

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

George I. Sánchez Memorial Award

Presented to a nominee whose activities in Hispanic affairs significantly impact education and equal opportunities for Hispanics.



Rosalinda Carreón-Altamirano
Member, New Mexico

George I. Sánchez was both a scholar and a visionary. He foresaw a time in the United States when a child's knowing Spanish would be considered an asset rather than a deficit by educators. And he was convinced that bilingual teachers would play a crucial role in elevating the education of Hispanic students.

Rosalinda Carreón-Altamirano is exactly the kind of educator George I. Sánchez had in mind. Born and raised in New Mexico, she is fluent in speaking, reading and writing Spanish, and for three decades she has been a powerful and persistent advocate for bilingual education and educators. She has also been a strong advocate for Hispanic and other underserved students, for parental involvement and for building broader community participation in public schools.

Ms. Carreón-Altamirano began her teaching career as a kindergarten teacher, and she taught kindergarten for 16 years. Then she became a middle school teacher. Specifically, she was a 6th through 8th grade English as a Second Language/Spanish Literacy teacher and an 8th grade Exploratory Spanish teacher. Since 1999 she has worked at the district level for the Las Cruces Public Schools as a facilitator/coordinator in the Department of English Language Acquisition, Bilingual, and Migrant Programs.

The New Mexico Child Development Board was created in 1989 by the state legislature and charged with the responsibility of establishing public policy for early childhood education services in the state. Ms. Carreón-Altamirano has served as the Board's Chair since 2003, becoming the first Hispanic woman to serve as Chair and the first person to serve consecutive terms as Chair.

Under her leadership, the Child Development Board has been a pioneer, establishing: early childhood education program standards which are often used as a national model; competencies and coursework for the licensure and certification of early childhood teachers, with emphasis on serving children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds; and early learning outcomes for New Mexico's pre-K program that focus on children gaining fluency in their home language and dual language instruction.

She has also been a leader in the New Mexico Association of Bilingual Education for years, is a long-standing member of the Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces, and has served in a number of different leadership positions in her local Association, NEA-Las Cruces, and in NEA-New Mexico. Rosalinda Carreón-Altamirano truly is a high-octane, multi-tasking activist and leader. She has made a significant difference in the lives of Hispanic and other minority children in New Mexico.

