



DR. MARTA SILVA

George I. Sánchez Memorial Award

Revolutionary education advocate Dr. George I. Sánchez was transformative in advancing academic and societal achievement for Latino youth...

Kansas-based education maverick Dr. Marta Silva has picked up Sanchez's torch, serving as beacon of light, hope and opportunity for "*mi gente*."

Dr. Silva's devoted her decades-long career to educational platforms promoting culture, tolerance and linguistic independence for American Latinos. A graduate of the University of Córdoba in Spain, Silva took her talents to the plains of Kansas, including her current tenure at Olathe North High School. There she serves as a Spanish as a Heritage Language Instructor, implementing her strategies in the lower grades, and using Heritage language in the service of college prep for seniors.

Her Heritage Language program, an innovative initiative in her district, promotes translation and interpretation skills, and career training that ensures the playing field is leveled for Hispanic students. Dr. Silva's philosophy reforms the concept of "English as a Second Language" to "Heritage Language as Empowerment"... a living, breathing part of Latino youth development. Teaching about the historic contributions of Latinos to American culture is a large part of her mission and mandate.

Dr. Silva has taken her "Language Level Up" even further with the establishment of the Kansas World Language Association, where she currently serves as President. In that role, she organizes annual national conferences where educators and administrators gather to workshop the most effective ways to empower Latino students, and equip these professionals with the tools they need to achieve that goal, in consultation with civic leaders. Recognizing that governmental agencies can play a vital role, Dr. Silva works to create long term improvements.

But Dr. Silva's work extends well beyond the chalkboard. She helps advise and sponsors the Latina Leadership Club, instilling in young women that they can aspire to greatness. The program has raised over \$22,000 dollars towards higher education financial support for students in need, creating internship opportunities, and most importantly, creating forums that allow young women to take pride in their identity. Her actions resulted in the state of Kansas announcing a Latina Day proclamation as part of their Women's History Month celebration.

Dr. Silva's diligence has provided a bounty of great results over the last twenty years: more Latino students in National Honor Societies, higher graduation rates, and making sure Hispanic youth don't fall through the cracks of poverty and unfair language barriers.

In an increasing climate of not-so benign neglect towards Latino youth, and their elder family members, Dr. Marta Silva, as Dr. George I. Sánchez before her, is unwavering in her goal to unite communities... *El pueblo unido jamás será vencido*.