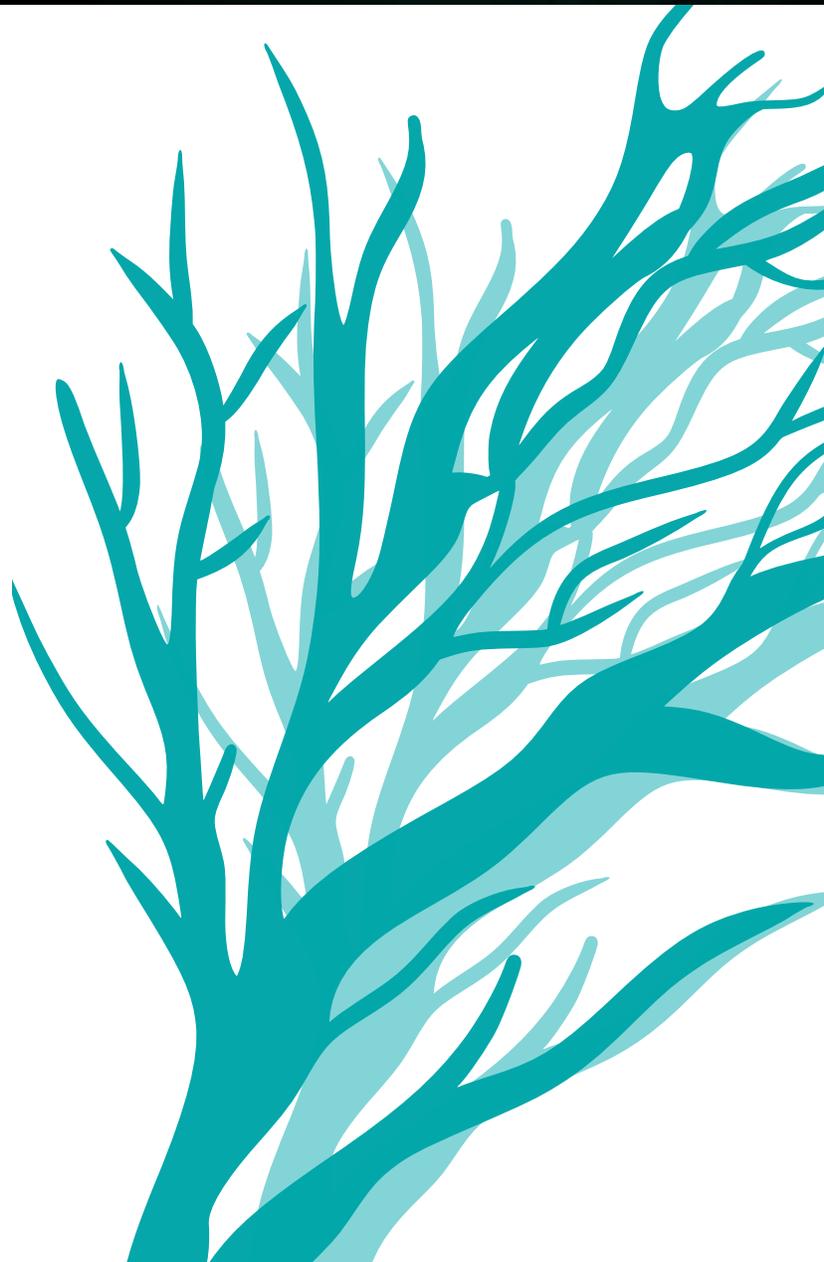
I am currently serving on the Compadres Panel Session.

**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees will take away information to assist leaders in critical thinking and problem skills when coordinating a school or district.

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Listen to Learn!





# Jigar

# Mehta

Principal

Pierson High School, Nogales Unified School District 1

### **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

My inspiration stems directly from the profound impact AZALAS had on my own professional journey. The two years I spent in the AZALAS leadership training program were instrumental in providing me with the foundation, confidence, and vision necessary to step into the role of principal. AZALAS is more than a program; it is the bedrock of my leadership philosophy. Serving on the Conference Committee is my opportunity to give back to the community that invested so much in me. It is a genuine pleasure to contribute to an organization that continues to cultivate the next generation of educational leaders.

### **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am currently serving on the Breakout Sessions subcommittee. What excites me most about this work is the opportunity to help curate a meaningful and impactful learning experience for our attendees. We are tasked with shaping the content that forms the core of the conference, ensuring the sessions are not only relevant and forward-thinking but also deeply resonant with this year's powerful theme, "Honoring Our Roots." It is incredibly rewarding to work behind the scenes to create spaces for dialogue, learning, and connection that we know can be truly transformative.

### **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees leave feeling inspired, re-energized, and equipped with practical strategies. Specifically, I hope they gain a renewed sense of purpose by connecting the theme of "Honoring Our Roots" to their daily practices. I want them to absorb the latest insights on leadership development and current trends in education, transforming this knowledge into actionable plans for their schools and districts. Most importantly, I hope they leave with a stronger network of colleagues and a powerful reminder that they are part of a supportive and brilliant community dedicated to educational excellence.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

My one piece of advice is to prioritize building authentic, intentional relationships above all else. Leadership is not exercised in a vacuum; it is built on the foundation of trust with your students, teachers, parents, and the broader community. Think beyond the walls of the school building. We are not just serving a school; we are serving and uplifting an entire community. When you genuinely invest in people and see your role as a service to the community, your impact becomes deeper, more sustainable, and truly transformative.



# Hilda

## *Ortega-Rosales*

Retired Administrator from Tolleson Union HSD  
School Board Member, Pendergast ESD

### **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I became involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee to engage with Educators for positive change.

### **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

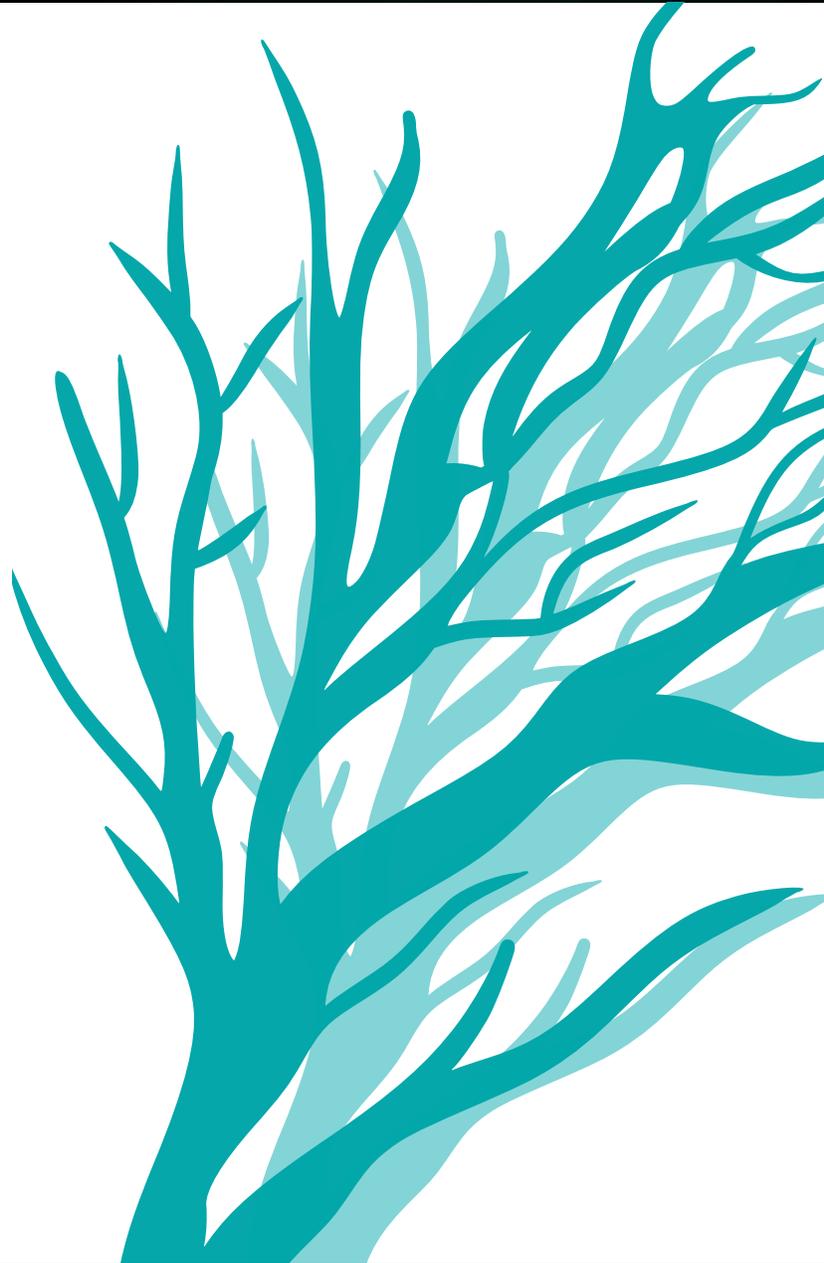
I am currently serving on the Student Performance Subcommittee.

### **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees walk away with a sense of hope and urgency to elevate others.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

If not now, when? ADELANTE!





# Joseph Ontiz

Director of Public Relations and Marketing  
Tolleson Union High School District

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

AZALAS is an organization that I believe in and I am more than happy to share my experience and skill set in the area of marketing and public relations to support the organization's mission and its annual conference.

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I currently serve on the Marketing Subcommittee. I want AZALAS to have a successful conference and have it be an incredible professional growth opportunity for everyone.

**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I want it to be a unique experience for each attendee and that they go back to their districts inspired to share what they learned at the conference.

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Make connections with those who job responsibilities you share and don't be afraid to ask for someone with more experience than you to be your mentor.





# Dr. Rosalinda

# Rodriguez

Multicultural Curriculum Director  
Tucson Unified School District #1

### **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

In 2020, Superintendent Roxana Rico invited me to join the AZALAS Aspiring Principal Panel at a lively casino in Tucson, AZ. I shared my journey, experiences, and the processes I use in my school. That moment ignited a deep pride within me—seeing so many Latino individuals aspiring to become principals, especially because our diverse student population deserves to see themselves represented in these vital leadership roles. That same day, I sensed a warm, family-like feeling in the air—everyone was kind, helpful, and genuinely supportive of each other's dreams. The following year, I attended the AZALAS conference as the recipient of the Outstanding Administrator of the Year. I was struck by the welcoming atmosphere, the camaraderie, and sense of belonging that permeates everything we do there. I started volunteering on the conference planning committee, initially helping with table decor—something I love to do creatively. Over time, I helped establish the decorations committee, pouring passion into making our conference beautiful and inviting.

My drive to be part of AZALAS has always been fueled by that sense of family—a place where I feel supported, valued, and inspired. After 25 years in education, I can truly say that the feeling of being in good company, surrounded by kindness and shared purpose, is unlike any other organization I've been part of.

### **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

This year I am only serving on the registration committee. But I am always willing to help in any way I can.

### **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

My hope for this year's conference attendees is that they recognize and celebrate the talents and strengths rooted in our culture and heritage, and that they bring those qualities forward in our shared commitment to making education a place where every child feels they belong. I hope attendees experience the same sense of belonging, support, and community that I have found at AZALAS—a space where they feel empowered, connected, and inspired. Just as I have been, I wish for them to continue advocating passionately for our students and families with renewed purpose and pride.

### **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

An important piece of advice for an aspiring Latinx leader is to embrace and prioritize your cultural identity as a source of strength and authenticity. Your unique experiences and heritage are valuable assets that can inspire others and drive positive change. Lead with pride, stay true to your values, and use your cultural voice to advocate for equity and inclusion. Additionally, love what you do, even on the challenging days. Those days help us to appreciate the good moments and, most importantly, teach us valuable lessons. Recognizing that every day is an opportunity to grow will strengthen your resilience and authentic leadership.



# Dr. Julio *Rubio*

Principal  
Carl Hayden High School/Phoenix Union

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I was inspired to get involved with AZALAS because of its mission to uplift and support Latino leaders in education. Being part of the Conference Committee allows me to contribute to a space where we can share knowledge, celebrate our culture, and create opportunities for future leaders.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

This year I serve as the chair of the Scholarships Subcommittee. I am most excited about the opportunity to help provide access and support for students who are pursuing higher education. Scholarships open doors, and being part of the process that directly impacts a student's journey is both meaningful and motivating.

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

I hope attendees leave with a renewed sense of purpose, practical strategies to take back to their schools, and connections that strengthen our collective impact as Latino leaders. Most of all, I want them to feel inspired and empowered to continue advocating for equity and opportunity in education.

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Stay rooted in your identity and values while embracing growth and learning. Your voice and perspective matter. Never underestimate the impact you can have on students, families, and communities by leading authentically.





# Marco Antonio

*Quiz*

Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services  
Cartwright School District

## **What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I have served on the AZALAS Conference Committee over the last several years. I enjoy collaborating with fellow Arizona administrators from across our state to bring a viable, vibrant and meaningful professional learning experience to all conference attendees.

## **What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

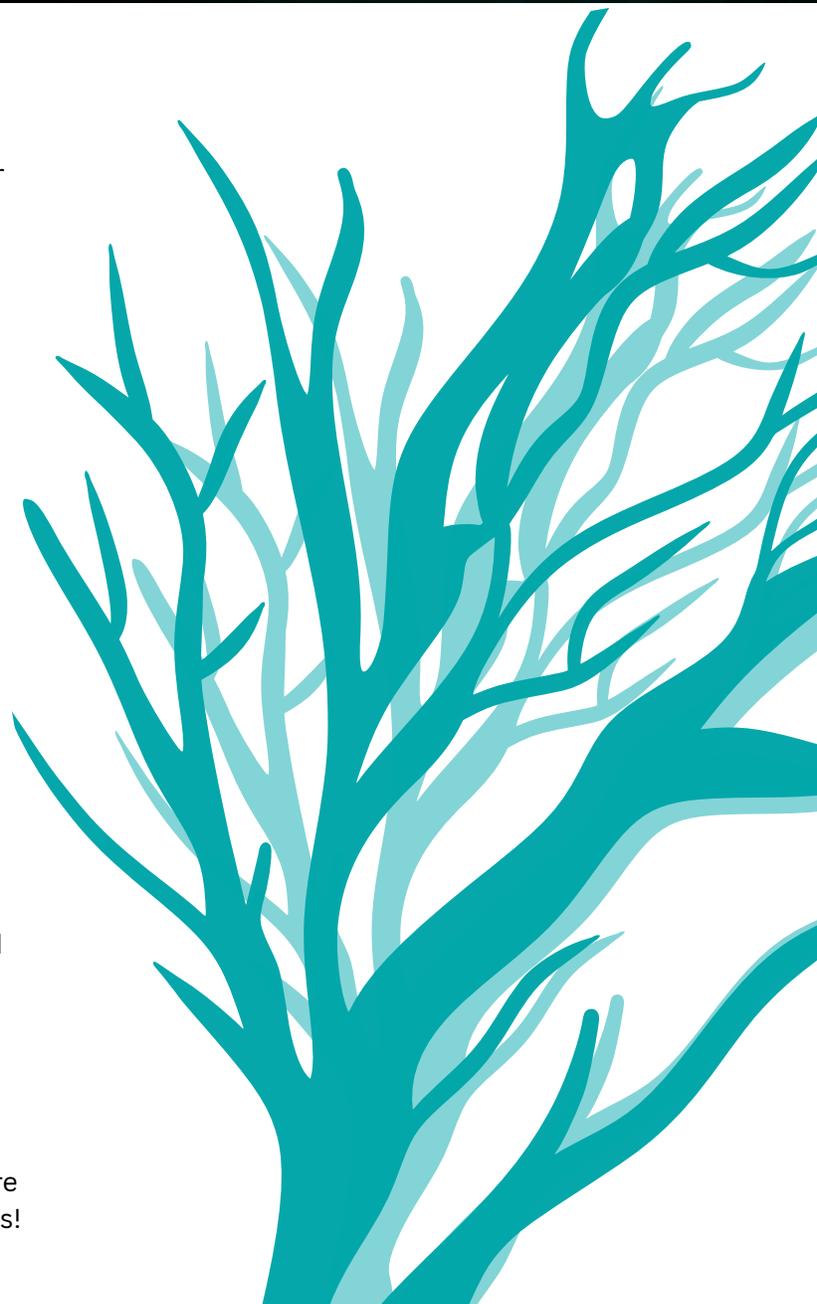
I am currently serving on the Technology/Whoa App subcommittee. I had the fortune of working on providing input on the slidedeck, working closely with our PR team. The collaboration with the technology team, PR team, combined with Tracy Harris' expertise, resulted in amazing graphics, videos and smooth transitions between presenters.

## **What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

As with previous conferences, my hope is that the conference attendee count continues to grow and that participants continue to walk away with a meaningful and memorable learning and networking experience!

## **If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

My advice to an aspiring Latino leader is to reach out to your fellow colleagues in leadership positions. We are here to help and willing to share our experiences and resources!





# Arturo Trujillo

Multimedia Specialist  
Roosevelt School District

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

Last year, I was given the opportunity to assist with editing some of the videos, and I found it deeply rewarding to help share the stories of those being honored. When I was invited to contribute again this year, I was eager to accept and continue that meaningful work.

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

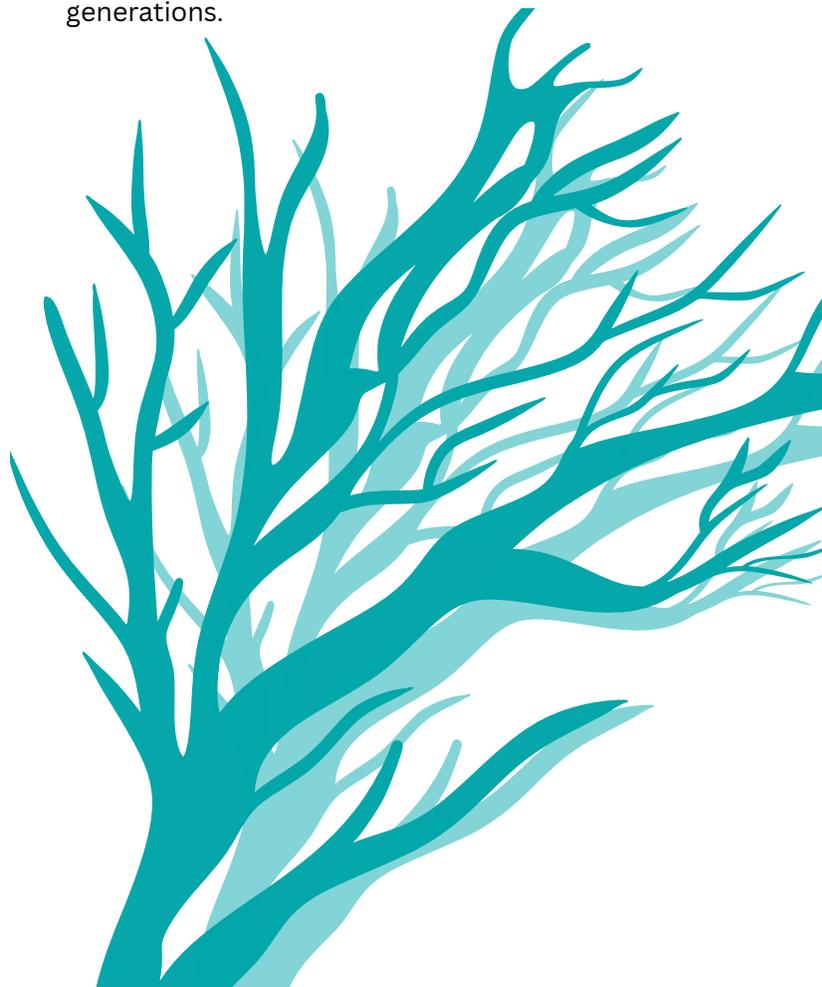
As a member of the Marketing Subcommittee, I am pleased to support this year's program by recording and editing the award recipient videos, ensuring their achievements are highlighted with care and professionalism.

**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

As a product of this very district, I know firsthand the profound impact educators and leaders have on shaping the future. The work you do every day molds the minds and hearts of the next generation. Just as I was guided and encouraged to rise beyond the limitations society placed before me, I hope you see clearly that your dedication continues to change lives and make a lasting difference.

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

To the Latino leaders, my advice is to embrace your heritage with pride and let it fuel your leadership, knowing that you are paving the way for future generations.





Robert

Zamora

Public Safety Director  
Agua Fria High School District

**What inspired you to get involved with AZALAS and the Conference Committee?**

I wanted to get involved with an organization of purpose, and one that provides leadership for meaningful learning experiences.

**What subcommittee(s) are you currently serving on, and what excites you most about that work?**

I am serving on the Art Subcommittee.

**What do you hope attendees will take away from this year's conference?**

That our community is one of se si puede.

**If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring Latino leaders in education, what would it be?**

Never underestimate yourself, but use your education, personal background and experiences to achieve. Never say what if . . .



# Thank You

## 37TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT FEATURED

---

*Ramiro Alvarez, Pendergast ESD*

*Jason Archuleta, Imagine Schools*

*Lorenzo Cabrera, Phoenix UHSD*

*Ruth Canez, Nosotros Academy*

*Ricardo Cordova, Imagine Schools*

*Deanna Cuevas, Continental ESD*

*Monica Delgado, Santa Cruz USD*

*Maria Federico-Brummer, Tucson UHSD*

*Erika Frangozo, Nosotros Academy*

*Joseph Fuentes, Phoenix ESD*

*LD Gomez, Nosotros Academy*

*Dr. JoEtta Gonzales, ASU*

*Ciara Goulette, Saddle Mountain SD*

*Tracy Harris, Pendergast ESD*

*Giselle Herrera, Tolleson ESD*

*Santosh Kumar, Nogales USD*

*Jimmy Navarro, Santa Cruz Valley USD*

*Monica Mesa, Mesa PSD*

*Jorge Moreno, Tolleson UHSD*

*Megan Padilla, Santa Cruz, USD*

*Jesus Perez, Nosotros Academy*

*Martin Perez, Tolleson UHSD*

*Aneela Pradhan, Nogales USD*

*Mimi Renteria, Santa Cruz USD*

*Roxana Rico, Continental ESD*

*Victor Hugo Rodriguez, Cartwright*

*Julio Rubio, Phoenix UHSD*

*Gloria Sanchez McDowell, Buckeye ESD*

*Theresa Trujillo, Cartwright ESD*



1988  
ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF LATINO  
ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERINTENDENTS



1988

ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF LATINO  
ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

# HONORING OUR ROOTS

*Elevating Our Future*

CELEBRATING  
**37**  
YEARS



NOV 2  
2 PM

AK-CHIN CASINO  
CONFERENCE CENTER  
MARICOPA, AZ

*Jimmy Casas*  
**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Jimmy Casas has been an educator for over 30 years, serving twenty-two years as a school leader. Under his leadership, his school was named one of the Best High Schools in the country three times by Newsweek and US News & World Report.

Jimmy was named the 2012 Iowa Secondary Principal of the Year and was selected as runner-up NASSP 2013 National Secondary Principal of the Year. In 2014, Jimmy was invited to the White House to speak on the Future Ready Schools pledge. Jimmy is also the author of ten books, including the Washington Post's best-selling book CULTURIZE: Every Student. Every Day. Whatever It Takes, which has sold over 350,000 copies to date.

Jimmy is the owner and CEO of J Casas & Associates, where he and his team serve as professional leadership coaches for school and district leaders across the country. In January 2020, Jimmy launched ConnectEDD, a publishing company aimed at giving back to the profession by supporting educators to become published authors.



1988

ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF LATINO ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

# HONORING OUR ROOTS

*Elevating Our Future*

## CELEBRATING 37 YEARS



NOV 3  
9 AM

AK-CHIN CASINO  
CONFERENCE CENTER  
MARICOPA, AZ

*Virgel Hammonds*  
**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

FullScale (formerly the Aurora Institute) Co-CEO Virgel Hammonds is a nationally recognized leader in education innovation, bringing over two decades of experience working alongside young people, educators, communities, districts, and policymakers. Prior to joining the Aurora Institute as CEO, Virgel served as chief learning officer at KnowledgeWorks, where he forged partnerships with national policymakers and local learning communities across the country to redesign learning systems to become more learner-centered. Prior to his time at KnowledgeWorks, Virgel served as superintendent of the RSU 2 school district in Maine, where he collaborated with five communities to develop and implement a curriculum designed to ensure mastery of standards by all students. Before serving as superintendent, Virgel was a high school principal at Lindsay Unified School District in California. There, Virgel helped implement a personalized learning model where learners didn't earn letter grades, but rather are awarded mastery for subjects in which they've proven to be proficient.

Currently, Virgel also serves on multiple boards: The Learner-Centered Collaborative Board; PBLWorks Board; and the Jobs for Maine Graduates Executive Board. In addition, Virgel is Board Chair Emeritus of the Aurora Institute and a former member of the CompetencyWorks Advisory Board.

Virgel holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts Lowell and a Master of Education from Fresno Pacific University.





Arizona Association of Latino  
Administrators and Superintendents

# DE TODO CORAZÓN (WITH ALL MY HEART) AWARD

The AZALAS “De Todo Corazón” is dedicated to recognizing educators in our school districts whose selfless acts, large and small, improve the lives of our students, families and staff. We have educators who are doing acts of service for others because they see a need. They take the initiative and act without expecting anything in return. The importance of giving back to our communities has value. Tell us about someone who inspires you. Nominate them for what they do to improve the lives of others. Everyday acts can have ripple effects that are just as impactful as huge acts of kindness. Kindness is the sincere and voluntary use of one’s time, talent, and resources to better the lives of others through genuine acts of compassion, generosity, and service. We believe kindness can change the communities around us. All gestures matter and we want to recognize it in others.

Please submit your nomination along with a 250-word essay for the educator in your school district who deserves to be recognized for a De Todo Corazón Award.

Nominations will be categorized by student enrollment for FY 2025. There will be one award per category. Categories include:

- Small to medium (1,200 students or less)
- Medium to large (1,201 - 5,999 students)
- Large to very large (6,000 plus students)

**PLEASE NOMINATE [HERE](#) OR SCAN THE QR CODE FOR THE NOMINATION FORM.**

**THE DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2025.**





# AZALAS

## Art Contest '25

*Want to win a gift card for your great artwork?*  
One talented student from grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 will win for their original artwork that embraces Mexican American/Latin(a/o) heritage. Open to all Arizona students!

### How to Enter

Complete the online form using this link:  
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZloznULCO6tni7H8cgytQJteTKOraN-A3uZL3MplA541b5A/viewform?usp=header> or scan the QR code provided.

Submit a picture of your artwork and you holding your 8 x 10 or 11 x 14 poster.

## HONORING OUR ROOTS

### *Elevating Our Future*



Scan to complete online form.

**DEADLINE**  
*Friday, Sept. 26, 2025*

**Contact Us!**  
ArtAZALAS@gmail.com  
<http://azalas.org>



# AZALAS

## Concurso de Arte '25

**¿Quieres ganar una tarjeta de regalo por tu obra de arte?**

Un estudiante talentoso de grados K-2, 3-5, 6-8 y 9-12 ganará por su obra de arte original que refleja la herencia México Americano/Latino (a).  
Abierto a todos los estudiantes de Arizona!

### Cómo Participar

Completa el formulario en línea utilizando este enlace <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZloznULCO6tni7H8qgytQJteTKOrAN-A3uZL3MplA541b5A/viewform?usp=header> o escaneé el código QR que se propociona a continuación.

Envía una foto de la obra de arte y de ti sosteniendo el póster de tu obra. La cartunlina debe ser de 8x10 o 11x14.

HONORING OUR ROOTS  
*Elevating Our Future*



Escanear para completar el formulario en línea

**Fecha limitada**  
Viernes 26 de Septiembre

**Contactanos a!**  
[ArtAZALAS@gmail.com](mailto:ArtAZALAS@gmail.com)  
<http://azalas.org/>

# Thank You Sponsors

**37**  
YEARS

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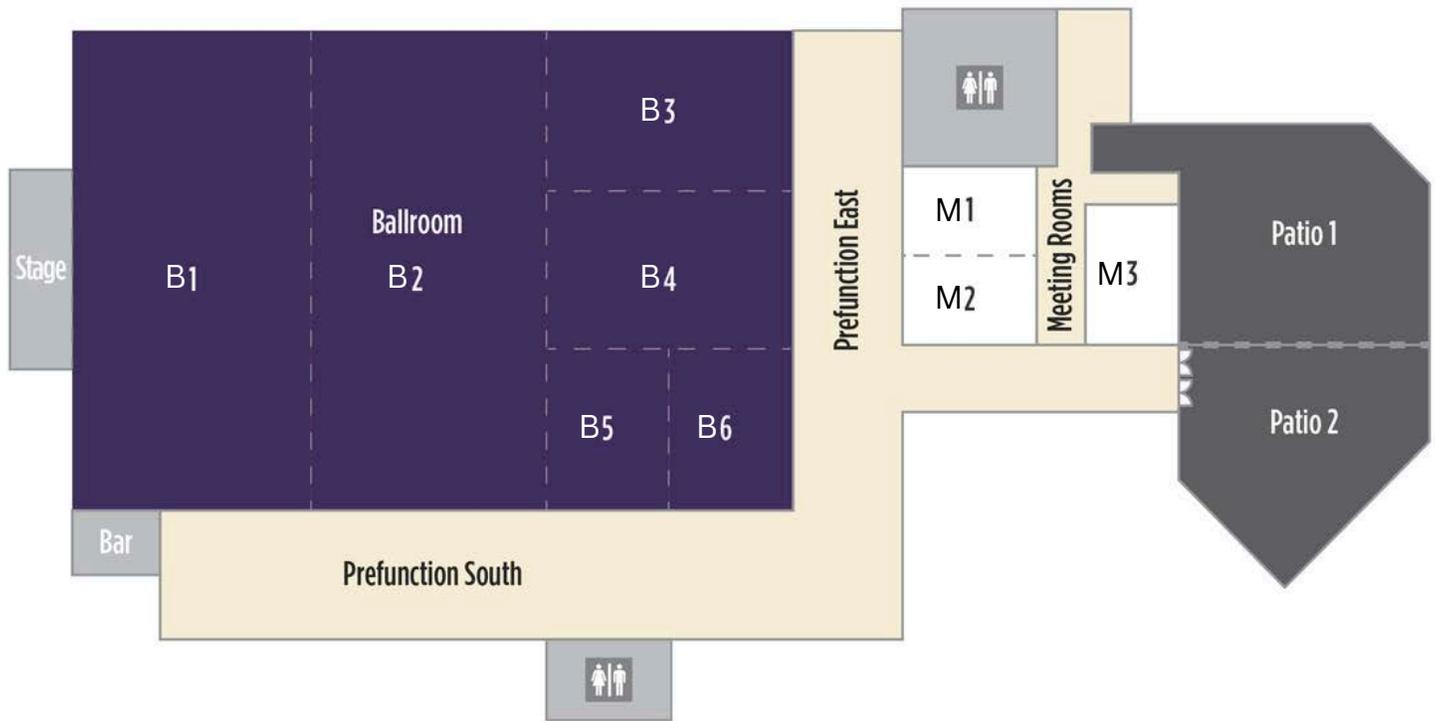
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*Introducing The*

2026-27

CONFERENCE

CO-CHAIRS



Dr. Rosalinda

*Rodriguez*

Director of Multicultural Curriculum  
Tucson Unified School District #1



Mario

*Castro*

CTE Director  
Sunnyside Unified School District

# Dr. Rosalinda Rodriguez

Director of Multicultural Curriculum  
Tucson Unified School District #1

Dr. Rodriguez is the Director of Multicultural Curriculum at Tucson Unified School District #1 in Tucson, Arizona, where she leverages 25 years of experience to champion equity and innovation in education. Her leadership is informed by a rich personal and professional journey, beginning in 1998 when she immigrated from San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora, Mexico, to the United States at age 21. Arriving with a high school equivalency and limited English proficiency, she balanced raising two children and working full-time while pursuing higher education. She earned a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Arizona in 2006, followed by a master's in curriculum and instruction in 2008, and an Education Specialist degree in leadership and administration in 2014.

In 2022, Dr. Rodriguez completed her doctorate at the University of Phoenix, with a dissertation titled *The Role of Emotional Intelligence Training in Educational Leadership: A Correlational Analysis*, exploring how emotionally intelligent leaders can positively transform campus culture. She is also an accomplished author, having written the memoir *A Purple Truck and a Box of Dishes* and co-authored the *Latina Radiance Trilogy Project*, a series of three books celebrating Latina voices.

Her commitment to student success and educational leadership has been recognized through numerous awards, including AZALAS Outstanding Administrator of the Year (2021), Arizona School Administrators Outstanding Principal of the Year (2024), and the 2025 ASA Distinguished Administrator of the Year in the student services division. She actively contributes to the AZALAS conference planning committee, is a recipient of the *De Todo Corazón* AZALAS award, and a graduate of the 4 Corners Latinx Leadership Academy. Dr. Rodriguez has also been selected for the prestigious ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy Cohort XV.

Building on her passion for empowering educators and students, Dr. Rodriguez recently founded Teach Insights LLC, where she serves as CEO. The company provides innovative education services, including the Teach Insights Instructional Walkthrough online platform, SEI endorsement courses, leadership professional development, and motivational speaking engagements. Through her leadership, research, and advocacy, Dr. Rodriguez inspires her community with the belief that perseverance and education make all dreams attainable.

# Mario Castro

CTE Director

Sunnyside Unified School District

Born and raised in Tucson, AZ, Mario graduated from Pueblo High School before attending Carleton College, where he studied Media Arts, a passion sparked by his involvement in Pueblo's CTE Warrior News program. After college, he returned to Tucson and launched Blue Devil News at Sunnyside High School, a CTE student-run media program inspired by his own high school experience. His career evolved from teaching to technology integration, leading him 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, he is honored to support incredible programs and educators dedicated to preparing students for college, careers, and their communities.

ARIZONA SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

# STRENGTHEN YOUR DISTRICT'S VOICE

INVEST IN LEADERSHIP & COMMUNICATION  
BY JOINING ARIZONA'S PREMIER SCHOOL PR  
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- Professional Development
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# Beyond the Numbers: Shaping the Future of Math Education in Arizona

Join Imagine Learning for an inspiring day with educational leaders and innovators. Hear from renowned author and educator, Weston Kieschnick, while connecting with peers from across the state. Additional sessions from national and Arizona leaders include exciting updates, resources, and knowledge to empower math instruction in your district. Don't miss out!



**Weston Kieschnick**



**Reserve your spot today**

[qrco.de/arizona-math-summit](http://qrco.de/arizona-math-summit)

**Breakfast & lunch provided**

**Free hotel parking for all attendees**

THURSDAY

November

13

8:30 am–3 pm

**Omni Tempe at ASU**

7 East University Drive

Tempe, AZ 85281

Sun Devil Ballroom

 **imagine  
learning**  
empower potential.



# You're Invited!

## Topgolf & IXL Learning

Join us for an exclusive event for district leaders to network and learn about Takeoff by IXL™, the breakthrough K-5 math core curriculum intentionally designed for differentiation.

Enjoy a selection of complimentary appetizers, beverages, and up to two hours of Topgolf.

**Friday, September 26, 2025**

**5:00-8:00 p.m. MST**

**4050 W Costco Dr,  
Tucson, AZ 85741**





# ROOT AND BRANCH

*We are the branches, stretching toward the light, seeking sun and sky with all our might.*

*We bloom with colors born of sun and rain, reflecting seasons through joy and pain.*

*But we are also root, sunk deep and wide, drawing wisdom from the turning tide.*

*From earth and darkness, our foundation grows, a hidden strength that only the root knows.*

*Our hands may hold a future unconstrained, while our hearts hold stories patiently retained.*

*The song we sing is woven, old and new, a tribute to the many, not the few.*

*We honor those who braved the sun and storm, who built the vessel that now keeps us warm.*

*In every lesson, hard-earned by their plight, we glean a truth and bring it into light.*

*So stand up tall, and reach for what's to come, but never let the ancient heart go numb.*

*For in each bold design, we feel the lineage of a sacred line.*

Make it a great day!

*Tracy Harris*