



## Illinois Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents

### Quarterly Newsletter

Dear IALAS Members,

As most of you have wrapped up the school year or are getting close to it, we want to THANK YOU for all of your hard work. We have heard many amazing stories from teachers and administrators across the state who have sustained their enthusiasm for education, despite the uncertainty with budget reform and the added demands of your respective roles. This is why an organization like IALAS is key! IALAS provides a platform of like-minded professionals who wish to learn and support each other. We know that we can best meet the needs of Latino or other disenfranchised students when we work collaboratively to build capacity. Our most recent and sold-out event, the *Network Mixer*, was an example of how networking is a powerful tool. We will continuously work to be responsive to membership and have taken the survey results from the mixer seriously. We are excited about our upcoming events, *Educational Conclave*, on **June 23rd** at NEIU, El Centro campus, and the next *Network Mixer* scheduled for **Friday, October 21st**, time and place to be determined.

As our membership grows almost daily, we want to THANK YOU for sharing about IALAS with your colleagues. The old adage, "There is power in numbers" is true and we are confident that with a strong membership base, we will be able to positively impact education in Illinois. Please continue to share about IALAS with all educators and administrators. Remember, IALAS is not exclusive to Latinos. We welcome all educators and administrators who share IALAS' [vision and mission](#). The free membership drive ends June 30<sup>th</sup> and official paid membership begins **July 1, 2016**. Everyone will have to become a member again on July 1<sup>st</sup>. For more information about membership dues, deeply discounted institutional dues and benefits, please visit our [Membership](#) page.

Please consider joining us at our next committee and Board meeting on **Sunday, August 7<sup>th</sup>** at Pioneer Elementary in West Chicago. There are ample opportunities to become involved and take on leadership roles. As an IALAS member, you are part of a familia that appreciates, recognizes you and supports your work. Thank you for *all* that you do!

Ivette M. Dubiel  
IALAS Board President



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#### FOUNDING PARTNERS

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Educational Conclave  
June 23rd
- Fall Network Mixer  
October 21st



## ADMINISTRATOR SPOTLIGHT

Name: **Ricardo Espinoza**

Occupation: **Superintendent, LaMoille Unit School District 303**

**Hometown:** Mendota

### **What excites you about IALAS?**

Being able to help others to fulfill their tenants of my dissertation— “Hispanic Superintendents in Illinois: Current Trends and Challenges” - and being able to create opportunities for more individuals to be involved in the lives of all students, specifically those that have been marginalized.

### **Tell us about the importance of educating Latino children or any disenfranchised group.**

It is our mandate to be in the service of others and to help all students to progress in all areas with a concentration in academic achievement. The great equalizer for all marginalized groups is the attainment of an education.

### **What was your journey like to superintendency?**

I worked in all facets of education (volunteer, paraprofessional, teacher, director, assistant principals, principal and superintendent). A school leader asked me to become a principal. While doing principal work, I realized that to affect change, I needed to be where decisions were being discussed, drafted, and decided. My first position as superintendent was homegrown through my own advocacy by being a servant leader at Rockdale District #84. During that time I became an ACI candidate and learned the trade while serving as a principal.

## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Name: **Virginia Valdez**

Occupation: **Kindergarten Teacher, Chicago Public Schools**

**Hometown:** Chicago

### **Why did you become a teacher?**

After working in the public and nonprofit sectors for nine years, I realized that I was not happy because I was not passionate about my work. Therefore, I decided to pursue my passion—working with children. While there are many paths to working with children, the only one that interested me was teaching. Teaching is the only profession that directly impacts the future academic, economic and social outcomes of children. This means that teaching offers the opportunity to make a significant and lasting difference in the lives of children.



### **Tell us about the importance of educating Latino children or any disenfranchised group.**

All research and statistics indicate that Latino children and other children of color, together, are the new majority. This new majority will continue to grow. Unfortunately, the achievement gap for this new majority continues to grow as well. Specifically, Latino children are the fastest growing student population and continue to have low academic achievement. This will have a significant impact on the economic, social and political future of our state and nation. As a result, it is imperative that we not only provide high-quality opportunities for Latino children but also advocate for changes in policy and educational institutions' practices of addressing the complex needs of Latinos.

### **Why did you join IALAS?**

As the Illinois State Affiliate of the national Association for Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS), IALAS and I share the same mission and vision that ultimately leads to strengthening and empowering children and youth through education.

# **“Why Gifted Latinos Are Often Overlooked And Underserved”**

**by Claudio Sanchez**

Three million school children in the U.S. are identified as gifted. That's roughly the top 10 percent of the nation's highest achieving students.

But Rene Islas, head of the National Association for Gifted Children, says tens of thousands of gifted English language learners are never identified. We sat down with Islas and asked him why.

He started out by explaining that there are several different measures for identifying gifted children. The most common in schools is recognizing achievement, above grade level work. But that poses a problem for English language learners, or ELLs, he says.

**Is that because not being fluent in English masks their giftedness?**

I can give you some personal experience about this. My mother, a single mom in Tucson, Ariz., worked hard to put me in the best school she could afford. I was labeled ELL. That meant a watered down curriculum and not being exposed to learning opportunities. It wasn't until she moved me to a more affluent, white neighborhood school that educators recognized that I had more potential than people at my previous school recognized.

**Even when schools identify ELL students as gifted, you say the impulse is not to place them in accelerated programs, despite evidence that they benefit from more challenging work while they're learning English.**

It's leaving talent on the table when you have these high performing students but you're restraining them. Gifted [ELL] students are actually harmed if they're held back. To me, the real issue is, how many geniuses are being hidden within their school system?

**What about the process for identifying gifted ELLs? When schools test ELLs for giftedness, they often rely on observation and prompts consisting of symbols, manipulatives, spacial relationships and patterns. Are these non-verbal tests effective?**

The assumption is that if you take away the language barrier, you can make a neutral assessment. We're finding out that's not true and this is a barrier for Spanish speaking students. The consensus out there is that you need multiple measures [verbal and non-verbal] to identify gifted students with language disadvantages.

**What about IQ tests?**

It's one identification model often used, even though it's difficult to measure true IQ because of language barriers.

**In fact, you argue that schools' over-reliance on IQ tests is one reason gifted programs are so racially and ethnically homogeneous. The research, meanwhile, shows that all gifted kids, including ELLs, share an important trait — advanced academic ability.**

Researchers have found that a gifted child often knows 60 percent or more of the curriculum that'll be presented in a full [school] year. So imagine if you knew almost two thirds of the content the first day of school.

**What about children of immigrant parents who are recent arrivals or are in the U.S. illegally? If their child is gifted and bored to death in school, how likely is it that they'll demand that their child be tested or placed in a more challenging academic program?**

There's fear involved when it comes to Hispanic students in particular. There's [also] a high premium on assimilating, fitting in. These are disincentives to go out and apply for a gifted and talented [program]. Our association, NAGC, is often the first stop for parents who encounter those barriers.

**Other than NAGC's advocacy for these students, aren't there laws that protect the rights of gifted ELL's the way the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act — IDEA — protects students with learning disabilities?**

Federal law does not require support for gifted students.

**On a final note, under the new federal education law — Every Student Succeeds Act — states for the first time will be required to break down and disclose gifted students' achievement data. School districts will also have to show that teachers who work with gifted students are getting the training they need. It's unclear though what the consequences are if they don't.**

## Network Mixer

On Friday, April 15th, 2016, IALAS hosted its inaugural event at Fogo De Chão in Rosemont. The event included 50 members and founding partners within the state of Illinois. They shared wonderful food and drinks as well as engaged in networking and conversations regarding the mission and vision of IALAS, the goals of our organization, and how to best support all members while building momentum to identify the needs of our Latino constituents, aspiring administrators, and students.

The president of our organization, Ivette Dubiel, addressed the crowd, discussed our parent organization (ALAS) and the work that they have done to build this organization, and raffled some prizes for all attendees.

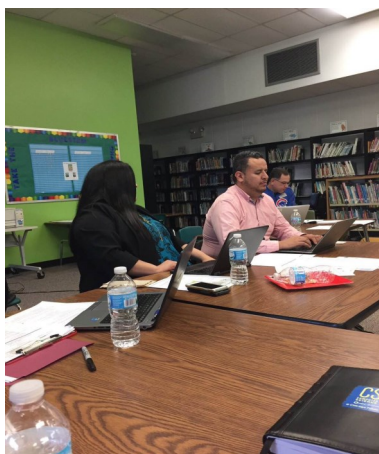
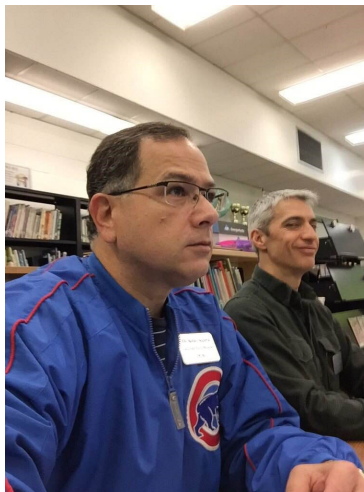
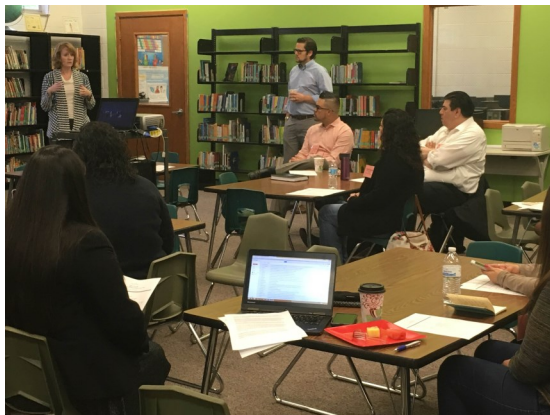
Below are some photographs from our event. We look forward to seeing you at our next scheduled event, an Educational Conclave on June 23rd, at Northeastern Illinois University. More information regarding this event is provided in our last page of the newsletter!





## Board Meeting & Committee Workshops

On Sunday, May 1st, IALAS hosted its second Board Meeting of the year at Pioneer Elementary School in West Chicago. We had an array of activities throughout the day, such as Committee break out sessions, a General Assembly and the Board Meeting. Among the highlights of the day were special guest speakers, Scott Pionek and Maureen Scully, from Lexia Learning, one of our founding partners that shared the impact of their product. Each committee reported out on its work plan and next steps. Updates on the organization's first month's ventures were shared and accomplishments were celebrated. Join us at the next meeting offering leadership opportunities on **Sunday, August 7th**.



### ATTENTION COMMITTEES

All committees (with the exception of mentor committee) will meet two more times this calendar year on the first Sunday of August and November, from 9:00 am—11:00 am, at Pioneer Elementary, 615 Kenwood Avenue in West Chicago.

For more information, please email [idubiel@ialas.org](mailto:idubiel@ialas.org).

## Founding Partners



IALAS  
P.O. Box 817  
Oswego, IL 60543

**Website**  
[www.ialas.org](http://www.ialas.org)

**Email:**  
[idubiel@ialas.org](mailto:idubiel@ialas.org)



## Upcoming IALAS Events

### Educational Conclave

*A unique professional development opportunity*

**Thursday, June 23, 2016**

**8:30 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

(3:00-4:00 p.m. optional IALAS roundtable)

**Northeastern Illinois University, El Centro  
3390 North Avondale in Chicago**

**This event** will feature research-based breakout sessions by experienced presenters, roundtable discussions with IALAS Board, and opportunities to learn about our founding partners. **Register** for this event by June 15th. Breakfast, lunch and CPDUs offered to every participant.

Keynote speaker\*, **Sonia Nazario**, is an award-winning journalist and author of *Enrique's Journey*. Every attendee will receive a complimentary copy of her book.

\*Keynote speaker and book are sponsored by Imagine Learning.

