



**SERC Dismantling Systemic
Racism Conference**

Latino District Leadership: What is the Impact on Students and Communities?

Wednesday, May 8th
Omni New Haven Hotel

Facilitator: Dr. Ivelise (Evie) Velazquez,
Deputy Superintendent,
Consolidated School District of New Britain



Presentation Outcomes

In this session, participants will read about four profiles of Latinx Superintendents and discuss the strategies these leaders used to ascend to and persist in their positions, including their relentless focus on making student outcomes more equitable.

Participants will leave with:

- A definition of Latino Critical Theory
- Examples of the impact that Latinx superintendents have had in CT
- Knowledge about strategies to grow representation among CT superintendents

Four-Part Strategy

Participants will leave with a strategy for advocating for better representation among educational leaders in the state and for understanding how representation matters for the improved educational attainment of Latinx students.

Agenda

1. Introduction to Latino Critical Theory
2. Discuss Four CT Latino Superintendent Profiles
3. Create Individual Action Plan to support the Latino Pipeline





Research Questions for CT Superintendents

1. What were their motivations to ascend to the superintendency?
2. What were their inhibitors to ascend to the superintendency?
3. What strategies did they utilize to persist in their role?
4. Whether their Latinx identity contributed to their leadership style? If so, how?

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit)

(Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Solórzano, 1998; Valdes, 1998)

LatCrit is grounded in five core tenets (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001):

1. *Commitment to Social Justice* – Latinx voices advocate for transformative change.
2. *Centrality of Experiential Knowledge* – Lived experiences are recognized as legitimate sources of knowledge.
3. *Transdisciplinary Perspectives* – Research integrates diverse disciplinary insights and non-academic knowledge systems.
4. *Inter-centricity of Race, Racism, and Intersectionality* – Race and racism are inextricably linked to other forms of identity and subordination, including gender and class.
5. *Challenge to Dominant Ideology* – Latinx perspectives may critique systemic oppression and offer counter-narratives.

Participants are eager to rise in leadership roles to advocate for students, especially Latinx and minority youth. Dr. Jiménez highlights that Latina women pursue superintendency not just for themselves but to support their communities, driven by their understanding of the struggles these children face.

1

Commitment to Social Justice

The participants' testimonios detail their struggles to find their way, including securing networks, building confidence, and overcoming discrimination. Dr. Sánchez's experience with a White mentor who could not understand the systemic nature of her crisis, preferring a "colorblind approach," validates her need for a mentor who shares her lived experience of dealing with racial bias.

2

**Lived Experiences are
Legit**

They combined technical skills with a strong community focus, using effective communication and budget management while collaborating with local organizations, community leaders, and parent advocates to shape school plans. Dr. Colón highlighted how she leveraged virtual outreach during COVID-19 to connect with families quickly, adapting to ensure everyone stayed informed and involved during the crisis.

3

Diverse Insights/Disciplines

Discrimination based on language and racial bias is identified as a top inhibitor. Participants experienced tracking in school based on race/language, professional bias due to accent, and being dismissed as "not looking for a Latinx." Intersectionality is evident in the general sense of being "alone" or "the only one" after gaining professional success, despite having family support for their ambitions. Dr. Sánchez's story of being reprimanded for taking time to see her dying mother suggests her supervisor's lack of understanding stemmed from cultural differences that are often tied to race/ethnicity.

4

Intersectionality of Race

The participants shared their frustrations with systems that hold them back—Ignacio Pérez’s blacklisting for advocating bilingual education questions the support of the educational system for community needs. Dr. Sánchez highlights the flaws of the "colorblind approach" through her experience with her White mentor, showing how it fails to address workplace racial issues. Additionally, many struggle with self-doubt and imposter syndrome, revealing how the dominant system doesn't recognize their achievements, making them feel they have to be convinced to apply for roles despite being well-qualified.

5

Latinx Perspectives Challenge Dominant Culture

Four Composite Profiles of Latinx CT Superintendents

1

Dr. Sofia Jiménez

The Immigrant Story -

participants described their experience learning English, often facing discrimination, and overcoming obstacles.

2

Mr. Ignacio Pérez

Early Recognition to Ascend for Men -

male participants' experiences including early recognition for their skills early and a relatively quick rise through the ranks.

3

Dr. Consuelo Colón

Strategic Networking and Advocacy -

participants described their advocacy and networking as central to their mission to help all Latinx leaders be successful.

4

Dr. Julia Sánchez

Critique of Connecticut -

the participants lived experience included leadership positions in other states, and because of this they were able to critique CT for supports they were missing and had elsewhere.

Four *Composite* Profiles of Latinx CT Superintendents



Dr. Sofia Jiménez



Mr. Ignacio Pérez



Dr. Consuelo Colón



Dr. Julia Sánchez



- **Debrief**

What can we learn from the *testimonios* of these leaders about how to increase Latinx Superintendent representation? And, ultimately improve outcomes for Latinx students in CT?



Statewide, Latinx educators—including superintendents—comprise 5.3% of all educators, an increase of 1% since 2019. Meanwhile, Latinx students now make up 32.1% of the student population, rising from 25.8% in 2019.

Eleven Majority Latinx Student Districts

(EdSight, 2025)

District/State	% Latinx Students	% Emergent Bilingual Learners	% Eligible for F/R Meals	Number of Education Leaders	% Latinx Certified Educators
Windham	72.6	32.0	72.7	29	18.1
New Britain	68.3	20.3	75.8	52	13.4
Danbury	66.1	37.6	56.5	69	9.6
Waterbury	63.7	21.0	79.4	115	10.6
Meriden	62.3	20.0	77.9	59	8.3
Bridgeport	61.1	31.1	96.5	119	11.7
Hartford	57.4	26.2	76.7	128	14.5
Norwalk	57.3	23.4	51.5	92	13.1
New London	58.7	32.4	84.4	27	10.1
Stamford	54.4	19.3	54.3	97	10.2
New Haven	50.5	24.1	75.5	124	12.5

Findings & Recommendations

- 1. *Collaboration Among Stakeholders***
(Collective Liberation)
- 2. *Legislative Changes***
- 3. *Collaboration with the***
State Department of Education
- 4. *Expand the Network Opportunities at CALAS***
(or other State Latinx organization)

1 Collaboration Among Stakeholders (Collective Liberation)

Latinx educational leaders and Latinx leaders across public and private sectors, including health, business, Latinx parent advocacy groups, and Latinx student organizations, come together in CT to **identify points of leverage and develop strategies together** that will improve the educational attainment for Latinx students and advocate for more Latinx superintendents to improve that pipeline. To date, CT does not have a database on the trajectory of educational leaders that can be used for analysis, recruitment, and retention efforts of more Latinx leaders (White & Jerman, 2025, p. 310).

Legislative Changes

Latinx leaders across sectors work with legislators to require **language acquisition programs**, such as DUAL language programs, similar to legislation approved for reading instruction in many states, to improve the educational attainment for all Latinx students and ultimately increase the pool of Latinx superintendents and educators prepared to teach a growing number of Latinx students and students who are native speakers of other languages, including Spanish. (McHugh, 2025). To garner support for the legislation, supporters can propose a policy that sunsets in the future and would require renewed legislation in the future.

3

Collaboration with the State Department of Education

Work with CSDE to highlight the successful stories of districts, schools, and Latinx students who have met or exceeded expectations in the area of academics, attendance, sports, graduation, scholarship, college credits in high school, achievement on state tests, and college attendance. **Create a data warehouse and dashboards that can show trends, areas of persistent growth, and create a mechanism for other leaders to use applied critical leadership**, which “acknowledges the rich and unique contributions that leaders of color offer in serving diverse populations (Rodríguez et al., 2016; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

4 Expand the Network Opportunities at CALAS (or other State Latinx organization)

To include a clearing house of **research-based best practices for the improved educational attainment of Latinx students** along the pipeline that can assist Latinx superintendents to implement more initiatives for equity. (Rodríguez, et al., 2018)

Create a Personal Plan to Improve the Latinx Pipeline

	<i>Collective Liberation</i>	<i>Policy & Advocacy</i>	<i>CSDNB</i>	<i>Professional Networks</i>
Within My Organization				
Outside My Organization				



We Need More Research & Collaboration

You can access my
research [here](#).

Thank you!
Ivelise Velazquez, Ed.D.