

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ Luanelly Iglesias ◆



George I. Sánchez Memorial Award

Luanelly Iglesias was born and raised in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. At 18 years old she moved to the United States and began working in a factory to contribute to her family's income. Education was important to Ms. Iglesias and, so, while working, she enrolled and graduated from college. She continued to pursue higher education, and once she earned a master's degree she began a career in education.

Ms. Iglesias has worked as a Bilingual teacher for the past 15 years in Connecticut, and in 2011 she was awarded the Connecticut Education Association (CEA) Award for Leadership in Hispanic Educational and Community Relationship.

A tireless champion for education in general, and Hispanic children in particular, Iglesias serves on the board of the Madre Latina Foundation, a non-profit organization she founded with her sister, based in Waterbury, CT, whose mission is to provide "a platform where Latinas can learn, connect, be heard, grow, build a network and be motivated to move forward!" With a focus on establishing the future of Hispanic students, the foundation annually awards scholarships to aid in the high cost of higher education.

As chair of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Commission, Ms. Iglesias has brought invaluable professional development opportunities to school staff focusing on diversity and inclusion. She has helped design and create bilingual programming for students recently arriving in the United States. These bilingual instructional materials are sought after resources by colleagues to use in their classrooms as they begin to work with bilingual students.

Ms. Iglesias has become an integral part of each school and district where she devotes herself to enhancing educational opportunities of Hispanic students through as many avenues as she can imagine. Ms. Iglesias' efforts in the school community through family engagement provides students the opportunity to have pride in their Hispanic Heritage. She organizes several events each year: Hispanic Heritage Celebration, Holiday Celebration, Community Awareness Event, and Honor Day. At these events, parents and students spend time together and further develop pride in their Hispanic culture. Ms. Iglesias has brought invaluable professional development opportunities to school staff; from administration to counselors, and teachers, to improve their knowledge and craft in meeting the needs of their Hispanic students.

This cultural exchange that Ms. Iglesias brings to the classroom and the school community teaches students and parents the importance of honoring the past, embracing their culture and language while working hard towards a bright future.