



HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

Presented by HISPANIC FEDERATION

June 17, 2025 | **CUNY Graduate Center**





Tuesday, June 17, 2025

8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

The Graduate Center, City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10016
Concourse/Lower Level

ABOUT HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

The **Hispanic Education Summit** brings together educators, policymakers, community advocates, elected officials, students, and parents for a dynamic day of dialogue, collaboration, and shared learning focused on supporting and uplifting Latine students across the educational and career journey.

This year's summit will focus on the critical role of policymakers, educators, and community leaders in driving systemic change and advancing educational equity. Hispanic Federation will also delve into the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative which is developing a cutting-edge curriculum that New York City teachers, administrators, and community-based organizations will be able to use to help integrate activities and lessons that elevate the stories of underrepresented Latine history and culture in existing practices and programs. The recommendations and insights shared at the summit will help shape and drive an action agenda focused on closing the Latino education gap.

AGENDA OUTLINE

8:30 AM – 9:20 AM | **Registration/Breakfast**

9:30 AM – 9:45 AM | **Welcome Remarks**

9:50 AM – 10:50 AM | **Opening Plenary Session**

11:00 AM – 12:20 PM | **Morning Panel Discussions**

12:30 PM – 1:20 PM | **Luncheon [Keynote]**

1:30 PM – 2:50 PM | **Afternoon Panel Discussions**

3:00 PM – 4:15 PM | **Latinidad Curriculum Town Hall**

4:15 PM – 4:30 PM | **Closing**

HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

MORNING AGENDA

8:30 AM – 9:20 AM | REGISTRATION/BREAKFAST

(Concourse/Lower Level)

9:30 AM – 9:45 PM | WELCOME REMARKS

(Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium)

- ▶ **Honorable Amanda Farías**, Majority Leader, New York City Council
- ▶ **Dr. Gladys Palma de Schrynmakers**, Interim Senior University Dean for Graduate and Undergraduate Programming, City University of New York
- ▶ **Jessica Guzmán Mejía**, Senior Vice President for Strategy and Impact, Hispanic Federation

9:50 AM – 10:50 AM | OPENING PLENARY SESSION

(Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium)

“Entre Familia” Chat: Envisioning a New York City Latinidad Curriculum

MODERATOR:

PANELISTS:

- ▶ **Damaris Díaz**, News Anchor and Reporter, Univision
- ▶ **Tom Liam Lynch, Ed.D.**, Vice President Education, United Way of New York City
- ▶ **Dr. Ezekiel Dixon-Román**, Director of the Edmund W. Gordon Institute for Advanced Study at Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Jessica Orozco Guttlein, Esq.**, Senior Vice President for Policy and Communications, Hispanic Federation

11:00 AM – 12:20 PM | MORNING PANEL DISCUSSIONS

WORKSHOP:

Interactive Workshop on Studying Latinidad in New York City Schools: Sample Lesson Plans

ROOM:

MODERATOR:

PANELISTS:

SALON A

- ▶ **Dr. Regina Cortina**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Dr. Amanda Earl**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Dr. Eddie Rivero**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Jonathan Beltrán Alvarado**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Shari Wejsa-Stewart**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Dr. Samantha Chung**, CUNY Lehman College

WORKSHOP:

Latinos Financing their College Education

ROOM:

MODERATOR:

PANELISTS:

SALON B

- ▶ **Natasha Torres**, New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, DREAM Act Coordinator
- ▶ **Melissa Clark**, New York Policy Director, uAspire
- ▶ **Julieta Schiffino**, Former Associate Director of Financial Aid Services, SUNY Welcome Center
- ▶ **Kim Nauer**, Director Understanding FAFSA.org
- ▶ **Denise Vivar**, Manager for the Immigrant Student Success Center at John Jay College City University of New York

WORKSHOP:

Jumpstarting Success: Benefits of Dual Enrollment for Postsecondary Achievement

ROOM:

MODERATOR:

PANELISTS:

SALON C

- ▶ **Honorable Shelley B. Mayer**, New York State Senator, Chair of Committee on Education
- ▶ **Laura Glass, Ph.D.**, Assistant Commissioner Office of Education Policy, New York State Education Department
- ▶ **Arlen Benjamin-Gomez**, Executive Director, Education Trust-New York
- ▶ **Miosotis Pantoja**, CUNY College Now Director
- ▶ **Susana Rivera**, Director of College Now CUNY Bronx Community College
- ▶ **Dr. Tonya Johnson**, Professor and Chairperson of Education and Academic Literacy CUNY Bronx Community College



HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

AFTERNOON AGENDA

12:30 PM – 1:20 PM

LUNCHEON [KEYNOTE]

(Dining Area/Concourse Level)

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

- ▶ **Honorable Letitia James**, New York State Attorney General
- ▶ **Melissa Aviles Ramos**, Chancellor, New York City Department of Education
- ▶ **Honorable Jennifer Gutiérrez**, New York City Council Member
- ▶ **Ingrid Álvarez**, Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement, Hispanic Federation

1:30 PM – 2:50 PM

AFTERNOON PANEL DISCUSSIONS

(Concourse/Lower Level)

WORKSHOP:

Latino College Success: Increasing College Completion through Powerful Partnerships and Effective University Practices

ROOM:

SALON A

MODERATOR:

- ▶ **Bethsy Morales-Reid**, Vice President for Program Strategy and Impact, Hispanic Federation

PANELISTS:

- ▶ **Nancy Yang-Camisa**, Associate Director of First Year Programs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University New York
- ▶ **Sandrine Fermino**, Director for the Network for College Success, K16 Initiatives, The City University of New York
- ▶ **Arlenís Marmolejos**, SUNY Purchase, CREAR Futuros Mentor & Student
- ▶ **Esteban Alcantara**, Lehman College CREAR Futuros Liaison
- ▶ **Lo Anderson**, Student Engagement Coordinator, CUNY CARES

WORKSHOP:

Learning Together: A Community-centered Vision of Latinidad for New York City Schools

ROOM:

SALON B

MODERATOR:

PANELISTS:

- ▶ **Dr. Limarys Caraballo**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Katie Caster**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Gisely Colón López**, CUNY Graduate Center, Urban Education
- ▶ **Fabiola Quiñones**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Sophia Vázquez**, Teachers College, Columbia University
- ▶ **Cyphers for Justice** (Youth Co-Facilitators)

WORKSHOP:

A Path Toward Equity: The Importance of a State Longitudinal Data System

ROOM:

SALON C

MODERATOR:

PANELISTS:

- ▶ **Ingrid Álvarez**, Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement, Hispanic Federation
- ▶ **Maria Fernandez**, Deputy Secretary of Education for Governor Hochul
- ▶ **Yufan Huang**, PhD, Executive Director Office of Information and Reporting Services, New York State Education Department
- ▶ **Felicia Singh**, Director of Policy & Government Relations, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)
- ▶ **Melanie Quiroz**, Research and Policy Analyst, Education Trust- New York

3:00 PM – 4:15 PM

LATINIDAD CURRICULUM TOWN HALL

(Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium)

- ▶ **Leurys Acosta**, Director, Systems Change, United Way of New York City

4:15 PM – 4:30 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

(Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium)

- ▶ **Honorable Rita Joseph**, New York City Council Deputy Speaker, Chair of Education
- ▶ **Perla Rodriguez**, Senior Director of Education Programs, Hispanic Federation



HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

Presented by HISPANIC FEDERATION

FULL PROGRAM



HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

Welcome Remarks

9:30 AM – 9:45 PM

| Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium



Honorable Amanda Farías

Majority Leader, New York City Council

Honorable Amanda Farías serves as the Majority Leader of the New York City Council, representing the 18th District in the Bronx, which includes Soundview, Castle Hill, and Parkchester. As the first Latina to hold the position of Majority Leader, she brings a historic and transformative voice to City Hall. A proud Afro-Latina of Puerto Rican and Dominican heritage, Farías is a lifelong Bronx resident and a passionate advocate for equity, economic justice, and community empowerment. She holds both a B.A. and M.A. in Government and Politics from St. John's University. In addition to her leadership role, she chairs the Council's Committee on Economic Development and has advanced legislation supporting small businesses, workforce development, and transportation access. Since taking office in 2021, she has secured over \$34.5 million in funding for her district and co-chaired the largest Women's Caucus in Council history, championing inclusive policies that uplift working-class New Yorkers.



Dr. Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers

Interim Senior University Dean for Graduate and Programming, City University of New York

Dr. Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers is the Interim Senior University Dean for Graduate and Undergraduate Programming at The City University of New York. Previously, she served as Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Chief Diversity Officer at CUNY's School of Labor and Urban Studies, where she led academic planning, accreditation, and faculty development. Her leadership helped SLU achieve record enrollment in Fall 2024. A seasoned educator, she has taught Honors, Sociology, and Education courses and is experienced in grant writing and program development. Dr. Palma de Schrynemakers has contributed to online degree program development across institutions and has served as an accreditor for NYSED and MSCHE since 2010. She also sits on several advisory boards, including Brookhaven National Laboratory's Inclusion and Diversity External Advisory Board. Her research interests include assessment, Constructive Theory, and online learning. She previously served as Associate Provost at Medgar Evers College.



Jessica Guzmán Mejía

Senior Vice President for Strategy and Impact, Hispanic Federation

Jessica Guzmán Mejía is the Senior Vice President for Strategy and Impact at the Hispanic Federation, where she leads the organization's strategic planning and program evaluation efforts. In this role, she ensures that the Federation's initiatives are aligned with its mission to empower Latino communities through advocacy, capacity building, and direct service. Jessica oversees a broad portfolio of programs addressing education, health equity, economic empowerment, immigration, and civic engagement. With over two decades of experience in nonprofit leadership and social impact strategy, Jessica is known for her commitment to equity and her ability to drive measurable change. She plays a key role in shaping the Federation's long-term vision and strengthening its partnerships with community-based organizations across the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

Opening Plenary Session

9:50 AM – 10:50 PM

| Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium

“Entre Familia” Chat: Envisioning a New York City Latinidad Curriculum



In this dynamic plenary session, “Entre Familia” – Envisioning a New York City Latinidad Curriculum, leaders from education, policy, media, and community advocacy come together to reimagine how Latinidad is represented, taught, and celebrated in New York City classrooms. Together, these thought-leaders will discuss how culturally responsive education can drive equity, empowerment, and a deeper sense of belonging for Latine students and families across NYC.



MODERATOR

Damaris Díaz

News Anchor and Reporter, Univision

Damaris Díaz is the morning news anchor at WXTV. Born in La Vega, Dominican Republic, she moved to New York with her family as a small child and later settled in New Jersey. She graduated from Seton Hall University with a Bachelor’s degree in Arts & Sciences, focusing on Communications and Criminal Justice, and has a background in legal studies. Damaris has received national exposure on television since 2013 when she began her on-air career as the New York correspondent for Univision network’s “Republica Deportiva”, a national weekly program that profiled famous sports figures. In 2010, she began corresponding for “Despierta America”, Univision’s national morning show, developing stories from the NY tri-state area and traveling the world covering movie premieres and interviewing Hollywood actors on the set of their films. She moved into the hard news platform during the coronavirus pandemic, and currently anchors Univision 41’s morning news from 5-7am.

PANELISTS



Tom Liam Lynch, Ed.D.

Vice President Education, United Way of New York City

Dr. Tom Liam Lynch is Vice President of Education at United Way of New York City. With over 20 years of experience in NYC education, he has served as an English teacher, district program leader, education professor, and editor-in-chief of InsideSchools. Dr. Lynch is a recognized expert in digital learning, school reform, and digital literacies, having published widely and presented internationally. His research on integrating K–12 computer science with English Language Arts earned him the National Technology Leadership Award from the National Council of Teachers of English. He holds a doctorate in education from Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Lynch is passionate about educational equity and innovation, and his work focuses on improving outcomes for underserved students through systemic change. At United Way of New York City, he leads initiatives that support schools and communities, ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education and the tools they need to succeed.





Dr. Ezekiel Dixon-Román

Director of the Edmund W. Gordon Institute for Advanced Study at Teachers College, Columbia University

Dr. Ezekiel Dixon-Román is Director of the Edmund W. Gordon Institute for Advanced Study in Black Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. A leading scholar in education and data justice, his work explores how algorithms, data systems, and quantification practices shape social inequality. Dr. Dixon-Román's interdisciplinary research draws from critical theory, sociology, and philosophy to examine how data technologies impact marginalized communities, particularly in education. He is widely published and has contributed to national conversations on equity, digital surveillance, and the future of learning. At Teachers College, he leads initiatives that challenge traditional paradigms and promote transformative educational practices. His leadership at the Gordon Institute centers on advancing Black education through research, policy, and community engagement. Dr. Dixon-Román is committed to reimagining education systems that are inclusive, just, and responsive to the lived experiences of historically underserved populations. His work continues to influence scholars, educators, and policymakers nationwide.



Jessica Orozco Guttlin, Esq

Senior Vice President for Policy and Communications at Hispanic Federation

Jessica Orozco Guttlin is the Senior Vice President for Policy and Communications at Hispanic Federation, where she has served since 2011. She previously held roles as Chief of Staff, Assistant Vice President for Policy, and Director of Immigration and Civic Engagement. Before joining HF, she worked briefly as an associate attorney in a small business immigration practice and interned with organizations like the Legal Aid Society of San Diego and New York City's Human Resources Administration. Jessica has also volunteered with New York Law School's Safe Passage Project, offering legal services to immigrant youth. She frequently appears in media as an expert on immigration and civic engagement. Jessica holds a B.A. in Psychology from UCLA and a J.D. from New York Law School. She is a member of the California State Bar. Her work reflects a deep commitment to immigrant rights and community empowerment through policy and legal advocacy.



**Edmund W. Gordon Institute
for Advanced Study**
Teachers College, Columbia University



UNITED WAY
New York City



Morning Panel Discussions

11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

| Concourse / Lower Level

| SALON A

Interactive Workshop on Studying Latinidad in New York City Schools: Sample Lesson Plans

As part of the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative, which will expand the study of Latinidad across academic content areas and grade levels, our team is creating a new and dynamic vision for teaching about histories and communities that have yet to be included in public school curricula. After a brief overview of the background, goals, and interdisciplinary content of our curriculum, participants will engage in a sample lesson that explores the multiple experiences of Latinidad in our city. Participants will be asked throughout the session for suggestions and feedback on proposed content and instructional design.



MODERATOR

Dr. Regina Cortina

Teachers College, Columbia University

Dr. Regina Cortina is a Professor of Education in the Department of International and Transcultural Studies at Teachers College, Columbia University. A former President of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), she delivered the 2019 Presidential Address, “The Passion for What Is Possible’ in Comparative and International Education,” published in the *Comparative Education Review*. Dr. Cortina’s scholarship focuses on gender and education, teacher development, and the schooling of Latinx students in the U.S. She edited a 2022 special issue of *Teachers College Record* on the

rise of public education in Latin America. Her work bridges Latin American and U.S. educational contexts, offering insights into equity, access, and policy reform. Dr. Cortina is a respected voice in international education, known for her commitment to social justice and inclusive pedagogy. Her research and teaching continue to shape the field and inspire educators working across diverse cultural and linguistic settings.

PANELISTS



Dr. Amanda Earl

Teachers College, Columbia University

Dr. Amanda K. Earl is a Lecturer in the International and Comparative Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research explores how schools support the preservation of nondominant and heritage languages, cultures, and knowledge systems. Dr. Earl conducts fieldwork in both New York City and rural Mexico, examining how educational practices can sustain cultural identity and linguistic diversity. Before entering academia, she worked as a middle and high school teacher in Philadelphia and supported college access initiatives in NYC. She holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Comparative and International Education from Teachers College and a B.A. in Greek and Latin from Brown

University. Dr. Earl’s work is grounded in a commitment to educational equity and cultural responsiveness. She brings a global perspective to her teaching and research, helping future educators understand the importance of inclusive, community-centered approaches to learning in multilingual and multicultural environments.



Dr. Eddie Rivero

Teachers College, Columbia University

Dr. Eddie Rivero is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Bilingual/Bicultural Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University. His research explores how youth—especially emergent bilinguals—engage with digital media, video games, and artificial intelligence to construct cultural identities and challenge systemic inequities. Dr. Rivero investigates how these technologies can both constrain and empower student learning, focusing on their role in shaping understandings of race, history, and power. His work is grounded in critical sociocultural theory and emphasizes the importance



of co-constructing liberatory learning environments with youth. He is particularly interested in how educators can use technology to foster equity and creativity in the classroom. Dr. Rivero's scholarship has implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and educational policy. Through his teaching and research, he advocates for inclusive, student-centered approaches that honor the lived experiences and cultural knowledge of marginalized communities in both digital and academic spaces.



Jonathan Beltrán Alvarado

Teachers College, Columbia University

Jonathan Beltrán Alvarado is a scholar and educator affiliated with Teachers College, Columbia University. His work centers on the intersections of Latinidad, education, and identity, particularly in urban schools. He contributes to the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative, designing inclusive, culturally responsive lesson plans that reflect the diverse experiences of Latine communities in New York City. With a background in curriculum development and community engagement, Jonathan is committed to equity and representation in education. His academic interests include bilingual education, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and storytelling as a tool for identity formation. He collaborates with educators

and youth to co-create learning experiences that center student voice and lived experience. Jonathan's work aims to transform classrooms into spaces where all students feel seen, valued, and empowered. He is passionate about bridging research, practice, and community to advance educational justice for Latine students.



Shari Wejsa-Stewart

Teachers College, Columbia University

Shari Wejsa-Stewart is an educator and researcher at Teachers College, Columbia University, contributing to the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative. Her work focuses on culturally responsive education, Latinx identity, and inclusive curriculum design. She collaborates with educators and community members to develop interdisciplinary lesson plans that reflect the histories and contributions of Latine communities. Shari's academic background includes research on Latin American education systems, bilingualism, and the sociopolitical dimensions of schooling. She is committed to creating educational spaces that affirm students' cultural identities and promote critical thinking. Shari

believes in the power of storytelling and community knowledge as tools for transformative learning. Her work supports educators in implementing practices that are both rigorous and culturally sustaining. She strives to ensure that all students—especially those from historically marginalized backgrounds—see themselves reflected in the curriculum and are empowered to shape their educational journeys.



Dr. Samantha Chung

CUNY Lehman College

Dr. Samantha Chung is a faculty member at CUNY Lehman College, where she focuses on curriculum development, teacher education, and culturally responsive pedagogy. As a contributor to the Latinidad Curriculum Initiative, Dr. Chung helps design interdisciplinary lessons that reflect the diverse histories and identities of Latine communities in New York City. Her academic work centers on equity in education, particularly for multilingual learners and students from historically marginalized backgrounds. Dr. Chung brings a wealth of experience in both K-12 and higher education, having worked with educators to implement inclusive teaching practices that affirm students' cultural and linguistic assets.

She is passionate about preparing future teachers to create classrooms where all students feel seen, valued, and empowered. Through her scholarship and community engagement, Dr. Chung advocates for systemic change in education that prioritizes justice, representation, and student voice. Her work continues to shape inclusive educational practices across New York City.

Morning Panel Discussions

11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

| Concourse / Lower Level

| SALON B

Latinos Financing their College Education

Access to and success in higher education are increasingly at risk for Latino students. As the largest growing population in the US, Latinos represent a significant population in the current and future workforce, making their educational success essential to US prosperity. However, Latino students are faced with various barriers, including financial, systemic inequities and lack of access to resources. This panel of experts will examine the vital role of financial aid in expanding access to higher education for Latino students and offer actionable strategies to strengthen federal and state support. The discussion will also address the current threats to the U.S. Department of Education, and the urgent need to protect and evolve financial aid programs to meet the growing needs of Latino students and families.



MODERATOR

Natasha Torres

New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, DREAM Act Coordinator

Natasha is a first-generation Ecuadorian American dedicated to advancing human rights through cross-sector collaboration and systemic change. She currently serves as the Special Populations Coordinator at the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), where she oversees key equity-focused initiatives, including the New York State DREAM Act, the Alternate Pathway Program for Mixed-Status Family students, and the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for Incarcerated Students. Natasha's work reflects a deep commitment to expanding access to higher education for historically

marginalized communities and ensuring that state systems are responsive to the diverse needs of all students. Her leadership bridges policy and practice to create more inclusive and just educational opportunities.

PANELISTS



Melissa Clark

New York Policy Director, uAspire

Melissa is the Policy Director for New York at uAspire, where she leads the development and execution of the organization's state and city-based policy agenda and systems change initiatives. Her work focuses on increasing access to affordable postsecondary education for students from historically underserved communities. Prior to joining uAspire, Melissa served as a Policy Associate at the Children's Defense Fund–New York, where she advanced education policies centered on mental health, school discipline, culturally responsive curriculum, and restorative justice. She also worked at the New York City Charter School Center, building community and political support for high-quality educational options.

Melissa holds a B.A. in Political Science from John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY) and an M.S. in Social Work from Columbia University, where she specialized in public policy and contemporary social issues.



Julieta Schiffino

Former Associate Director of Financial Aid Services, SUNY Welcome Center

Julieta Schiffino is a licensed mental health counselor with over 30 years of experience in higher education and student support services. She began her career as an international student advisor and later discovered a passion for financial aid while working at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), where she led the administration of the college's first private grant supporting 9/11 victims. Julieta went on to serve as Associate Director of Financial Aid within the SUNY system, where she supported students, families, and educators, and became a campus advocate for undocumented students. Motivated by the growing mental health needs of students, she transitioned into clinical practice

and now provides therapy to adolescents, families, and couples. She also conducts psychological evaluations for immigration cases, including hardship waivers, asylum, and VAWA petitions. Julieta holds a BA, an MBA, and an MA in Mental Health Counseling, and is licensed in both New York and New Jersey.





Kim Nauer

Director Understanding FAFSA.org

Kim Nauer is the Director of the Higher Education Affordability Project at the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School and the founder of *UnderstandingFAFSA.org*, a resource designed to help first-generation students and counselors navigate the complexities of financial aid. Through applied research and user-centered design, Kim and her student team create accessible guides and curriculum materials that demystify the FAFSA and financial aid process. Prior to this work, Kim launched the Center's public education research initiative, producing influential studies on chronic absenteeism, school poverty, district leadership, and college access in New York City. Her work bridges

research, policy, and practice to support educational equity and student success.



Denise Vivar

Manager for the Immigrant Student Success Center at John Jay College City University of New York

Denise Vivar is a public policy and higher education professional committed to advancing educational equity through data-informed, student-centered initiatives. As Manager of the Immigrant Student Success Center at John Jay College, she leads efforts to support undocumented and immigrant students through inclusive program design, policy analysis, and cross-sector collaboration. She holds a Master of Public Administration in Policy Analysis and Evaluation from Baruch College and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Lehman College. Denise previously served as Special Assistant to New York

State Senator Gustavo Rivera, contributing to legislative initiatives and community engagement. With a strong foundation in program management and evaluation, she helps institutions build effective, accountable student support systems. Her work is driven by a deep belief in the power of public policy to strengthen institutional practices and expand access and opportunity for historically underserved student populations.



Morning Panel Discussions

11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

| Concourse / Lower Level

| SALON C

Jumpstarting Success: Benefits of Dual Enrollment for Postsecondary Achievement

Dual enrollment allows high school students to earn college credits by taking college-level courses, providing an early pathway to higher education. This program is vital for promoting college readiness, reducing the cost of postsecondary education, and increasing degree completion rates. However, disparities in access mean that many students, particularly from underserved communities, miss out on this opportunity. This panel will explore strategies to expand and strengthen dual enrollment implementation, ensuring equitable access for all students across New York State.



MODERATOR

Honorable Shelley B. Mayer

New York State Senator, Chair of Committee on Education

Senator Shelley Mayer represents New York's 37th Senate District and has spent her career advocating for children, families, and public education. Elected to the State Senate in a 2018 special election, she was re-elected in 2018, 2020, and 2022. Previously, she served six years in the State Assembly, where she chaired the Education Subcommittee on Students with Special Needs. As Senate Education Chair since 2019, she has championed equitable school funding, expanded Pre-K access, and passed legislation decoupling teacher evaluations from standardized tests. Before elected office, Shelley served as

Chief Counsel to the Senate Democrats, Senior Counsel at Columbia Law School's National State Attorney General Program, and Vice President of Government Affairs at Continuum Health Partners. She also served over a decade as an Assistant Attorney General, focusing on civil rights and consumer protection. A UCLA and SUNY Buffalo Law graduate, Shelley lives in Yonkers with her husband and is a proud mother and grandmother.

PANELISTS



Laura Glass, Ph.D.

Assistant Commissioner Office of Education Policy, New York State Education Department

Dr. Laura Glass is the Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Education Policy at the New York State Education Department. In this role, she leads the development of policies and initiatives across the P-20 continuum, spanning early childhood, K-12, postsecondary education, and workforce readiness. With over two decades of experience in education, Dr. Glass brings a deep understanding of teaching, learning, and leadership to her work. Prior to joining NYSED, she served in various roles, including high school mathematics teacher, university faculty member, and academic administrator. Her career reflects a

strong commitment to advancing educational equity, supporting student success, and building cohesive systems that prepare learners for lifelong achievement.



Arlen Benjamin-Gomez

Executive Director, Education Trust-New York

Arlen Benjamin-Gomez is the Executive Director of The Education Trust-New York, where she leads statewide efforts to advance educational equity for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. With two decades of experience in education policy and advocacy, she partners with communities and stakeholders to drive systemic change. Prior to this role, Arlen served as Senior Director of Legal Strategy and Policy at Columbia University's Center for Public Research and Leadership, where she focused on school integration, culturally responsive education, and students' legal rights. She has also advised states and districts on equity initiatives and was a fellow at the Regents

Research Fund, supporting multilingual learners. Arlen began her career as a civil rights attorney at the Southern



Poverty Law Center and Advocates for Children. Born in Cuba and raised in San Francisco, she holds a J.D. from NYU School of Law and a B.A. from UCLA. She lives in Washington Heights with her two children.



Miosotis Pantoja

CUNY College Now Director

Miosotis (Mio) Pantoja is a proud New Yorker and first-generation college graduate with over 18 years of experience in youth development and after-school programming. She currently serves as the Citywide Director of College Now at CUNY K16 Initiatives, overseeing one of the nation's largest dual enrollment programs. Previously, Mio held senior leadership roles at Row New York, where she advanced to Vice President of Student Support & Success, expanded post-secondary programming for alumni, and contributed to the organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council. Her earlier work includes managing out-of-school time initiatives at the YWCA of New York City

and Morningside Center, and guiding students through college access and alumni programming at the Harlem Educational Activities Fund (HEAF). Mio holds a B.A. in International Studies from Middlebury College and an M.S. in Nonprofit Management from The New School University.



Susana Rivera

Director of College Now CUNY Bronx Community College

Susana Rivera is the Director of the College Now, FutureReady NYC, and CUNY Explorer Programs at Bronx Community College. With over 25 years of experience in pre-college programming across the City University of New York (CUNY) and New York City Public Schools (NYCPS), she has dedicated her career to expanding access to higher education for historically underserved students. A proud alumna of Bronx Community College, Susana earned her Associate's degree there before completing a B.A. in Sociology and an M.S.Ed. in Childhood Education with a Bilingual Extension from Lehman College. Her leadership reflects a deep commitment to equity, student empowerment, and college

readiness, helping thousands of students explore academic pathways and prepare for successful futures.



Dr. Tonya Johnson

Professor and Chairperson of Education and Academic Literacy CUNY Bronx Community College

Dr. Tonya Johnson is Chairperson of the Education and Academic Literacy Department at Bronx Community College. A proud community college graduate, she began her academic journey at Nassau Community College and holds advanced degrees from Hofstra University, Mercy University, Walden University, NYIT, and CUNY SPS. Dr. Johnson brings over a decade of experience in higher education and a distinguished career in New York City public schools, where she served as both teacher and principal. Since joining BCC in 2010, she has championed culturally responsive pedagogy and facilitated teacher

training across the U.S. and internationally. Her research focuses on teacher preparation, technology integration, and educational equity, with publications in *Voices of Reform*, *International Journal of Educational Reform*, and *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*. As Chair, she is committed to student success, seamless transfer pathways, and removing financial barriers for future educators through grant-funded support initiatives.

HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

Luncheon / Keynote

12:30 PM – 1:20 PM | Dining Area/Concourse Level

FEATURED SPEAKERS



Honorable Letitia James

67th Attorney General of the State of New York

Letitia “Tish” James is the 67th Attorney General of New York and the first woman of color elected to statewide office in the state. A Brooklyn native, James began her career as a public defender before rising through the ranks of public service. She served on the New York City Council and later as the city’s Public Advocate, where she passed landmark legislation addressing housing and wage equity. Elected Attorney General in 2018, James has led major legal actions against opioid manufacturers, polluters, and corrupt officials, securing over \$7.5 billion for New Yorkers. She

has championed reproductive rights, environmental justice, and gun safety, removing thousands of illegal firearms from communities. Known for her fearless pursuit of justice, James has taken on powerful interests, including President Donald Trump. A graduate of Lehman College and Howard University School of Law, she remains a trailblazer in American law and politics.



Melissa Aviles Ramos

Chancellor, New York City Department of Education

Melissa Aviles-Ramos is Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, the largest school system in the nation. A lifelong educator and leader, she previously served as Deputy Chancellor of Family and Community Engagement and External Affairs, and as Chief of Staff to former Chancellor David C. Banks. In these roles, she led initiatives such as NYC Literacy Hubs, Family Literacy Ambassadors, and Project Open Arms, which supported over 45,000 newly arrived students. As Chancellor, she is committed to advancing NYC Reads, NYC Solves, and reimagined Student Pathways—

ensuring every student builds strong foundations in literacy and math while preparing for future careers. Her priorities include student safety and wellness, robust professional development for educators, and deep family and community engagement. A native New Yorker, proud Latina, and NYCPS parent, Chancellor Aviles-Ramos began her career as an English teacher and principal, and holds degrees from Fordham University, City College, and the College of Saint Rose.



FEATURED SPEAKERS, *continued*



Honorable Jennifer Gutiérrez ***New York City Council Member***

Jennifer Gutiérrez is a community organizer, activist, and New York City Council Member representing District 34, which includes Williamsburg, Bushwick, and Ridgewood. A proud daughter of Colombian immigrants, she was born and raised in Queens and earned her B.A. in Political Science from SUNY Albany. Jennifer began her advocacy early, supporting her family through financial and language barriers, and later became a community organizer focused on housing justice. As Chief of Staff to Council Member Antonio Reynoso, she led eight cycles of Participatory Budgeting, securing over \$5 million for schools, parks, and NYCHA. She played a key role in passing the Right to Know Act and the Waste Equity Bill. Elected in 2021, Jennifer is the first Colombian-American to serve on the Council. She is committed to legislative transparency, community-based solutions, and equity in education, housing, and environmental justice. Jennifer lives in Bushwick with her family and is a proud new mother.



Ingrid Álvarez ***Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement,*** ***Hispanic Federation***

Ingrid Álvarez is Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement at the Hispanic Federation (HF), the nation's leading Latino nonprofit membership organization. In this senior leadership role, she directs HF's public policy agenda and advocacy strategies across state and regional offices, advancing equity and opportunity for Latino communities nationwide. Since joining HF in 2013, she has held several key roles, including New England Regional Director, where she led capacity-building, grantmaking, and policy advocacy across Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. A recognized civic leader, Ingrid serves on the Connecticut Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and is a Fellow of the Connecticut Health Foundation's Academy for Health Equity and Adaptive Leadership. Her work has earned numerous honors, including *Latino de Oro* (2022) and *Latina of the Year* (2016). Ingrid holds an M.A. in Education Policy from Columbia University and dual B.A.s in Political Science and Spanish from Syracuse University.

Afternoon Panel Discussions

1:30 PM – 2:50 PM

| Concourse / Lower Level

| SALON A

Latino College Success: Increasing College Completion through Powerful Partnerships and Effective University Practices

While Latino student enrollment in higher education continues to increase, Latinos continue to face serious barriers staying in college and attaining a higher education degree. This panel will explore the barriers Latino students face in enrolling in and completing college, and highlight effective programs, policies, and institutional models that promote and accelerate Latino student success in higher education. The discussion will also underscore the critical role of emergency aid in supporting New York State college students, ensuring college readiness, persistence, and on-time graduation.



MODERATOR

Bethsy Morales-Reid

Vice President for Program Strategy and Impact, Hispanic Federation

Bethsy Morales-Reid is the Vice President for Program Strategy & Impact at the Hispanic Federation, where she leads national initiatives that strengthen communities through strategic programs, advocacy, and grantmaking. With a background in public health, she helps shape the Federation's health policy priorities while also overseeing efforts in education and other critical areas impacting Latino communities. Bethsy has a proven track record of developing impactful programs and engaging community leaders across the country. Her work has been published in the *AIDS Education and Prevention*

Journal for her contributions to behavioral intervention research. A native New Yorker, Bethsy earned her B.A. in Political Science from Fordham University and her M.A. in International Affairs from The New School. Her leadership reflects a deep commitment to equity, community empowerment, and measurable impact.

PANELISTS



Nancy Yang-Camisa

Associate Director of First Year Programs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University New York

Nancy Yang-Camisa, M.A. is the Associate Director for First Year Programs at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY), where she leads initiatives that support student transition, academic momentum, and long-term success. A first-generation college graduate herself, Nancy brings both personal insight and professional expertise to her work with John Jay's predominantly first-generation, immigrant, and students of color. She founded the SASP Peer Success Coaching Program, which provides peer-to-peer support for nearly all incoming students and has led the development of key initiatives

such as First Year Summer Bridge, First Year Seminars, and the ¡Adelante! Leadership Program powered by CREAR Futuros. Nancy also played a pivotal role in launching the College's Immigrant Student Success Center. Her work blends culturally responsive design with student success research, and she contributes to national conversations on equity, inclusion, and reimagining college success through collaborative, student-centered approaches.





Sandrine Fermino

***Director for the Network for College Success, K16 Initiatives,
The City University of New York***

Sandrine Fermino is the Director of the Network for College Success at the CUNY Office of K16 Initiatives, where she leads strategic partnerships between CUNY and Community-Based Organizations to enhance college access and student success. With over a decade of experience in community engagement and public sector programming, she is dedicated to expanding educational opportunities for underserved populations. A first-generation immigrant and single mother of five-year-old twins, Sandrine brings a personal passion for equity and inclusion to her work. She holds a Bachelor's degree in

Criminal Justice and International Studies from Long Island University – C.W. Post, has pursued postgraduate studies in Public Administration, and earned a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion certificate from Cornell University. Sandrine combines professional expertise with lived experience to advocate for collaborative, student-centered solutions that promote academic achievement and long-term success.



Arlenis Marmolejos

SUNY Purchase, CREAR Futuros Mentor & Student

Arlenis Marmolejos is a summa cum laude graduate of SUNY Purchase College, where she earned dual B.A. degrees in Law & Justice Studies and Journalism on an accelerated three-year track. A proud first-generation Dominican-American, Arlenis began her journey as a CREAR Futuros mentee and later became a mentor, supporting underclassmen in navigating college life. She co-founded and served as president of the Purchase Pre-Law Society, establishing the college's first community for aspiring legal professionals. As managing editor of *The Purchase Phoenix*, the student-run campus newspaper, she led a team of reporters and expanded readership through timely, impactful journalism. Driven

by a deep commitment to justice and public service, Arlenis is now pursuing a career in law, with the long-term goal of serving in the judiciary.



Esteban Alcantara

Lehman College CREAR Futuros Liaison

Esteban Alcantara is a physics professor and program liaison at Lehman College, CUNY, where he advocates for Latino representation in STEM. A first-generation college student of Mexican heritage, Esteban began his academic journey in 2015. Initially quiet and focused solely on coursework, he discovered his leadership potential through programs like CREAR Futuros. As a mentor and now liaison, he supports first-generation and underrepresented students, helping them navigate academic and professional spaces. Esteban is passionate about teaching general physics and inspiring students who, like him, once struggled to see themselves in STEM. His work emphasizes mentorship,

representation, and the belief that success in science is within reach for all. Esteban's long-term goal is to pursue a Ph.D. in physics, continuing his mission to uplift and empower the next generation of scientists. He remains committed to being the mentor he once needed and to building inclusive pathways in higher education.



Lo Anderson

Student Engagement Coordinator, CUNY CARES

Lo Anderson (she/they) is a second-generation AfroLatinx creative, activist, and recent graduate of John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a B.S. in Human Services and Community Justice. Rooted in direct service and community-led solutions, Lo's work centers on social equity and support for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. They began their career as a Peer Counselor and later served as Head Case Manager at one of New York City's only LGBTQ+ Transitional Housing Centers. Lo has interned with the Bronx District Attorney's Crime Victim Assistance Bureau and the Health Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest. Since 2022, Lo has grown within CUNYCARES,

a basic needs initiative on Bronx CUNY campuses, where they now serve as Student Engagement Coordinator. In this role, they lead outreach, support complex student cases, and train peer navigators to bridge essential services and the CUNY community.

Afternoon Panel Discussions

1:30 PM – 2:50 PM

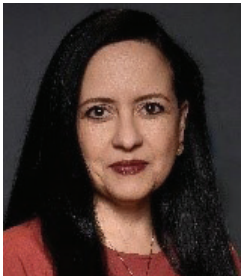
| Concourse / Lower Level

| SALON B

Learning Together: A Community-centered Vision of Latinidad for New York City Schools

What does Latinidad mean across New York City communities? The Latinidad Curriculum Initiative is designed to provide educators with resources that highlight who their students are and the diverse communities they belong to. In collaboration with New York City Public Schools, these curriculum resources will support teachers and students as they explore, celebrate, and expand the study of Latinidad across all subjects and grade levels. In this interactive session co-facilitated by youth collaborators, we will discuss:

1. an intersectional definition of Latinidad
2. our collaborative and participatory design process
3. data that informed our curriculum framework and mapping



MODERATOR

Dr. Limarys Caraballo

Teachers College, Columbia University

Dr. Limarys Caraballo is a faculty member in the Arts & Humanities and Curriculum & Teaching departments at Teachers College, Columbia University. A former high school English teacher and school leader, she brings deep experience in curriculum design, student support, and educator development. Dr. Caraballo is a former Cultivating New Voices (CNV) Fellow and an active member of the Latinx Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English. She has been recognized for her teaching and scholarship, including receiving the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Early Career Award. Since 2012, she

has served as an affiliate of the Gordon Institute for Advanced Study, where she leads intergenerational inquiry initiatives through Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in collaboration with local schools and colleges. Her work bridges research and practice, centering youth voice, equity, and transformative educational partnerships.

PANELISTS



Katie Caster

Teachers College, Columbia University

Katie Caster is a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she also teaches in the TESOL and English Education programs. With over 18 years of experience in education, she has worked across K–12 schools, higher education, and nonprofit leadership. Katie's research focuses on the identity development of Latina educators within mentorship relationships, exploring how these dynamics shape professional growth and leadership. Her professional work emphasizes culturally responsive curriculum design, educational equity, and community-based leadership development. Through both her scholarship and practice, Katie is committed to creating inclusive learning environments

and supporting educators in building affirming, justice-centered spaces for all students.

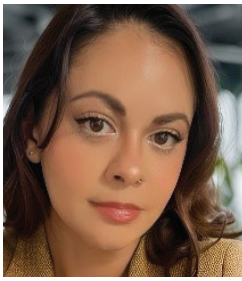


Gisely Colón López

CUNY Graduate Center, Urban Education

With more than 10 years of experience working as an educator in public schools for both K–12 and higher education in the U.S. Northeast, Gisely Colón López fuses her lived experience as a multilingual learner and mixed media artist to develop a praxis of engagement in these settings. An advocate and student of the field of ethnic studies, Gisely is interested in exploring the pedagogical and epistemological processes that contribute to the effectiveness of ethnic studies beyond statistical metrics such as graduation rates and test scores. A doctoral student at the CUNY Graduate Center, she engages decolonial theories, digital archives, digital mapping, and critical visual methodologies as the basis of her research.





Fabiola Quiñones

Teachers College, Columbia University

Fabiola Quiñones is a doctoral student in the Curriculum and Teaching Department at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research focuses on the inclusion and representation of current U.S. colonies in history education, co-developing curricula with youth through Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), and integrating Latino Critical Race Theory and multimedia tools into teaching. She serves as a Research Assistant at the Gordon Institute for Advanced Study and consults with District 7 in the Bronx. Fabiola brings extensive experience as an instructional coach, leadership coach, STEM teacher, department head, curriculum developer, and instructional fellow. Identifying as Puerto

Rican and Panamanian, her personal journey fuels her commitment to creating educational opportunities for Latinx students. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Notre Dame, a Master's in Arts Management from Columbia College, and an M.S.Ed. from Hunter College.



Sophia Vázquez

Teachers College, Columbia University

Sophia Vázquez is a Ph.D. student in Sociology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. A former elementary educator and proud Cuban American, she holds a Master's degree in the Sociology of Education. Her research explores educator identity, race, culture, and the affective and generational transmission of oral histories. Sophia has contributed to multiple projects focused on antiracist teacher education and ethnic studies. Currently, she is part of a team developing a Latinidad curriculum for New York City public schools, working closely with youth through Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). Her dissertation centers on honoring lived experiences and diasporic

educational storytelling through multimodal research methods. Sophia's work is grounded in a commitment to culturally sustaining pedagogy and community-rooted scholarship.



Cyphers for Justice

Cyphers for Justice (CFJ) is a dynamic youth and educator development organization that empowers New York City high school students and educators by engaging them as critical researchers and cultural producers. Rooted in the traditions of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and hip-hop culture, CFJ creates transformative learning spaces where participants explore and analyze youth culture—including hip hop, social media, spoken word, digital literacy, and critical social research methods—as tools for social change. Through a unique apprenticeship model, CFJ fosters intergenerational collaboration, critical consciousness, and civic engagement, equipping young people and educators with the skills to investigate and challenge systems of inequality. By centering the voices and

experiences of youth, CFJ cultivates a sense of agency and belonging, while promoting culturally responsive pedagogy and community-based knowledge production. CFJ is not just a program—it's a movement that bridges education, activism, and the arts to reimagine justice and equity in schools and beyond.



Afternoon Panel Discussions

1:30 PM – 2:50 PM

| Concourse / Lower Level

| SALON C

A Path Toward Equity: The Importance of a State Longitudinal Data System

State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) integrate data from education, workforce, and social service sectors to track individual outcomes over time. These systems are essential for identifying disparities, informing policy decisions, and measuring the effectiveness of public programs. However, gaps in data collection and accessibility can hinder their impact, limiting transparency and accountability. This panel will explore how strengthening SLDS can drive equity-focused policymaking and ensure government and public-serving agencies remain accountable to the communities they serve.



MODERATOR **Ingrid Álvarez**

Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement, Hispanic Federation

Ingrid Álvarez is Vice President for Policy and Strategic Engagement at the Hispanic Federation (HF), the nation's leading Latino nonprofit membership organization. In this senior leadership role, she directs HF's public policy agenda and advocacy strategies across state and regional offices, advancing equity and opportunity for Latino communities nationwide. Since joining HF in 2013, she has held several key roles, including New England Regional Director, where she led capacity-building, grantmaking, and policy advocacy across Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. A recognized civic leader,

Ingrid serves on the Connecticut Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and is a Fellow of the Connecticut Health Foundation's Academy for Health Equity and Adaptive Leadership. Her work has earned numerous honors, including *Latino de Oro* (2022) and *Latina of the Year* (2016). Ingrid holds an M.A. in Education Policy from Columbia University and dual B.A.s in Political Science and Spanish from Syracuse University.

PANELISTS



Maria Fernandez

Deputy Secretary of Education for Governor Hochul

Maria Fernandez currently serves as Deputy Secretary for Education. She brings extensive experience in legal, compliance, and ethics leadership across both public and private sectors. Prior to her appointment, Maria was an Advisory Consultant for Employment Practices Solutions and an Adjunct Professor in Fordham Law School's L.L.M. Compliance Program. She previously served as Vice President and Head of Ethics and Compliance at Direct Energy and spent over two decades at IBM in various senior legal and compliance roles. Maria holds a B.A. in Psychology from Lehman College, City University of New York, and a J.D. from Cornell Law School. She is admitted to practice law in New York, California,

and before the United States Supreme Court. Maria's career reflects a deep commitment to ethical leadership, education, and public service.



Yufan Huang, PhD

Executive Director Office of Information and Reporting Services, New York State Education Department

Dr. Yufan Huang serves as Executive Director in the Office of Information and Reporting Services at the New York State Education Department (NYSED), where he supports P-20 operations and leads the state's education data ecosystem. He oversees the development and implementation of the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and collaborates with regional data warehouse teams to enhance systems and support schools and districts statewide. Yufan works closely with NYSED program offices to meet diverse data needs



and inform policy through data-driven insights. Nationally, he contributes to the National Forum on Education Statistics, participating in multiple workgroups to shape data strategies and policies. Prior to NYSED, Yufan spent 15 years at the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. He brings extensive experience in data-informed policymaking, research, analytics, and interagency collaboration. Yufan holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from the University at Albany.



Felicia Singh

Director of Policy & Government Relations, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)

Felicia Singh is a dedicated advocate for children and families, with a background in civic engagement, electoral organizing, and education. She currently serves as the Director of Policy and Government Relations at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), where she leads efforts to advance equity for AAPI communities across New York. Felicia's work focuses on education, budget justice, data equity, healthcare access, and language justice. Her approach to policy change is rooted in deep partnerships with community-based organizations, collaboration with city and state agencies, and strong relationships with legislative allies. A lifelong educator, Felicia taught for a decade and served in the U.S. Peace Corps. Her lived experience as a Queens native continues to shape her commitment to building inclusive, community-centered policy solutions that reflect the needs and voices of those most impacted.



Melanie Quiroz

Research and Policy Analyst, Education Trust-New York

Melanie Quiroz is a senior analyst at The Education Trust–New York, where she leads quantitative research and analysis across early childhood, K-12, and higher education policy. She co-leads the Data Co-Op and Learning Network, advocating for a robust statewide longitudinal data system in partnership with #DegreesNYC. Previously, Melanie served as research and data manager at Bank Street College's Education Center, supporting school improvement efforts in Yonkers. She also worked at the Center for New York City Affairs, contributing to education policy research and data work for InsideSchools.org. With a background in community service, Melanie has supported Spanish-speaking families through Medicaid-funded programs and organized for the U.S. Census in Queens. A proud Queens native, she holds a BA in Urban Studies and an MS in Public and Urban Policy from The New School, with a specialization in applied quantitative methods and a focus on education policy.



HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

Latinidad Curriculum Town Hall

3:00 PM – 4:15 PM

| Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium



Leury Acosta

Director, Systems Change, United Way of New York City

Leury Acosta is Director of Educational Systems Change at United Way of New York City, where he leads initiatives focused on literacy, family engagement, and school-community partnerships in underserved communities. A Bronx native and son of Dominican immigrants, Leury brings a deep personal connection to the communities he serves. His work centers on advancing educational equity through systemic change, ensuring that families' voices and needs are at the heart of policy and practice. With a background in community engagement, education policy, and strategic partnerships, Leury has built a career dedicated to empowering youth and transforming schools. He collaborates

with educators, nonprofits, and city agencies to create sustainable solutions that improve student outcomes. Passionate about lifelong learning and cultural empowerment, Leury is committed to building inclusive systems that support every child's success. His leadership reflects a vision of education that is equitable, community-driven, and rooted in justice.

Closing Remarks

4:15 PM – 4:30 PM

| Harold M. Proshansky Auditorium



Honorable Rita Joseph

New York City Council Deputy Speaker, Chair of Education

Council Member Rita Joseph represents Flatbush, Prospect Lefferts Gardens, Kensington, Ditmas Park, and Southern Crown Heights. A former public school teacher and lifelong advocate, she brings a deep commitment to equity, education, and justice. Born in Haiti and raised in Brooklyn, she began organizing at 19, leading a 150,000-person rally that helped overturn the FDA's discriminatory blood donation policy. A teen mom who earned a college degree on a full scholarship, Rita balanced raising a family, teaching at PS6, and organizing around police reform and student transit access. She secured major funding for school technology upgrades and served on the Citywide Participatory Budgeting

Committee and Neighborhood Advisory Board. Elected in 2021, she now serves as Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Education Committee, championing public schools, affordable housing, climate action, and social justice.



Perla Rodriguez

Senior Director for Education Programs, Hispanic Federation

Perla Rodriguez is the Senior Director for Education Programs at the Hispanic Federation, the nation's leading Latino nonprofit membership organization. A lifelong educator and advocate, she brings decades of experience in education and community development to her work advancing equity and opportunity for underserved communities. Perla leads a team focused on closing educational gaps through innovative programming, strategic partnerships, and culturally responsive initiatives. She has collaborated with Univision 41 and other media outlets to promote college access and success, and her work has been recognized in *City & State's Higher Education Power 100* in 2022 and 2023. Prior to joining

HF, she served as an English Instructional Specialist at CUNY K16 Initiatives. Perla holds an M.A. in Secondary English Education from City College (CUNY), an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from The New School, and a B.A. in English and Spanish Literature from Skidmore College.

HISPANIC EDUCATION SUMMIT

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