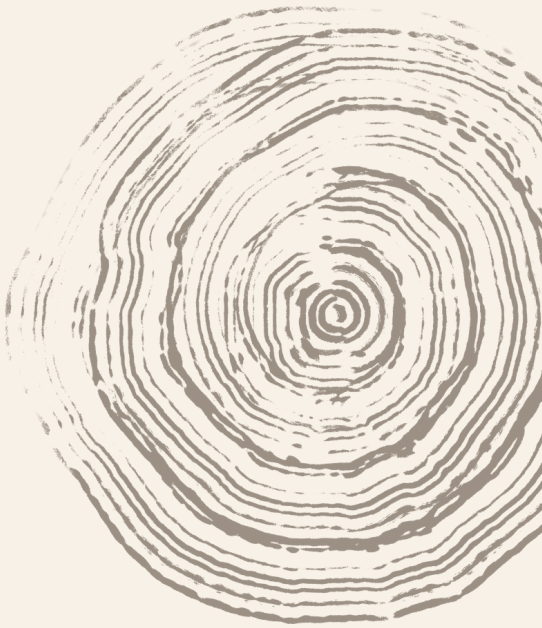
2026

5TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Liderazgo con Ganas:

PASSION • PURPOSE• PERSEVERANCE



OCTOBER 23 & 24, 2026

Three Rivers Convention Center • Kennewick, WA

Rooted in Purpose



OUR MISSION

To empower Latino educators, both current and aspiring into positions of leadership through mentorship, networking, and professional development. WALAS will impact both the educational interests and opportunities of all students in Washington, particularly those of Latino heritage in order to ensure their educational success.

OUR VISION

To create a forum for Latino administrators, educational leaders and other allies serving underrepresented Latino students that promotes equity and access in leadership positions throughout the State of Washington.

OUR GOALS

- Promote Latino educators into leadership positions.
- Ensure educational equity for all students, especially those of Latino heritage.
- Advocate at the federal, state, and local level for equitable educational policies impacting Latino students.
- Disseminate data related to changing demographics and their implications for schools in Washington.
- Develop strategic partnerships with organizations that acknowledge and support the accomplishments of Latino youth.
- Provide opportunities to build capacity in the organization and its members.

Meet our Board



DR. SUSANA REYES
PRESIDENT

Superintendent
Shoreline School District



DR. ISMAEL VIVANCO
PRESIDENT-ELECT

Superintendent
Northwest ESD 189



DR. VICTOR VERGARA
TREASURER

Superintendent
Mount Vernon School District



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SECRETARY

Executive Director of Communications
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Retired School Superintendent



SERGIO HERNANDEZ
APPOINTED MEMBER • EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Retired School Superintendent

President's Message



Dra. Susana Reyes
Presidenta de WALAS

Dear WALAS Familia,

Bienvenidos to the 5th annual WALAS Conference!

This year's conference brings us together to celebrate the strength of our collective leadership, deepen our connections, and continue growing as educators who are dedicated to creating meaningful opportunities for our students and communities. Our conference theme: Liderazgo con Ganas: Passion, Purpose, and Perseverance, reflects the joy and inspiration that come from our passion for the work we do each day in our schools and organizations, the purpose that guides our efforts, and the perseverance that empowers us to continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of students, families, and communities.

Each year, this gathering provides a space to build relationships, strengthen our leadership, and continue our shared commitment to creating more equitable and inclusive educational experiences for all students. Our time together is also an opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments, learn from one another, build lasting relationships, and renew our commitment to educational equity.

We are deeply honored to have you join us, and we hope the next two days are filled with inspiration, meaningful connections, joyful celebration, and inspiration as we continue our journey supporting and empowering our students across the state, leading with ganas and making a difference together. Enjoy this year's conference!

With gratitude and orgullo,

Dra. Susana Reyes

SHARE THE MOMENTS

Scan this QR code to upload your photos from the WALAS Conference. Your pictures will be added to our shared gallery so we can celebrate and relive the highlights together.

Speakers

CONFERENCE KEYNOTE

Montserrat Garibay



Montserrat Garibay is a life long educator, labor leader, and advocate with more than 25 years of experience advancing public education and workers' rights. Most recently, she served in the Biden-Harris Administration as Assistant Deputy Secretary and Director of the Office of English Language Acquisition, and as Senior Advisor for Labor Relations at the U.S. Department of Education.

Born in Mexico City, Montserrat immigrated to the United States as an undocumented child and became a U.S. citizen two decades later. A former bilingual pre-K teacher and National Board Certified Teacher, she has also served in key labor leadership roles with Education Austin and the Texas AFL-CIO as its first Latina Secretary-Treasurer. She currently chairs advocacy for the National Association for Bilingual Education and serves on the board of the Center for Applied Linguistics.

LUNCH KEYNOTE

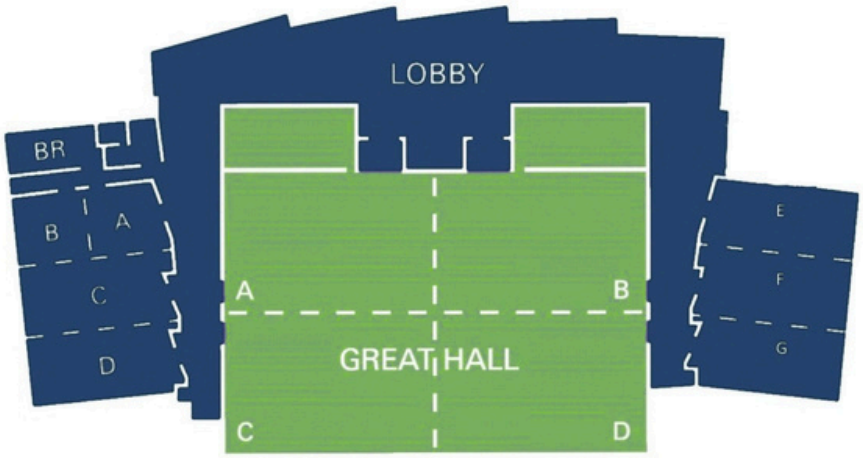
Dr. Katherine Rodela



Dr. Katherine C. Rodela is the inaugural Drs. George Brain and Gay V. Selby Professor of Educational Leadership, Associate Professor, and Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Sport Management at Washington State University. Through her research, teaching, and leadership, she works to expand educational opportunity and justice by centering the voices, experiences, and leadership of students, families, educators, and communities who have historically been marginalized.

A third-generation Mexican American and first-generation college graduate, Dr. Rodela is deeply committed to community-engaged leadership. Her work has included Latino parent leadership initiatives, youth leadership and organizing, and the LEAD Scholars Program, a statewide university-district partnership supporting educators as they pursue school leadership roles. Before joining WSU in 2014, she taught Spanish and service learning at an urban high school in Oregon.

Friday, October 23



Conference Center Map

12:00–1:30 PM **COMADRES LUNCHEON** — *Conference Room F*

*Pre-registration required

Sponsored by Triumph Teen Life Center

2:00 PM **REGISTRATION OPENS** — *Conference Center Lobby*

2:00–3:00 PM **SPONSOR EXHIBITION HALL** — *Great Hall*

3:00 PM **WELCOME** — *Great Hall*

Dr. Susana Reyes, WALAS President
Dr. Chris Gilmer, Heritage University President

3:30–5:00 PM **LEADERSHIP PANEL** — *Great Hall*

Camille Empey • Dr. Mayra Gomez • Dora Johns
Dr. Ricardo Torres-Morales • Dr. Alejandro Vergara
Sponsored by College Spark

5:30–7:30 PM **WALAS PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION** — *Great Hall*

Sponsored by Summit K12

Music by Tri-Cities Fino
Sponsored by Association of Washington School Principals

Saturday, October 24

7:30 AM — **REGISTRATION** — *Conference Center Lobby*

7:30–8:30 AM — **BREAKFAST** — *Great Hall*
Sponsored by Grand Canyon University

8:30 AM — **OPENING REMARKS** — *Great Hall*
Dr. Susana Reyes, WALAS President

8:45 AM — **KEYNOTE ADDRESS** — *Great Hall*
Monserrat Garibay
Sponsored by American Reading Company

REFRESHMENT BREAK • 9:45–10:00 AM
Sponsored by Imagine Learning

MORNING WORKSHOP #1 • 10:00–10:50 AM

Great Hall
From Aspiration to Appointment: Navigating the Path to District Leadership
Joel Aune, Association of Washington School Principals
Tom Rockefeller, Northwest Leadership Associates

Conference Room E
From STAMP to Seal: Leveraging Equity-Centered Data Systems to Expand Biliteracy Pathways
Marlene Perez, Yolanda Herrera, Samantha Ruiz, Walla Walla Public Schools

Conference Room F
Accelerating Literacy for MLLs: Right Support, Right Time, Right Tier. Making Confident Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 Decisions
Lisa Rivera, American Reading Company
Cat D'Avignon, Mount Vernon School District
Ashleigh Moe, Mount Vernon School District

Conference Room G
A'Dream Learning: AI Imagination and Future Readiness Lab
Dr. Robert Elizondo & Dusti Crenshaw, A'Dream Learning - Washington Chapter

Vista Court
Harnessing the Power of Transformational Leadership: Essential Tools to Elevate Your Impact
Dr. Julie Perron, Walla Walla Public Schools

Vista Field
Liderazgo que Sana: Our Wealth, Our Healing, Our Pipeline
Dr. Susana Reyes, Shoreline School District
Lucy Estrada-Guzman, Vancouver Public Schools
Dr. Maria Lucero, Yakima School District
Dr. Melisa Macias, Bellevue School District
Dr. Concie Pedroza, Tukwila School District
Adina Thea, Highline Public Schools

Saturday, October 24

MORNING WORKSHOP #2 • 11:00–11:50 AM

Conference Room E

Passion, Purpose, and Perseverance: Lessons from Dual Language Leadership

Teresa Mendoza-Casby, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

Conference Room F

Leading Through Collective Resistance: Reclaiming Our Power

Dr. Mayra Gómez, Mount Vernon School District

Conference Room G

Narrative-Informed Leadership: Leading with Identity, Purpose, and Practice

Dr. Kadriye El-Atwanii, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

Vista Court

Integrated Classroom Walkthroughs and Principal Support Meetings: A Path to Instructional Alignment

Dr. Jose Rivera, Grandview School District
Jim Masters, Classroom Mosaic

Vista Field

Leading the Way: How Washington Districts Are Transforming Outcomes for Multilingual Learners

Dr. Maria Lucero, Yakima School District
Megan Anderson-Reilly, Yakima School District
Dr. Ana Aguilar, Summit K12

12:00 PM–1:30 PM

LUNCH

Great Hall

Sponsored by Curriculum Associates

Entertainment: Mariachi Gran Vista and Ballet Folclórico Corpus Christi

Sponsored by Capturing Kid's Hearts

LUNCH KEYNOTE

1:30-2:00 PM

Dr. Katherine Rodela

Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Sport Management, WSU Vancouver

Sponsored by Classroom Mosaic

Saturday, October 24

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP • 2:10–3:00 PM

Conference Room E

From Compliance to Connection: Building Districtwide Language Access Systems

Elizabeth Puga, Virginia Ramirez Romero, Vicky Chan, Mayumi Johnson, Aspen Brooks, Milagros Alcaron Casafranca, Rebecca Pinzon, Washington State Language Access Coordinators' Network.

Conference Room F

Commitment to Biliteracy: How Curriculum Associates Invests in Latino Educators and Spanish-Speaking Students

David Cisneros, Curriculum Associates

Conference Room G

A Park Bench Conversation About What It Takes to Lead Today

Dr. Christina Kishimoto, Former State Superintendent of Hawaii

Vista Court

From Compliance to Collaboration: Empowering Families, Students and Staff Through Intentional Partnership

Mary Williams, Mukilteo School District
Dr. Elena Kelley, Mukilteo, School District

Vista Field

Developing School Communities Rooted in Cultural Connections: Drawing from Chontal Culture of Southern Mexico Principles of Living

Dr. Alejandro Vergara, Burlington-Edison School District
Bianca Vergara, Everett School District

3:00–3:15 PM **REFRESHMENT BREAK**

Sponsored by Benchmark Education

3:15 PM **RAFFLE & CLOSING** *Great Hall*

Remember to turn in your completed sponsor passport for a chance to win a prize during closing remarks.

Breakout Descriptions

MORNING WORKSHOP #1 • 10:00–10:50 AM

From Aspiration to Appointment: Navigating the Path to District Leadership — Great Hall

This interactive session equips Latino educational leaders with practical guidance for advancing into building and district-level leadership roles. Participants will explore strategies for assessing readiness, navigating principal, superintendent, and central office search processes, and identifying opportunities that align with their values and leadership goals. Attendees will leave with actionable next steps to pursue leadership opportunities with confidence and purpose.

Accelerating Literacy for MLLs: Right Support, Right Time, Right Tier. Making Confident Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 Decisions — Conference Room F

Explore strategies for accelerating literacy development among multilingual learners through intentional, data-informed instructional support. This session will focus on making confident Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 decisions to ensure students receive the right level of instruction and intervention at the right time. Discover how a coordinated approach to literacy instruction can strengthen student outcomes and create more equitable learning opportunities for multilingual learners.

Harnessing the Power of Transformational Leadership: Essential Tools to Elevate your Impact — Vista Court

This presentation explores how transformational leadership can deepen your influence, strengthen relationships, and inspire meaningful change within your school community. Through interactive experiences, engaging conversations, and intentional reflection, leaders will explore essential tools and practical strategies to sharpen their leadership practice and elevate their impact. Together, we will consider how intentional leadership choices through a transformational lens empower others, cultivate a culture of growth, and transform outcomes for students and staff.

A'Dream Learning: AI Imagination and Future Readiness Lab — Conference Room G

Explore how artificial intelligence can empower students, educators, and families to think creatively, solve problems, and prepare for the future. Aligned with Washington State's AI Guidance, this innovative program introduces practical, responsible uses of AI while emphasizing human creativity, critical thinking, and decision-making. Discover how schools can expand AI literacy and create meaningful learning opportunities for all, with a special focus on engaging and empowering Latino families.

From STAMP to Seal: Leveraging Equity-Centered Data Systems to Expand Biliteracy Pathways — Conference Room E

This session highlights how Walla Walla Public Schools leveraged longitudinal STAMP assessment data to design equity-centered systems that expand access to the Seal of Biliteracy. Participants will explore how data can move beyond compliance to become a humanizing tool that aligns vision, instruction, and opportunity for multilingual learners. Practical strategies and leadership practices will be shared to support the development of purpose-driven systems that center identity, access, and student success.

Liderazgo que Sana: Our Wealth, Our Healing, Our Pipeline — Vista Field

Join a dynamic panel of Latina educational leaders as they explore the power of cultural wealth, collective healing, and intentional leadership development. Through personal experiences and meaningful dialogue, panelists will share how embracing identity, fostering belonging, and building supportive networks can sustain leadership and strengthen pathways for future Latino and Latina leaders. Discover how empowering leaders today creates greater opportunities for the next generation of students and educational leaders.

MORNING WORKSHOP #2 • 11:00–11:50 AM

Vista Court

Integrated Classroom Walkthroughs and Principal Support Meetings: A Path to Instructional Alignment

How do district and school leaders ensure instructional alignment across every classroom? This session explores how one district is using integrated walkthroughs and principal support meetings, powered by real-time observation data, to create a coherent, responsive system for instructional leadership. Attendees will leave with a concrete model for connecting what's happening in classrooms directly to the coaching and support conversations leaders are having with principals.

Vista Field

Leading the Way: How Washington Districts Are Transforming Outcomes for Multilingual Learners

Join district leaders as they share powerful insights, successes, and proven strategies for supporting Multilingual Learners across different district contexts. This dynamic panel discussion will highlight funding sources that drive impactful programs, effective implementation practices that lead to sustainable success, the critical role of leadership in building strong MLL programs, and innovative strategies for supporting and reclassifying long-term English Learners. Moderated by Dr. Ana Aguilar, Vice President of Professional Development from Summit K12, this session will provide practical solutions and actionable takeaways you can adapt to accelerate.

Conference Room F

Leading Through Collective Resistance: Reclaiming Our Power

Join a healing circle with trusted fellow administrators designed to support you through politically challenging times. As leaders, we carry the weight of protecting our students, staff and community, often while managing your own exhaustion behind the scenes. This session offers a space to pause, reflect, and reconnect with what grounds us leaders and advocates. We will explore practical self-care strategies that help sustain the energy and resilience needed to continue leading and advocating for your community. You'll also leave with concrete resources and district-level strategies for navigating backlash.

Conference Room G

Narrative-Informed Leadership: Leading with Identity, Purpose, and Practice

This session explores how personal narrative can inform transformative educational leadership, drawing from the experiences of an immigrant educator from a historically underserved background supporting multilingual learners across states. Grounded in research on narrative leadership, it highlights how identity and lived experience shape ethical decision-making and move leaders beyond compliance toward equity-driven practice.

Conference Room E

Passion, Purpose, and Peseverance: Lessons from Dual Language Leadership

Through personal storytelling and professional reflection, this presentation highlights lessons in passion, purpose, and perseverance drawn from a journey as an immigrant, parent, and dual language leader. Participants will learn how lived experience, resilience, and cultural wealth inform leadership practices that empower multilingual learners and strengthen educational systems.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP • 2:10-3:00 PM

A Park Bench Conversation About What It Takes to Lead Today

Conference Room G

A compelling, get real talk about executive leadership from three-time school superintendent, state superintendent, entrepreneur and published author, Dr. K, about taking your passion for equity of access, cultural realism and leadership superpowers to any school community you choose to lead. Learn what matters most for successful leadership, especially when conditions change making your work wrought with conflicts, challenges and political contradictions.

Commitment to Biliteracy: How Curriclum Associates Invests in Latino Educators and Spanish-Speaking Students

Conference Room F

WALAS exists to move Latino educators into leadership through mentorship, networking, and professional development, and this session shows how that mission moves in step with Curriculum Associates' own commitment to biliteracy, built into resources like Mosaico: Fundamentos por i-Ready from the ground up rather than layered on as translation. Educators who see their language, and their students' language, reflected with quality and respect are more likely to see a future for themselves in district leadership, and the session explores how Curriculum Associates partners with districts and organizations like WALAS to support that pathway through professional learning and a shared investment in growing the pipeline of Latino leaders. Participants will leave with a clear picture of what genuine biliteracy commitment looks like when it's built into curriculum design, and how that commitment fuels the leadership goals WALAS champions.

From Compliance to Connection: Building Districtwide Language Access Systems

Conference Room E

Language access is more than compliance, it is a leadership responsibility that strengthens equity, family engagement, and belonging. Through practical examples from Washington school districts, this session will explore how leaders can move from reactive practices to sustainable, districtwide language access systems that build trust and ensure multilingual and deaf and hard-of-hearing families can fully participate in their children’s education.

From Compliance to Collaboration: Empowering Families, Students and Staff Through Intentional Partnerships

Vista Court

Family engagement is often viewed as a compliance requirement—but what if it became a catalyst for equity, belonging, and student success? In this interactive session, the Directors of Equity, Family & Community Partnerships and Multilingual Education & Student Supports will share how cross-departmental collaboration is transforming family engagement in a mid-sized, diverse school district. Through examples from Dual Language Education, Title I Parent and Family Engagement, and Refugee Family Engagement programming, participants will explore strategies for building family leadership, sharing decision-making, and creating family-driven opportunities that reflect community strengths and needs. Grounded in Dr. Karen Mapp’s Dual Capacity-Building Framework, this session is most relevant for professionals serving K–12 youth and families.

Roots of Harmony: Applying Chontal Philosophy to Cultivate Inclusive School Communities

Vista Field

Long before modern instructional frameworks existed, Indigenous communities in Mesoamerica cultivated sophisticated practices for harmony, collective responsibility, and mutual respect. This workshop centers the core principles of living harmoniously from the Chontal people of Guerrero, Mexico. Principles such as community before self, intergenerational wisdom, individual role celebration, and stewardship become the main topics of this presentation. Participants will first explore how these cultural values create a foundation for belonging and relational trust in secondary schools. Secondarily, the session demonstrates how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) inclusionary practices naturally align with and operationalize these Indigenous values to support all learners academically and socially

Growing the Next Generation

With your generous donations at last year's conference, WALAS was able to award two graduating seniors with $1000 scholarships. The scholarship was open specifically to Washington State seniors preparing to become bilingual educators. Learn more about our scholarship recipients below. Thank you for supporting our future leaders!



Mylaa Moreno

Myla is a graduate of Mount Vernon High School and is attending Central Washington University, where she plans to study Elementary Education. Bilingual in English and Spanish, Myla hopes to become a Dual Language elementary teacher and give back to the program that had such a meaningful impact on her own education.

Her passion for working with children grew through years of caring for her younger cousin and has been strengthened through hands-on classroom experiences, including serving as a teaching assistant in her school's Early Childhood Education program and volunteering with Children of the Valley. Myla is passionate about nurturing students' natural curiosity and building strong connections with families so every child has the support they need to succeed.

Chloe Martinez

Chloe is a graduate of Eisenhower High School and plans to attend Central Washington University, where she will major in Business. Inspired by educators who encouraged her and helped build her confidence, Chloe hopes to provide that same support and sense of belonging for future students.

Her experiences volunteering and working with younger students have strengthened her passion for education and taught her the importance of patience, encouragement, and meeting students where they are. Chloe is especially passionate about helping students and families overcome language barriers and ensuring every student feels understood, included, and supported in their education.

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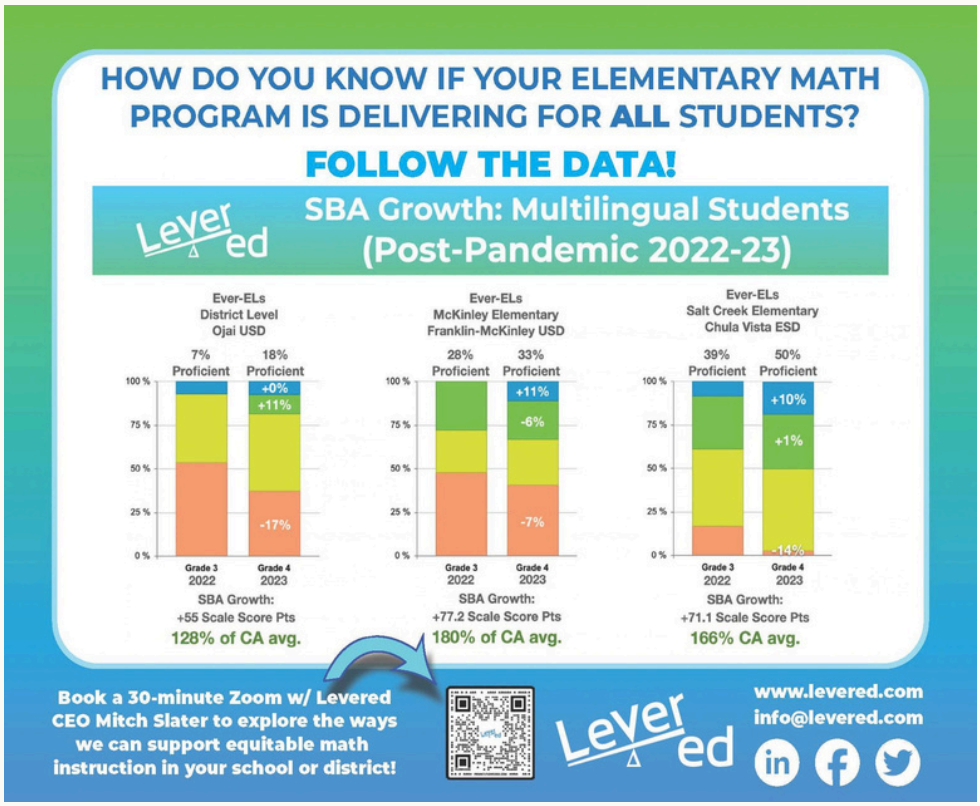
i-Ready Classroom Mathematics
Core Math (English) | Grades K-Algebra 1

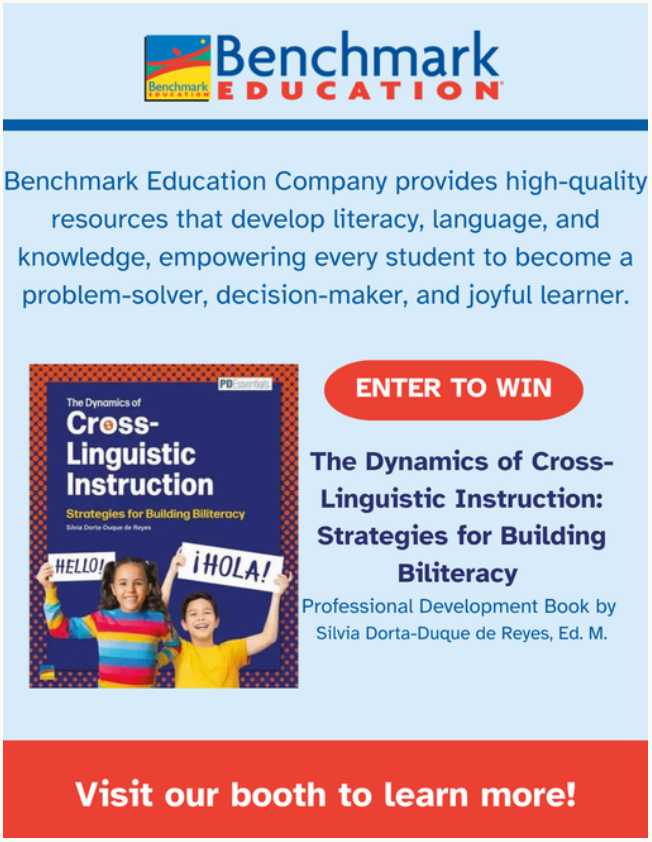
i-Ready Classroom Matemáticas
Core Math (Spanish) | Grades K-Algebra 1

Phonics for Reading
Phonics Intervention | Grades 3-12

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18% Proficient
+0%
+11%
-17%
Grade 3 2022
Grade 4 2023
SBA Growth:
+55 Scale Score Pts
128% of CA avg.
Ever-ELs
McKinley Elementary
Franklin-McKinley USD
28% Proficient
33% Proficient
+11%
-6%
-7%
SBA Growth:
+77.2 Scale Score Pts
180% of CA avg.
Ever-ELs
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Chula Vista ESD
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50% Proficient
+10%
+1%
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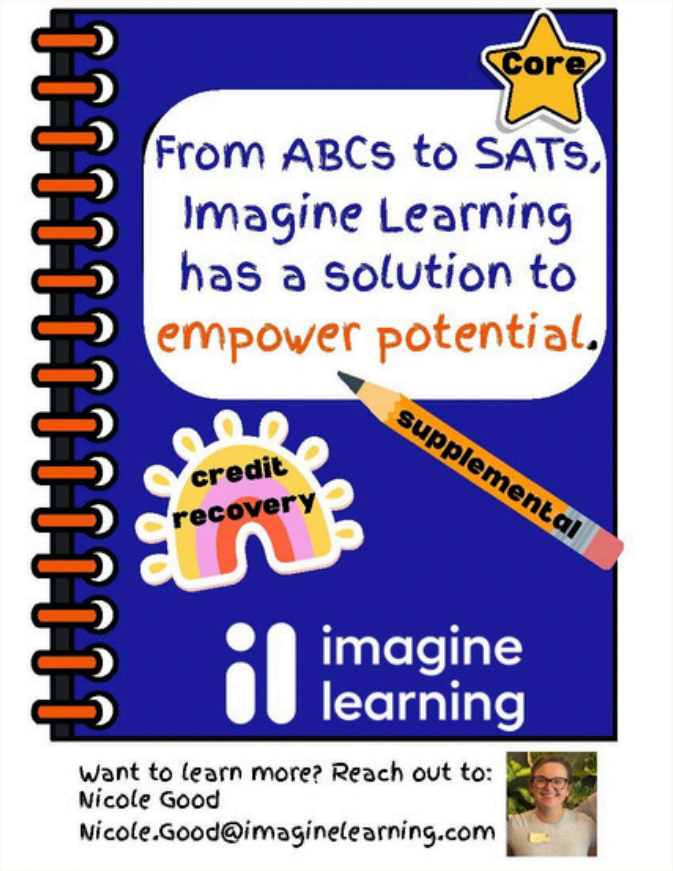

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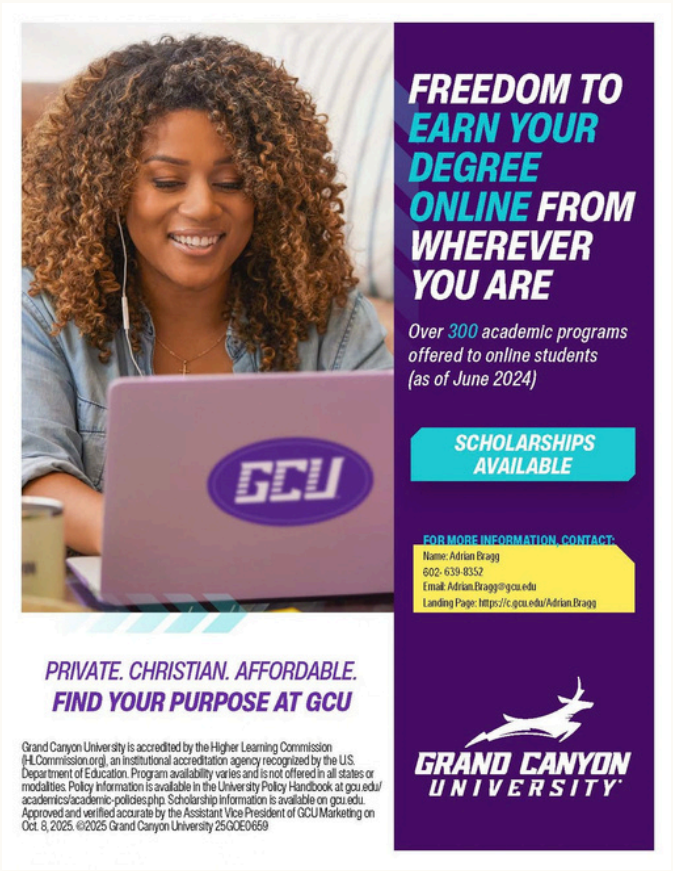


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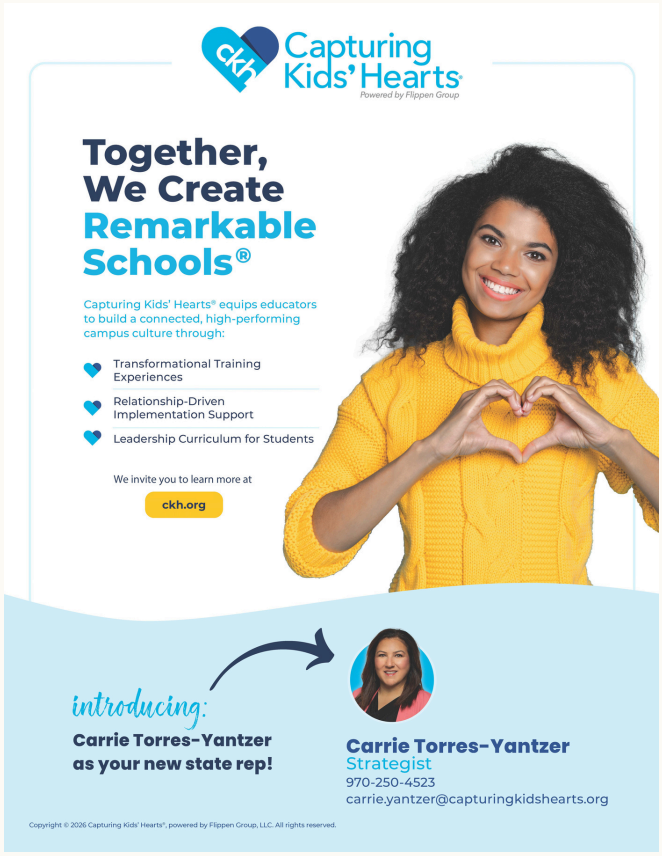
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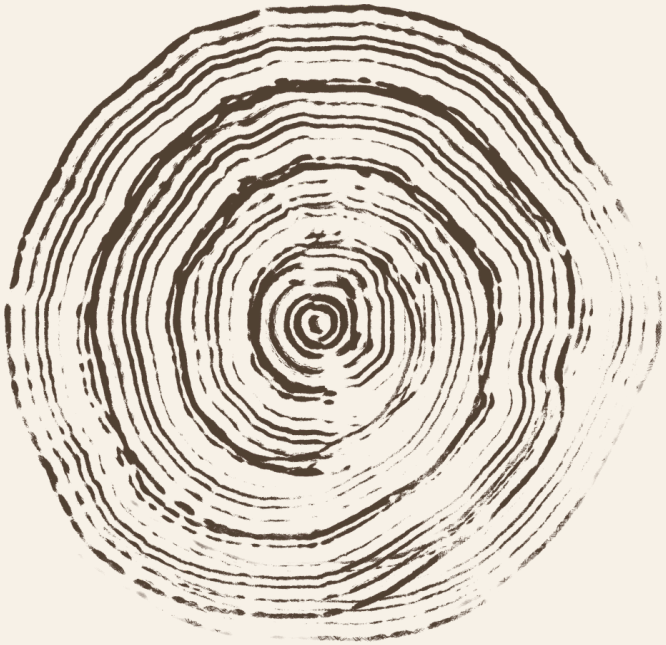
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