

GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinar
Emergent Bilinguals and English Language Learners:
The Sturdy Bridge Opportunity

January 30, 2024

Moderator and Presenter Bios

MODERATOR



Karla Ruiz,
Senior Program Officer, English Learner Program
Sobrato Philanthropies

Karla Ruiz is a Senior Program Officer in the English Learner Program at Sobrato Philanthropies where she helps advance the program's grantmaking and strategy. Based in Los Angeles, Karla manages the initiative's regional strategy which aims to embed multilingual student and family voice into state and local policy. Prior to joining the Foundation, Karla was a Program Officer at the Stuart Foundation where she led work in state systems change, family and community engagement and capacity building. Karla served as a Multicultural Fellow in Education at the San Francisco Foundation after working to implement the community schools model in Los Angeles Unified School District at Los Angeles Education Partnership. Karla holds a B.A. in Public Policy Analysis with a concentration in Sociology from Pomona College and a Masters in Public Administration from University of Southern California's Sol Price School of Public Policy.

PRESENTERS



Melissa Castillo, Ed.D.
Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Education

Dr. Melissa Castillo has over 28 years of experience in education. She currently serves as the Senior Advisor, for the Office of The Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. Before that She served as the Associate Superintendent of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for the Arizona Department of Education, responsible for advancing educational opportunities and outcomes for diverse student populations. Dr. Castillo's professional career includes elementary teacher in dual language and bilingual programs, instructional coach, site and district administrator and educational consultant. Dr. Castillo co-authored the book Language and Literacy for ELLs; Creating Systematic Change for Academic Achievement and contributing author to 99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with the SIOP® Model. Dr. Castillo continues to work with educators and leaders across the country on planning and implementing asset-based systems, language programs, and instructional practices to meet the needs of diverse learners.



Anya Hurwitz, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL)

Dr. Anya Hurwitz is the Executive Director of [SEAL](#) (Sobrato Early Academic Language), an educational nonprofit working to ensure all English Learners/Dual Language Learners in California learn, thrive, and lead. She has worked for over 25 years in education as a teacher, school leader, district administrator, and within the educational nonprofit sector. The early part of her career was in New York City, and in 2010 she moved to northern California. Dr. Hurwitz joined the SEAL team as Deputy Director in 2014 and became Executive Director in 2017. She has a doctorate in educational leadership from UC Berkeley.



Shantel Meek, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Equity Project
Arizona State University

Shantel E. Meek is a professor of practice and the founding director of the Children's Equity Project (CEP) at Arizona State University. She manages strategic partnerships with CEP partners at 16 universities and non-profit organizations, policymakers, and national organizations, and sets the strategic direction of the CEP. Dr. Meek previously served as a consultant in early childhood policy and strategy at the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington D.C. where she advised senior staff on a range of federal and state equity and early childhood policy issues. Prior to founding the CEP, Dr. Meek served in the Obama Administration as a Senior Policy Advisor for Early Childhood Development at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and as a Senior Policy Advisor for Education in the Domestic Policy Council at the White House.



Lydia Acosta Stephens
Executive Director, Multilingual and Multicultural Education
Department
Los Angeles Unified School District

Lydia Acosta Stephens is the Executive Director of Multilingual & Multicultural Education with the Los Angeles Unified School District. In her role, Lydia serves over 200,000 students, each with individual needs and unique pathways to academic success. Before being Executive Director, Lydia was a school principal and helped enact the first successful district model of Full Day Kindergarten in 2004. Lydia holds a B.A. in Liberal Studies with a Bilingual Emphasis from California State University, Northridge, and a Masters in Educational Leadership and Administration from California State University, Los Angeles.