



Summer Principals Academy

Teachers College, Columbia University

October, 2024

Dear SPA Students, Alumni, and Friends,

Happy Hispanic Heritage Month! Here at the Summer Principals Academy, we are thrilled to join in celebrating the rich cultural contributions and educational advancements of our Latinx leaders. This month, we're taking time to honor the heritage, diversity, and resilience of Hispanic and Latinx communities, while highlighting the incredible work our graduates and students are doing in schools and educational spaces nationwide.

Whether they are advocating for equitable policies, inspiring future generations, or leading innovative programs, our Latinx leaders are creating meaningful change and setting new standards of excellence in the field. We are proud of their dedication to fostering inclusive learning environments and driving progress in our educational system.

Over the past few weeks, we have enjoyed meeting prospective students and reconnecting with current and past cohorts at various events. It has been wonderful to see so many familiar faces, exchange ideas, and share updates about our growing SPA network. As we move further into this month, we look forward to seeing even more of you at upcoming events!

Thank you for your continued support of the Summer Principals Academy. Together, we are building a vibrant community that champions diversity and educational leadership.

Warm Regards,
Dr. Colette Young (SPA Cohort 2021)
Assistant Director, Summer Principals Academy | NYC
Teachers College, Columbia University

Upcoming Events



IN OCTOBER



2024

**THU
10**

TC CAMPUS TOUR AND INFORMATION SESSION

4:30 -5:30 EST

▾ Teachers College, 525 W 120th St, New York, NY 10027
Room: Russel Hall 17

**FRI
18**

MEET AND GREET

Eat, Mix, and Mingle!

4:30 PM EST

▾ Amity Hall Restaurant
982 Amsterdam Ave, New York, New York 10025

**TUES
29**

FUNDING YOUR SPA EDUCATION: FINANCIAL AID

4:00 PM EST

▾ Virtual

ONGOING

ASK ME ANYTHING OFFICE HOURS!

Learn more about the SPA program! Talk with Dr. Young!

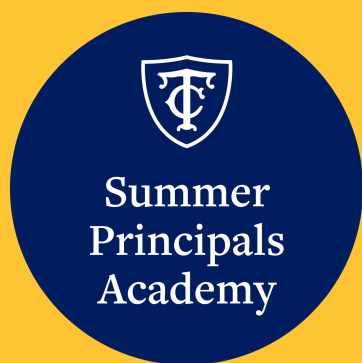
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Hispanic Heritage Month

Written by:
Claudia Mendez

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we find that it was important to highlight the incredible contributions of Hispanic and Latinx communities to our society. This celebration, which runs from September 15 to October 15, is a time to honor the rich cultural heritage, history, and achievements of Hispanic and Latinx individuals.

In this article, we aim to spotlight Hispanic and Latinx educators who have made a significant impact in the field of education. These dedicated professionals not only impart knowledge and inspire students, but they also serve as role models, demonstrating the importance of diversity and inclusion in our educational systems.

By highlighting their stories, achievements, and the challenges they have overcome, we hope to celebrate their invaluable contributions and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

Join us as we delve into the lives and careers of these remarkable educators, exploring how their heritage has shaped their teaching philosophies and their unwavering commitment to fostering a more equitable and inclusive future for all students.



Jorge Alvarado



Jorge's journey into education began with the influence of his grandmother, a teacher's assistant who dedicated herself to helping students, often using her own resources to support those in need. Her selflessness left a lasting impression on him. Though initially pursuing a career in medicine with aspirations to become an eye surgeon, Jorge discovered his passion for teaching through his involvement in tutoring and mentoring during college.

After joining Teach for America, he found fulfillment in building long-term relationships with students, which led him to transition from teaching, to coaching educators and working on curriculum development. Jorge as explained the tension between societal expectations and personal fulfillment, especially as a person of color, where traditional career markers like becoming a doctor can often overshadow other forms of success.

As an educator, Jorge emphasizes the importance of advocacy and disrupting traditional systems, even when it comes with risks.

His drive to complete tasks and push for change often leads to friction with leadership, but he believes true advocacy involves challenging norms and facing backlash in order to support marginalized communities. Jorge stresses that progress requires confronting uncomfortable truths and resisting established structures, even if it means personal or professional sacrifices. His commitment to advocating for systemic change drives his efforts to reshape educational systems.

Jorge stays connected to his cultural heritage through food, music, and language. He incorporates culturally diverse foods, particularly from family-owned restaurants of former students, into gatherings to support the community and share experiences.

He also enjoys attending music festivals, where he reflects on favorite artists from his youth, and finds connection with Spanish speakers, noting that shared jokes in Spanish create a special bond. Despite the challenges of maintaining his cultural ties while working in a different context, Jorge finds fulfillment in moments that allow him to celebrate and share his heritage.



Jorge highlights the importance of Hispanic and Latinx educators supporting one another and collaborating to reform the educational system. He stresses that these educators are uniquely positioned to challenge outdated practices and lead change by drawing from their cultural experiences.

He also advocates for greater visibility and inclusion of Hispanic and Latinx professionals in leadership roles, pointing out the irony of organizations promoting diversity while lacking it in practice. Jorge calls for ongoing efforts to amplify Hispanic voices beyond Hispanic Heritage Month, arguing that true progress requires continuous conversation and action around diversity, not just temporary initiatives.

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Christian Roman



Christian shares his journey as a Hispanic/Latinx educator in the US, rooted in his upbringing in a Puerto Rican household where education was highly valued. Cultural perspectives play a significant role in Christian’s approach to education.

He openly shares his family's story and his own experiences, using them to connect with students and families who face similar cultural challenges. Christian creates inclusive spaces, such as multicultural events and discussion forums, to address these issues and help the community process feelings of identity and belonging.

These initiatives foster dialogue and understanding among students, staff, and families, allowing them to navigate the complexities of balancing cultural expectations with life in the US.

Navigating cultural differences in the US educational system requires collaboration and an authentic approach to teaching. Christian emphasizes the importance of presenting historical and cultural facts in ways that inspire students to reflect on their current situations. By partnering with educators from diverse backgrounds and organizing multicultural events, Christian creates opportunities for students to hear different perspectives and engage in meaningful discussions. This method has been well-received, with students and stakeholders expressing a desire to continue these conversations.

Supporting Hispanic/Latinx students involves providing platforms for them to express their ideas and share their cultural identities. Peer-to-peer discussions and cultural celebrations help students embrace both their heritage and their experiences in the US. Christian also stays connected to his cultural roots by participating in traditional Puerto Rican practices, researching Latinx figures, and attending community events like the Puerto Rican Day parade.

For aspiring Hispanic/Latinx educators, he advises embracing the diversity of their heritage, prioritizing mental and physical health, and viewing both successes and failures as learning opportunities. Christian also advocates for unity within the Hispanic/Latinx community, stressing that embracing all cultures is key to building stronger support networks.

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Betty Salgado



Betty Salgado shared her journey as a Hispanic educator in the US, starting from a non-traditional path. She initially worked as an accountant and real estate agent before becoming involved in education, inspired by her children's schooling and a friend's suggestion to speak to students about overcoming barriers as an immigrant.

Betty also highlighted cultural differences between her home country, Ecuador, and the US, especially in the education system.

In Ecuador, there's a more holistic approach to education, integrating community and family events into school life, which she feels is lacking in the US.

When asked about challenges as a Hispanic educator, Betty spoke about how immigrants are sometimes seen as burdens to the system. However, she works to change this perception by highlighting the value and skills that Hispanic communities bring, especially the ability to speak multiple languages. She also educates people about the struggles that lead many to leave their home countries, including systemic inefficiencies and safety concerns.

By doing this, Betty hopes to be able to raise awareness that immigrants should not be seen as a threat to the system, but as someone that can bring new and different knowledge and experiences that others can learn from.

In terms of supporting Hispanic students, Betty emphasizes empowering them to take control of their learning. She teaches practical skills like using translation tools but encourages students to learn independently rather than relying on others. She focuses on preparing them for life beyond the classroom, helping them become successful, informed citizens.

She also encourages them to embrace the slow process of learning a language, emphasizing communication over perfection, and guiding them to use the tools they already have, like recognizing cognates and familiar terms.

Juan Camilo Trespalacios



Juan Camilo's journey as a Hispanic/Latinx educator in the US began unexpectedly during his time as a Graduate Assistant at St. John's University. Inspired by the passion and dedication of his professors, he discovered an interest in education while completing his Master's in Government and Politics.

After working in both public and private sectors, he returned to school to earn a second Master's degree in Childhood Education and TESOL. As an immigrant and former English Language Learner (ELL), Juan Camilo felt a deep sense of responsibility to give back to the nation that welcomed him and his family. His desire to serve his community and help new immigrants build linguistic and cultural bridges led him to pursue a career in education.

As an immigrant from Medellín, Colombia, Juan Camilo brings a unique cultural perspective to his role as an educator. He draws on his own experiences of overcoming language barriers and adapting to a new culture to inspire resilience and determination in his students.

Juan Camilo emphasizes the importance of “berraquera,” a Colombian term that embodies drive and tenacity, which he uses to motivate students to pursue their dreams and overcome challenges. This cultural insight informs his teaching approach, where he fosters an environment that encourages students to thrive academically and personally, while embracing their cultural identities.

Navigating cultural differences in the US educational system, Juan Camilo emphasizes the importance of active listening, cultural awareness, and inclusive practices. He believes that educators must integrate best practices and disrupt ineffective ones to create a supportive learning environment. Juan advocates for giving voice to the diverse communities he serves, ensuring that their experiences are represented in the curriculum and school culture.



By promoting inclusive platforms and advocating for student self-advocacy, Juan Camilo works to amplify the voices of Hispanic/Latinx students and ensure that their identities are valued.

Juan Camilo has faced challenges as a Hispanic/Latinx educator, particularly around cultural biases and ensuring that diverse perspectives are integrated into the educational system. He addresses these challenges by advocating for more inclusive educational practices and engaging in partnerships that elevate the experiences of Hispanic/Latinx students.

Juan Camilo also supports his students through culturally relevant curricula, empowering them by reflecting their experiences in the classroom. He believes that strong relationships with students' families and communities are crucial, as these local networks provide mentorship and inspiration. To further promote Hispanic/Latinx education, Juan Camilo is involved in initiatives like bilingual education programs and mentorship opportunities that connect students with legislators to encourage civic engagement.

He also stays connected to his heritage through community involvement and participation in cultural events like Hispanic Heritage Month.

Juan Camilo advises other Hispanic/Latinx educators to embrace their cultural strengths, seek mentorship, and pursue leadership opportunities while prioritizing self-care. He hopes for a future where Hispanic/Latinx students have equitable access to resources, representation in leadership positions, and a curriculum that reflects their cultural identities.

Isaac Alcantara



As a first-generation Dominican-American educator, Isaac's journey in education is deeply influenced by his family's sacrifices in pursuing the American Dream.

Raised in a single-parent household with a mother who navigated life in a wheelchair, he was driven by a strong sense of responsibility to honor his heritage and uplift others.

His personal struggles, particularly with unmet educational needs, motivated him to pursue a career where he could support students facing similar challenges. For him, being an educator is not just about teaching, but about serving as a symbol of hope and change for future generations.

Isaac's Dominican-American background informs much of his teaching philosophy. He draws on the values of community, resilience, and collective progress from his upbringing in Washington Heights. These values have helped him understand how to create an inclusive, supportive classroom environment.

He emphasized the importance of building a learning space where students feel a strong sense of belonging, much like the tight-knit community he grew up in. By fostering collaboration and inclusion, he ensures that students can bring their authentic selves into the classroom, which enhances the learning process.



Navigating cultural differences in the US educational system has been both challenging and rewarding. Isaac acknowledges the barriers, particularly regarding representation and equity, but draws strength from his heritage to overcome these obstacles.

By remaining connected to his cultural identity, he wants to provide a bridge between his students' experiences and the systemic expectations of the US education system. Isaac advocates for culturally responsive teaching and mentorship programs that uplift Hispanic/Latinx students, while also working to equip other educators with the tools to create inclusive environments.

Looking forward, Isaac envisions a future where Hispanic/Latinx voices play a stronger role in shaping educational policy and leadership. They emphasize the importance of collaboration and mentorship among Hispanic/Latinx educators to support each other and advocate for systemic change.



Isaac believes that celebrating initiatives like Hispanic Heritage Month fosters a more inclusive dialogue about the contributions of his community and the importance of representation in education. His aspirations are to create a system where students of all backgrounds are empowered to succeed, honoring the legacy of their ancestors and paving the way for future generations.

“
I aim to honor the sacrifices of our ancestors by creating a system that integrates the contributions of Hispanic/Latinx communities and equips all students with the tools to achieve their own version of the American Dream.

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Congratulations!



ALLEN SCHAGENE

Join us in congratulating Cohort 2024 SPA student Allen Schagene on receiving the ISTE 20 to Watch Award, which recognizes individuals who are up and coming and are already making a difference through their work!

[LEARN MORE](#)

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

APPLICATIONS OPEN! SUMMER PRINCIPALS ACADEMY

The Summer Principals Academy is a transformative graduate program committed to developing school leaders and promoting equity and excellence in education through an enriching hands-on curriculum and administrative internship.



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- ☒ Statement of Purpose
- ☒ Application Fee (waived with proof of affiliation)

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Interested candidates should send a resume to aeversleymilton@schools.nyc.gov

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Morocco

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Upper School Principal

Malaysia

Contact: Jonathan Gastel jagastel@hotmail.com

The Summer Principals Academy (SPA) at Teachers College, Columbia University is a transformative graduate program that is committed to promoting equity and excellence in education and overcoming the gap in educational access and achievement between the most and least advantaged groups in this country



tc.edu/SPA