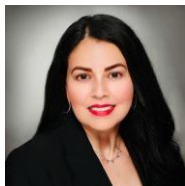


UNIDOS PARA TEXAS BILINGUAL CONFERENCE 2026



Saturday, September 12, 2026
Texas A&M International University

MEET THE COMMITTEE



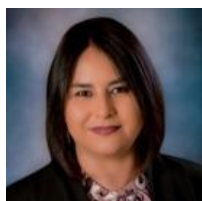
Dr. Gilda Y. Martínez
Conference Founder & Chair



Dr. Alfredo Ramirez
College of Education



Dr. Ricardo Lozano, Dean of
Interim Chair



Dr. Erica Guerrero
Committee Co-Chair



Janet Carrillo
Committee Member



Dr. Janelly Garza
Committee Member



Dr. Mayra Pena,
Committee Member



Omar Ramirez
Committee Member



Allayza Ugarte-Sanchez
Committee Member



Armando Molina
School District Representative
(Laredo ISD)



Clarissa Flores
School District Representative
(United ISD)

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Xóchitl Anabel Rocha



Dr. Xóchitl Anabel Rocha serves as the Director of Bilingual Education & GT Programs in the Office of School Programs at the Texas Education Agency. She is a former bilingual migrant student and first-generation college graduate; she holds degrees from The University of Texas–Pan American and a doctorate from Texas A&M University–Kingsville. She led the development of the state’s Dual Language Framework and continues to guide effective and sustainable program implementation practices.

She collaborated in the development of the United States Department of Education (USDE) national dual language resources. Her experience includes roles as a dual language teacher, district leader, regional bilingual/ESL leader, and adjunct professor. Dr. Rocha is deeply committed to advancing high-quality bilingual education and promoting bilingualism and biliteracy while honoring the varied backgrounds of emergent bilingual students and their families. In addition, she has served as a board member in RGV TABE and is the current President-Elect of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE).

Legacy Award

2026 INAUGURAL LEGACY AWARD RECIPIENT



THE HONORABLE HENRY CUELLAR, Ph.D.

The Unidos Para Texas Legacy Award was established to recognize distinguished leaders whose service, advocacy, and commitment to education have created a lasting impact on students, educators, families, and communities. This prestigious recognition honors individuals whose leadership extends beyond professional achievement and reflects a sustained commitment to expanding educational opportunity and strengthening the communities they serve.

Unidos Para Texas is proud to recognize Congressman Henry Cuellar, Ph.D., U.S. Congressman TX-28, as the inaugural recipient of the Unidos Para Texas Legacy Award.

A lifelong advocate for education and the communities of South Texas, Congressman Cuellar has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to expanding educational opportunities and supporting students and families throughout the region. His leadership and public service reflect the values at the heart of Unidos Para Texas—education, opportunity, community, and a belief in the transformative power of learning.

As the inaugural recipient, Congressman Cuellar represents the enduring impact of dedicated leadership across generations. Unidos Para Texas is honored to recognize his distinguished service and lasting contributions to education and the communities of South Texas.

DR. RAMON G. ALANIZ PIONEER AWARD



Dr. Ramón G. Alaniz, a distinguished professor of education at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), dedicated his career to advancing bilingual education. From 1972 to 2015, Alaniz imparted knowledge in elementary and middle school science, math, and social studies, and at the university level, he specialized in bilingual education. His teaching repertoire included both English and Spanish, as well as English as a Second Language (ESL).

Alaniz's professional service in bilingual education has left a lasting impact at local, state, national, and international levels. His collaborations spanned across Laredo, Mexico, and post-USSR Europe, where he worked closely with education personnel to promote bilingual initiatives. As an educational consultant in Texas, Alaniz played a pivotal role in shaping bilingual education policies and practices, a testament to his significant contributions to the field.

Notably, Alaniz founded a bilingual conference at TAMIU, providing a platform for educators and researchers to share insights and advancements in the field. He was also a proficient grant writer, securing funding for various educational projects. One of his most significant contributions was developing the first bilingual certification program at TAMIU and working alongside Miami Dade County, Florida, ensuring educators were well-equipped to teach in diverse, multilingual environments.

In 2024, Unidos Para Texas proudly established the Dr. Ramón G. Alaniz Pioneer Award in honor of his trailblazing advocacy for education. Each year, this prestigious award will be presented to a distinguished member of our community whose work exemplifies visionary leadership and enduring contributions to the field.

We are honored to announce Dr. Gilberto Soto as the 2026 recipient of the Dr. Ramón G. Alaniz Pioneer Award. Dr. Gilberto Soto, whose dedication and advocacy continues to elevate and empower students in our community.

2026 Pioneer Award Recipient

Dr. Gilberto D. Soto



Gilberto D. Soto, Ph.D. is Professor of Music Education and Guitar at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), where he teaches courses in early childhood, elementary, and secondary bilingual music education. He also supervises guitar and bass students and directs the TAMIU Guitar Ensemble. In addition to his university responsibilities, Dr. Soto is the founder and director of Soto Academy of Music, a music studio serving children ages 2–18. The academy also functions as a teaching laboratory where university students gain valuable hands-on experience in music education as they prepare for their professional careers.

Dr. Soto is a distinguished author, educator, and clinician whose work has made significant contributions to bilingual music education. He is the author of the bilingual music series *Fiesta de Canciones* (Primary and Intermediate Levels) and *Music of Our World: Mexico*, published by Hal Leonard Music Corporation. He has also co-authored *Multilevel Strategies for English Language Learners*, the national music education series *Spotlight on Music*, and the reading programs *Treasures/Tesoros* and *Wonders/Maravillas*, all published by McGraw-Hill Education. In addition, he served as a song arranger for the National Mathematics Series and DLM Early Childhood Express. Dr. Soto has written numerous articles for *Music Express*, reviewed elementary music education textbooks, and received multiple awards recognizing his contributions to bilingual music education, particularly in underserved communities, as well as his excellence as a university instructor and guitar performer.

Dr. Soto earned a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Universidad Autónoma del Noreste, a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Abilene Christian University, and both a Master of Music and a Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education from the University of Southern Mississippi.

An internationally recognized presenter and performer, Dr. Soto travels extensively conducting workshops, clinics, and lectures on bilingual music education. He is also an accomplished flamenco and classical guitarist, performing throughout the United States, Central and South America, and most recently in Spain and the Middle East.

2026 Bilingual/ESL Teacher of the Year Award Recipients

Laredo Independent School District
Honore Ligarde Elementary
School
Bilingual Teacher of the Year

Anna Brewster



United Independent School District
Lamar Bruni Vergara Middle
School
ESL Teacher of the Year

Alyssa Sanchez



Aprenizaje Sin Fronteras: Advancing Bilingual Education in Diverse Communities

Conference Agenda - Saturday, September 12, 2026

7:00 – 8:00 am	STC Ballroom	Pre-Registration and Breakfast Musical Entertainment: Elias Herrera Jazz Band
8:00 – 8:15 am	STC Ballroom	Welcome and Opening Ceremony: Dean Dr. Alfredo Ramirez, Jr. Presentation of Keynote Speaker, Dr. Gilda Y. Martinez
8:20 – 9:20 am	STC Ballroom	Keynote Speaker: Dr. Xochitl Rocha
9:25-9:30 am	STC Ballroom	Dr. Christopher Maynard – Presentation of Legacy Award
9:30-9:50 am	STC Ballroom	Dr. Henry Cuellar, U.S. Congressman TX-28
9:55-10:05	STC Ballroom	Presentation of Ramon Alaniz Pioneer Award Recipient: Dr. Gilberto Soto Texas A&M International University
10:05 – 10:15 am	STC Ballroom	Bilingual Teacher of the Year Award Presentation Recipient: Anna Brewster Campus: Ligarde Elementary School School District: Laredo Independent School District
10:15-10:25	STC Ballroom	ESL Teacher of the Year Award Presentation Recipient: Alyssa Sanchez Campus: Lamar Bruni Vergara Middle School School District: United Independent School District
10:30-10:45	STC	Visit vendors and exhibitions
10:45-11:35 am	See Program	Session One
11:35 – 11:55 am	STC	Visit vendors and exhibitions
12:00 – 1:00 pm	STC Ballroom	Lunch Musical Entertainment: Martin High School Tigres del Sur
1:10 – 3:00 pm	TBA	Afternoon Teacher Workshop
1:10-2:00 pm	See Program	Session Two
2:10 – 3:00 pm	See Program	Session Three
3:00 – 4:00 pm	STC Ballroom	Closing/Door Prizes (must be present to win)

Program at-a Glance

Rooms	Session I 10:45-11:35	Session II 1:10-2:00	Session III 2:10-3:00
STC 236	Dr. James O'Meara & Sanna Lukander: The Funtastic Five: Making Learning Fun Through Stories, Play, and Purpose	Dr. Reşit Doğan: Where AI Meets the Reader: Practical Literacy Tools Every Teacher Can Use	Miguel Castillo: The Hidden Signs of Youths in Transition
STC 230	Magda Benavidez: Parent Engagement: Two-way Partnership to Increase Student Achievement	Workshop 1: Dr. Youmna Deiri, Victoria Camacho, Dr. Erica Guerrero, Eric Morales The Translanguaging Library: Teachers as Community Engaged Storytellers	
STC 231	Armando Molina: CBLI and QSSSA in the Classroom	Dr. Christina Hernandez: Emergent Bilingual (EB) Scaffolds for Effective Tier Instruction	Emy Tomita: Biliteracy by Design: Blending Science of Learning & Dual Language Instruction
WHC 103	Daniela Ceballos & Itza Torrez: Small Moves, Big Impact: High-Leverage Literacy Practices for Emergent Bilinguals	Juan Salinas: The Power of Interaction: Implementing Seidlitz's 7 Steps for Language Growth	Liset Saenz: Think. Write. Talk. Grow. Building Academic Language Through Structured Discourse and TELPAS-Aligned Instruction
WHC 104	Ana Lozoya: Between Theory and Reality: Supporting Emergent Bilinguals in Texas' High-Accountability Math Classrooms	Dr. Roberto Torres: AI-Powered Objectives: Scaffolding Content, Language, and Tech TEKS for Emergent Bilinguals	Dr. Roberto Torres: Objetivos Impulsados por IA: Andamiaje de TEKS de Contenido, Lenguaje y Tecnología para Bilingües Emergentes
PLG 107	Karina Chapa: Beyond Google Translate: Integrating AI into Bilingual Education	Dr. Ernesto Guerrero: Beyond Translation: Preparing School Counselors to Serve Bilingual and Emergent Bilingual Students	Dr. Patricia Garza Gonzalez: Advancing Bilingual Education from a Borderlands Perspective: Language, Identity, and Educational Equity.
PLG 106	Melissa Bustamante: Noticing the Unnoticed: Generation 1.5 Students and the Processing of Written Corrective Feedback	Jeremiah Short: Beyond TELPAS: Building Academic Language Through Speaking and Writing	Francisco Faticati Supporting Bilingual Students with Dyslexia
PLG 214	Dr. Lourdes Vilorio: From Pedagogy to Practice: Culturally Responsive Leadership in Support of Bilingual Learners	Carla Pineda & Thelma Fraga: Empowering Bilingual Excellence: Elevating Student Success with Nearpod	Rosa Esthela Mora: Language & Literacy: An Effective Approach to Community Transformation
PLG 219	Dr. Maria de Lourdes Soto New ELPS Implementation in Middle & High School	Workshop 2: Dr. Puneet Gill & Dr. Flitz Shine Lift off Learning: Utilizing bilingual, STEM, and literacy integration for elementary teachers	

PLG 221	Eva Sandoval: Building Grade-Level Reading and Writing Through Integrated ELD Instruction	Vanessa Wallace: From Sounds to Print: Distinguishing Phonological Awareness and Phonics	Keanu Roath: Rooted in Culture, Growing in Hope: Supporting Latino/a/e Adolescents Through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
---------	---	---	---

Morning Session 10:45 – 11:35 am

Session: From Pedagogy to Practice: Culturally Responsive Leadership in Support of Bilingual Learners

Presenter(s): Dr. Maria de Lourdes Viloria, Texas A&M International University

Location: PLG 214

Audience: Campus/District Administrators

Abstract: This presentation offers recommendations for educator preparation programs to develop leaders who effectively recruit, support, and mentor bilingual teachers, fostering equitable, inclusive learning environments that uphold high expectations for emergent bilingual students.

Session: The Funtastic Five: Making Learning Fun Through Stories, Play, and Purpose

Presenter(s): Dr. James O'Meara-Texas A&M International University, Sanna Lukander-The Campus Company, and Eda Ulku-The Campus Company

Location: STC 236

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: Bring more joy to your classroom! Experience "The Funtastic Five," a hands-on workshop filled with stories, movement, games, and practical classroom ideas inspired by the Finnish Fun Learning Series. Leave with ready-to-use strategies that increase engagement, strengthen literacy, and make learning fun.

Session: Parent Engagement: A Two-way Partnership to Increase Student Achievement

Presenter(s): Magda Benavidez – Texas A&M International University Alumni

Location: STC 230

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: This presentation highlights how parent engagement partnerships can help schools meet strict accountability demands. It examines current participation challenges, offers strategic solutions, and provides specific guidelines for hosting three types of school events to boost parental involvement and maximize student potential.

Session: Small Moves, Big Impact: High-Leverage Literacy Practices for Emergent Bilinguals

Presenter(s): Daniela Ceballos & Itza Torrez, REAL Academy – Wayside Schools

Location: WHC 103

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: Emergent bilinguals thrive when literacy instruction intentionally builds on their linguistic strengths. In this interactive workshop, participants will explore ten high-leverage instructional practices that require minimal preparation but produce meaningful gains in reading, writing, vocabulary, and oral language. Through demonstrations, collaborative activities, and classroom examples, educators will leave with practical strategies they can implement the very next day.

Session: Between Theory and Reality: Supporting Emergent Bilinguals in Texas' High-Accountability Math Classrooms

Presenter(s): Ana Lozoya – Texas A&M International University/Laredo ISD

Location: WHC 104

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: This session focuses on the challenges mathematics educators face in addressing both the linguistic and academic demands of state assessments. Participants will explore realistic ways to integrate bilingual support into standards-based math instruction without requiring additional instructional time or adding unrealistic demands to teachers' existing responsibilities.

Session: Beyond Google Translate: Integrating AI into Bilingual Education

Presenter(s): Karina Chapa, Texas Association for Bilingual Education

Location: PLG 107

Audience: K-12 Teachers, Inst. Coaches, Bilingual/ESL Specialists

Abstract: Artificial intelligence offers multilingual classrooms possibilities that extend far beyond translation. This interactive session explores how educators can leverage AI to support authentic biliteracy development, strengthen reading and writing, and expand opportunities for language development.

Moving beyond Google Translate, participants will explore practical ways AI can support vocabulary, comprehension, writing, language production, scaffolding, and differentiation while maintaining high expectations for multilingual learners. The session will also address culturally responsive and intentional AI use that honors students' linguistic identities and complements—not replaces—teacher expertise and authentic language development.

Participants will leave with actionable AI strategies they can immediately apply in dual language, ESL, and multilingual classrooms.

Session: Noticing the Unnoticed: Generation 1.5 Students and the Processing of Written Corrective Feedback

Presenter(s): Melissa Bustamante, Texas A&M International University

Location: PLG 106

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: This session presents findings from a study of Generation 1.5 university writers and their responses to direct written corrective feedback. The discussion highlights challenges with error recognition, implications for writing instruction, the potential benefits of audio feedback, and more inclusive approaches to supporting bilingual writers.

Session: New ELPS Implementation in Middle & High School

Presenter(s): Dr. Maria Lourdes Soto, Region One

Location: PLG 219

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: Participants will explore the significant changes in the new ELPS and learn how to implement expectations for language development through stronger alignment to content-area learning and a more intentional progression of language acquisition across listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Session: Building Grade-Level Reading and Writing Through Integrated ELD Instruction

Presenter(s): Eva Sandoval, Benchmark Education

Location: PLG 221

Audience: Teachers

Abstract: This session will support strategies for engaging multilingual learners in rigorous, grade-level content while addressing their linguistic and sociocultural needs. Participants will learn how asset-based instruction and intentional scaffolding can strengthen students' reading, writing, and academic language development while promoting access to grade-level learning.

Session: CBLI and QSSSA in the classroom

Presenter(s): Armando Molina – Laredo Independent School District

Location: PLG 231

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: This presentation will consist of CBLI (Content-Based Language Instruction) which integrates language learning with content narrative, teaching language through subject matter like Science or History and QSSSA (Question, Signal, Stem, Share, Assess). This is a structured interaction framework that guides student discussions, ensuring all learners process questions and participate equitably.

Afternoon Workshops : 1:10 – 3:00 pm

Workshop 1: The Translanguaging Library: Teachers as Community Engaged Storytellers

Presenter(s): Dr. Youmna Deiri, Victoria Camacho, Dr. Erica Guerrero, Texas A&M International University

Location: STC 230

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: This session will present focal self-published storytelling children's books authored by bilingual and multilingual preservice teachers and rooted in community-based languaging practices. The books are created as sites of intergenerational memory work, translanguaging and transdialecting literacy.

Workshop 2: Lift off Learning: Utilizing bilingual, STEM, and literacy integration for elementary teachers

Presenter(s): Dr. Puneet Gill & Dr. Flitz Shine, Texas A&M International University

Location: PLG 219

Audience: Teachers

Abstract: This workshop will discuss a case study on how an in-service teacher experiences a flight lab, and discuss how to integrate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), bilingual education, and literacy. In this workshop, researchers will facilitate an interdisciplinary perspective that is central to promoting STEM, bilingual education, and literacy.

Afternoon Session: 1:10 – 2:00 pm

Session: AI-Powered Objectives: Scaffolding Content, Language, and Tech TEKS for Emergent Bilinguals

Presenter(s): Dr. Roberto Torres, Texas A&M Kingsville

Location: WHC 104

Audience: K-12 Teachers, Inst. Coaches, Bilingual/ESL Specialists

Abstract: With Texas updated Technology Applications TEKS and state emphasis on AI literacy in education, teachers need practical ways to prepare Emergent Bilingual (EB) students with rigorous academic content and essential digital skills. In this fast-paced, hands-on 45-minute workshop, educators will explore how generative AI can streamline lesson planning to create dual classroom objectives that integrate Content TEKS, ELPS language supports, and Technology/AI standards. Participants will practice using AI prompt formulas to design measurable, scaffolded objectives that lower language barriers and elevate student voice.

Session: From Sounds to Print: Distinguishing Phonological Awareness and Phonics

Presenter(s): Vanessa Wallace – Texas A&M International University

Location: PLG 221

Audience: Elementary Teachers (K-2)

Abstract: Explore how phonological awareness serves as a critical precursor to phonics by understanding the progression from oral language skills to decoding, word recognition and spelling. This session is designed for early childhood teachers (Pre-K to 2nd grade).

Session: Where AI Meets the Reader: Practical Literacy Tools Every Teacher Can Use

Presenter(s): Dr. Reşit Doğan – Founder & CEO, Fedu.ai / MentalUP – Finland/Turkey

Location: STC 236

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: Explore Fedu.ai Open Bookshelf through the eyes of a teacher. Discover AI-supported tools, multilingual books, and practical classroom resources that reduce planning time, simplify reading progress monitoring, and help you spend more time doing what matters most—helping children become confident readers.

Session: Beyond TELPAS: Building Academic Language Through Speaking and Writing

Presenter(s): Jeremiah Short – Aldine Independent School District

Location: PLG 106

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: Discover a practical four-day framework that develops academic vocabulary, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing through structured, classroom-ready lessons. Participants will explore strategies that strengthen academic language for multilingual learners, intervention groups, and general education students while promoting confident communication and improved literacy outcomes.

Session: Emergent Bilingual (EB) Scaffolds for Effective Tier Instruction

Presenter(s): Dr. Christina Hernandez, Independent Scholar

Location: STC 231

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: Discover how to integrate linguistic scaffolds and Proficiency Level Descriptors (PLDs) into lesson planning and instruction to support emergent bilinguals. Participants will leave with practical, classroom-ready strategies for designing inclusive, language-rich lessons that increase student engagement and academic achievement.

Session: Beyond Translation: Preparing School Counselors to Serve Bilingual and Emergent Bilingual Students

Presenter(s): Dr. Ernesto Guerrero, Texas A&M International University

Location: PLG 107

Audience: School/District Administrators

Abstract: This session explores the essential role school counselors play in supporting bilingual and emergent bilingual students. Moving beyond translation, participants will examine culturally and linguistically responsive strategies for academic planning, college and career readiness, social-emotional development, family engagement, and equitable access to educational opportunities within comprehensive school counseling programs.

Session: Empowering Bilingual Excellence: Elevating Student Success with Nearpod

Presenter(s): Carla Pineda & Thelma Fraga, Laredo Independent School District

Location: PLG 214

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: Participants in this session will discover how to integrate Nearpod's immersive features (audio responses, visual boards, and embedded media) to lower the affective filter for English Learners (ELs). Explore real-time formative assessment tools, lessons using dual-audio recordings, and Collaborate Boards, Immersive Reader, Open-Ended Questions, and Time to Climb—specifically optimized for bilingual education.

Session: The Power of Interaction: Implementing Seidlitz's 7 Steps for Language Growth

Presenter(s): Juan Salinas, Vanguard Academy

Location: WHC 103

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: Discover how Seidlitz's 7 Steps can transform any classroom into a language-rich learning environment. Through interactive modeling, and practical strategies, participants will learn to increase student discourse, strengthen academic language, and support Emergent Bilingual students across all content areas with ready-to-use classroom practices.

Afternoon Session: 2:10 – 3:00 pm

Session: Biliteracy by Design: Blending Science of Learning & Dual Language Instruction

Presenter(s): Emy Tomita – Texas A&M - Kingsville

Location: STC 231

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: A wise person once said: Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad. The same is true in dual language classrooms—knowing two languages is not enough; skillfully using them to promote deep learning matters. In this session, educators explore how the Science of Learning applies to dual language instruction and experience it through a dual language lens. Participants leave with instructional shifts that strengthen language transfer, honors multilingual learners, and improve academic outcomes across content areas.

Session: The Hidden Signs of Youths in Transition

Presenter(s): Miguel Castillo, MAC Education Strategic Partners

Location: STC 236

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: Sometimes students show signs of homelessness that are difficult to see. These often lead to academic difficulties for students. This presentation will equip teachers on how to recognize these signs and activate the safety nets under McKinney Vento for students in transition.

Session: Objetivos Impulsados por IA: Andamiaje de TEKS de Contenido, Lenguaje y Tecnología para Bilingües Emergentes

Presenter(s): Dr. Roberto Torres, Texas A&M Kingsville

Location: WHC Room 104

Audience: Teachers

Abstract: Ante las actualizaciones de los TEKS de Aplicaciones Tecnológicas de Texas y el énfasis estatal en la alfabetización sobre IA en la educación, La educación actual requiere que los docentes formulen prácticas para equipar a los estudiantes Bilingües Emergentes (EB) con contenidos académicos rigurosos y competencias digitales esenciales. En este taller práctico e interactivo de 45 minutos, los educadores descubrirán cómo la IA generativa agiliza la planificación de lecciones para diseñar objetivos que integran los TEKS de contenido, los apoyos lingüísticos de ELPS y los estándares de tecnología e IA. Los participantes practicarán el uso de fórmulas e instrucciones (prompts) de IA para crear objetivos medibles y adaptados que reduzcan las barreras del idioma y potencien la participación estudiantil.

Session: Language & Literacy: An Effective Approach to Community Transformation

Presenter(s): Mrs. Rosa Esthela Mora, University of Texas at San Antonio

Location: PLG 214

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: Explore how language and literacy empower individuals and drive community transformation. This conference highlights innovative, inclusive strategies that foster education, cultural identity, and social equity, equipping communities with the tools to create lasting impact through communication, learning, and shared knowledge.

Session: Rooted in Culture, Growing in Hope: Supporting Latino/a/e Adolescents Through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Presenter(s): Keanu Roath, Capella University

Location: PLG 221

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: Attendees will learn about culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy and how to apply it to better support Latino/a/e adolescents' culture, identity, belonging, and engagement in schools and other educational settings. Participants will have the opportunity to voluntarily engage in an interactive, reflective visual activity by contributing to a collective tree. Individuals who wish to participate will answer quick reflective questions with a word or short phrase.

Session: Advancing Bilingual Education from a Borderlands Perspective: Language, Identity, and Educational Equity

Presenter(s): Dr. Patricia Garza-Gonzalez, Texas A&M International University

Location: PLG 107

Audience: Secondary Teachers

Abstract: Esta presentación ofrece una perspectiva de «zona fronteriza» sobre la educación bilingüe, reconociendo el idioma como herencia, identidad y poder. Los participantes obtendrán estrategias prácticas, preguntas para reflexionar y herramientas para usar en el aula, con el fin de apoyar a los estudiantes bilingües en las diversas comunidades de Texas.

Session: Think. Write. Talk. Grow. Building Academic Language Through Structured Discourse and TELPAS-Aligned Instruction

Presenter(s): Liset Saenz, Vanguard Academy

Location: WHC 103

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: What if TELPAS growth began with what happens every day in the classroom? Discover how Think–Write–Talk and structured language protocols help bilingual learners organize ideas, develop academic language, and communicate with greater confidence. Participants will leave with practical, cross-content strategies that strengthen Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

Session: Supporting Bilingual Students with Dyslexia

Presenter(s): Francisco Faticati

Location: PLG 106

Audience: Elementary Teachers

Abstract: Emergent bilingual students with dyslexia often sit at the intersection of language acquisition and disability identification, and educators are frequently faced with an important question: Is this a language difference, a disability, or both? This session will examine how to thoughtfully navigate that distinction while maintaining high expectations for bilingual learners. Participants will explore how TELPAS practices can support both language development and literacy growth, and how to interpret student performance through a lens that honors second language acquisition and dyslexia characteristics. The session will provide practical classroom strategies that align ELPS, dyslexia supports, and TELPAS proficiency levels. Educators will also learn and practice the LIFT strategy to strengthen student writing and speaking responses during TELPAS. Attendees will leave with clear instructional moves they can implement immediately to support bilingual students with dyslexia without lowering cognitive rigor.

**Closing Remarks and Door Prizes 3:00- 4:00 pm –
Must be present to win!**

SAVE THE DATE!
Unidos Para Texas Conference 2027
September 11, 2027