

Achieving Educational Equity for New York City's Newcomer Students

(Webinar, December 13, 2023)

PANELISTS



Natasha Quiroga



Lara Evangelista



Ivonne Mora



Melissa de Leon



Dr. Lisa Auslander



María Rocha-Carrillo



**Assemblywoman
Catalina Cruz**



Alejandra Vázquez Baur



Aqdas Shahnoory

MODERATOR

Natasha Quiroga

Director of Education Policy and InsideSchools, The New School's Center for New York City Affairs



Natasha Quiroga is Director of Education Policy and InsideSchools at the New School's Center for New York City Affairs. She brings almost 20 years of experience advocating for children, youth, and families to these roles. Most recently, she was Director of the Parental Readiness and Empowerment Program (PREP) and Senior Counsel in the Educational Opportunities Project at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, where she developed and successfully expanded national initiatives fostering parental leadership in education. Over the course of more than 10 years' leadership at the Lawyers' Committee, she provided extensive and expert analysis for parents, educators, and legislators on issues impacting the education of students of color, immigrant children, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities. Natasha also served as the first full-time Executive Director of Escuela Bolivia (now Educación Para Nuestro Futuro) in Arlington, Virginia, and advised state and local education agencies on compliance with federal education laws at an education law firm.

Natasha received her J.D. from American University's Washington College of Law and her Master's in International Politics with a concentration in Children and Youth Development from American University's School of International Service. She received her B.B.A. in Marketing and B.A. in Plan II Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Austin. She is a 2017 Presidential Leadership Scholar.

SPEAKER 1

Lara Evangelista

Executive Director of the Internationals Network for Public Schools



Lara Evangelista is the Executive Director of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, an educational nonprofit that partners with schools and districts to develop inclusive and equitable programs for their adolescent, newcomer, multilingual learners. As the child of immigrants and a first-generation college student, she feels passionately about this work. Prior to this role, Lara spent 28 years serving MLL students in New York City Public Schools. This included teaching and leading in three different International High Schools and being a founding team member of The Flushing International High School in 2004. Lara was appointed principal of Flushing International in September 2011 and worked throughout her 8-year tenure to develop a culturally responsive environment for the young people in the FIHS community. Most recently, she was the deputy superintendent for the Consortium, Internationals, and NYC Outward Bound Schools, a 48-school high school district in New York City. Lara holds degrees from Georgetown University, New School University, and is a doctoral student at Teachers College, Columbia University.

SPEAKER 2

Ivonne Mora

ESL / Literacy teacher, International
Community High School



Ivonne Mora has been a high school ESL / Literacy teacher in the South Bronx for 11 years at International Community High School. She has engaged in curriculum development for Students with Interrupted or Limited Formal Education (SIFE/SLIFE) for 8 years. Ivonne is a model teacher at ICHS and mentors new teachers at the school as well as new teachers to the profession. She is a recent Bank Street School of Education graduate in their Progressive Educational Leadership program sponsored through the NYC DOE as Leaders of Education Apprentice Program (L.E.A.P.). In recent years, she has focused her energy in developing equitable structures to support literacy instruction and development at her current school, International Community High School.

SPEAKER 3

Melissa de Leon

Principal, International High School at Lafayette (IHSL)



Melissa de Leon is the Interim Acting Principal at the International High School at Lafayette (IHSL), in Brooklyn, NY. She joined the leadership team as Assistant Principal in July 2022. Prior to joining IHSL, Melissa served as a citywide Instructional Lead for the New York City Department of Education, coaching teacher teams and school leaders from across different districts. In this role, she also supported schools through coaching cycles focused on Multilingual Learner needs and designed literacy professional development for teachers. Before that, Melissa worked in a range of teaching and instructional leadership roles for over thirteen years within schools in the Internationals Network. She began her education career at the International High School at Prospect Heights, where she taught ELA and Social Studies to 9th through 12th graders. From there, she joined the International High School at Union Square as an instructional coach, working with teachers across disciplines and expanding literacy intervention opportunities for 11th-12th graders. Melissa graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. She holds her Master of Science in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages from Long Island University (Teaching Fellows) and a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership: School Building Leader, from New York University.

SPEAKER 4

Dr. Lisa Auslander

Senior Project Director at Bridges to Academic Success



Dr. Lisa Auslander is the Principal Investigator and Senior Project Director at Bridges to Academic Success, a City University of New York-based project at the Graduate Center, where she leads the curriculum, professional learning and evaluation teams, designing and evaluating resources for teachers of Students with Interrupted and Inconsistent Schooling (SIFE) and entering newcomer multilingual students. In this role, she works with schools and districts throughout New York State and other parts of the country on their school improvement plans for multilingual learners. Lisa is the co-author of *School-wide Systems for Multilingual Learner Success: A Roadmap for Leaders* and several peer-reviewed articles.

SPEAKER 5

María Rocha-Carrillo

NYC Program Specialist, ImmSchools



From Torreón, Coahuila, México, María immigrated to the United States at the age of three and was raised in a small Texas Hill Country town where she later moved to San Antonio, TX with her family at the age of 10.

As an undocumented student, she encountered numerous obstacles while seeking opportunities in higher education upon graduating high school in 2005. In May 2012, María received her Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of Texas at San Antonio but her aspirations in becoming a bilingual educator and obtaining her teaching credentials seemed nearly impossible due to her immigration status. In the fall of 2012, María received DACA which authorized her to pursue her career in education and later joined Teach for America in 2015 where she taught in early childhood, elementary, and middle school. In 2018, she received her M. Ed. in Educational Leadership from the University of Texas at San Antonio and continues to advocate early childhood education, dual-language programs as well as providing equitable educational opportunities for all students regardless of their immigration status. In 2021 María moved to New York City to teach in a Montessori classroom setting and has recently transitioned out of the classroom after 7 years.

Currently, María is the Program Specialist for ImmSchools working towards transforming schools into safe and welcoming spaces for undocumented students and families.

SPEAKER 6

Assemblywoman Catalina Cruz

New York State Assembly District 39



Catalina Cruz has the privilege of representing New York State Assembly District 39, one of the most diverse districts in the nation, encompassing the neighborhoods of Corona, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights, as well as parts of Middle Village and Rego Park. Catalina was born in Colombia and came to Queens at the age of 9. She grew up as a DREAMer, living in the United States for more than 10 years as an undocumented American. Catalina was raised by a single mother who, like many immigrants, had to work multiple and menial jobs to support her family. As a single mother of four children, she worked long hours during the week as a nanny, cleaned offices at night and sold tamales and empanadas at the soccer fields on the weekends. Inspired by her mother's perseverance, Catalina has committed her career to fighting for our community to ensure our workers, neighbors and families not only survive, but thrive. Catalina is an experienced attorney and a leader for tenant protections, immigration reform and workers' rights. Prior to becoming the Assemblywoman for the 39th District, she practiced housing law and served in various positions in city and state government, including Chief of Staff to former Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Counsel to the City Council's Committee on Immigration and Director of the Governor's Exploited Workers Task Force, among others. In these positions, she represented tenants in housing court, drafted legislation and implemented initiatives to support women, protect workers and champion small businesses. Since taking office in 2019, Catalina has passed more than 20 new laws to combat food insecurity, curtail the high cost of healthcare, protect aging New Yorkers and so much more. Catalina helped secure billions of dollars for schools, hospitals and libraries within her district through historic state budgets. This funding helped with renovations and the purchase of equipment, as well as to provide services for seniors, families and children throughout her community. Catalina's district office places a strong emphasis on constituent services. Her hardworking staff is proud to have helped thousands of constituents access legal services, small business support, obtain unemployment insurance, health insurance and pandemic assistance, as well as help with mortgage, rent and utility payments. In the community, Catalina and her team address quality of life issues such as garbage, graffiti and snow removal through close cooperation with community boards and city and state agencies. Catalina also conducts dozens of community events yearly, including back-to-school/backpack parties, community cleanups health and legal clinics and so much more. Catalina lives in Jackson Heights, Queens. She holds a bachelor's degree from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a Juris Doctor from the City University of New York's School of Law. She is admitted to practice law in the State of New York.

SPEAKER 7

Alejandra Vázquez Baur

Fellow at The Century Foundation,
Co-founder of National Newcomer
Network

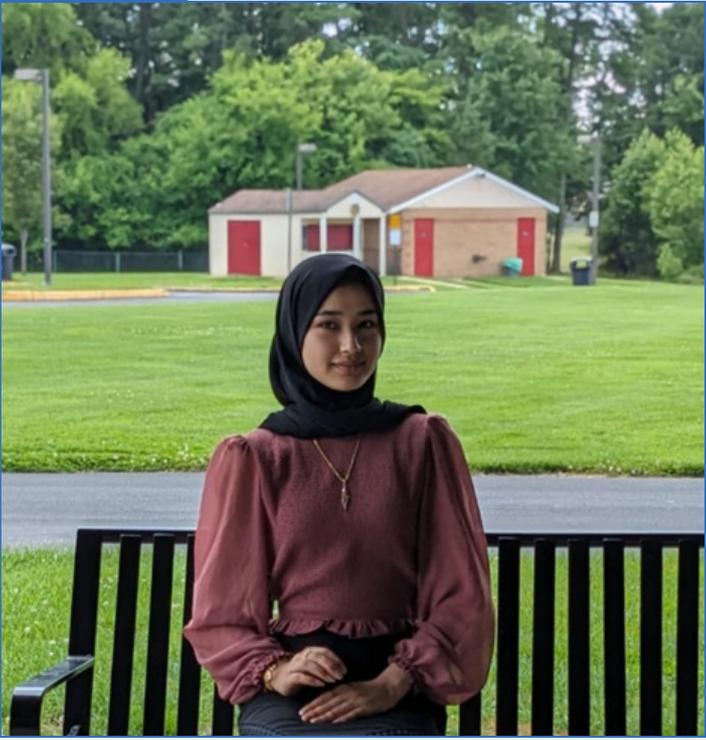


Alejandra Vázquez Baur is a fellow at The Century Foundation, where she manages the Bridges Collaborative, an initiative that champions school integration. In 2022, she co-founded the National Newcomer Network, a coalition that brings together over 100 educators, researchers, and advocates who are invested in developing systemic solutions to address newcomer student inequity in K–12 schools. An inaugural Obama USA Leader and former teacher, her work has been featured by a range of media outlets, including Chalkbeat, the 74 Million, K–12 Dive, Education Week, and POLITICO. Alejandra is a proud granddaughter of Mexican farmworkers and holds degrees from Claremont McKenna College and Columbia University.

SPEAKER 8

Aqdas Shahnoory

Eleanor Roosevelt High School 11th grader, New York City Schools



Aqdas is a 17 years old student from Afghanistan. She has been living in the US for seven months now.

“I had a two-years of interruption in my schooling, but luckily I'm now a junior in high school. I'm really passionate about government administration and human rights. They're my favorite fields of study.”