



Feeling Good About Education: A Path for Wellbeing, Building Belonging, and Identity

An Online Educational Summit presented by TAMU
Eco-Synergistic Connections Program

2023 TEXAS EDUCATION SUMMIT

SATURDAY, JULY 1, 2023



EDUCATION
& HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

[HTTPS://ECOSYNERGISTICPROGRAM.COM](https://ecosynergisticprogram.com)





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Website Link to Access All Sessions



<https://ecosynergisticprogram.com>

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER



DR. ZAIDA SALDIVAR

THRIVING THROUGH THE 3E'S - EMPOWER, EXAMINE, ELEVATE

How do you stay true to the calling that once inspired you to believe that you had what it takes to become a teacher, a leader, and that individual who would make a difference in the lives of others because education was what truly made a difference in your life?

In this session, participants will be guided through a series of steps that will allow them to reconnect to their calling as an educator. They will focus internally to **Empower** themselves to establish their identity as an educator, and **Examine** their selfie against their identity with an outcome of an **Elevated** You!



DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



DR. ZAIDA SALDIVAR

Dr. Zaida Saldivar has served public education for over twenty-five years meeting the needs of students in small, medium, and large school districts. Her many years of experience in education includes educational consultant, central office administrator, principal, assistant principal, high school Spanish and ESL teacher, and self-contained Bilingual/Dual Language.

Her expertise lies in program design and implementation for improved academic performance of at-risk populations. While serving as English Language Learner director, she led the implementation of Dual Language Spanish and Vietnamese programming along with Sheltered Instruction district-wide. Her latest experience allows her to support administrators at a regional level and partner with schools, districts, and organizations to collaboratively design and implement evidence-based educational programs that deliver meaningful, measurable, and sustainable results.

Her passion for students' educational success is driven by her personal experience as a second language learner in the public-school system and by the impact meaningful relationships played in her accomplishments as a learner. Experiencing firsthand the obstacles a student must overcome, whether it be language barriers, emotional/social barriers, or academic barriers, leads her belief that all students will succeed academically. She is committed to being the advocate and face for the upcoming generation.



NORMA GÓMEZ-FUENTES

Norma Gómez-Fuentes, M.Ed. is currently a Bilingual Dyslexia Specialist and Section 504 Designee/Facilitator for Cityscape Schools. Previously, she has served as a second- and third-grade Dual Language reading and self-contained teacher. Norma has worked beyond the classroom setting collaborating with family involvement, extracurricular programs and activities, mentoring elementary teachers, and providing district's professional development on different aspects of literacy and dyslexia. She earned a master's degree from the University of Texas at Arlington in literacy studies and is currently working towards the Academic Language Practitioner certification (CALP) from ALTA (Academic Language Therapy Association) to become a licensed dyslexia practitioner. Ahe's a volunteer translator and presenter for the International Dyslexia Association - Dallas Branch. Norma's teaching interests include incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy to reach every diverse student and sharing her passion for literacy to students, teachers, and families. She takes great pride in working with general education and dual language teachers as they promote bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism.



DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



MELISSA CARRIAGA

Melissa has served in public education for 15 years as a teacher, district administrator, administrator and teacher coach, and educational consultant. Her areas of expertise are bilingual/biliteracy and sheltered instruction program design, development and implementation; program management; standards aligned cross-curriculum design; academic language and literacy development; and strategies that promote equity in classrooms.

Melissa's personal experience as a second language learner and immigrant fuel her to advocate for the best educational opportunities for students with diverse educational needs. She strongly believes in equity of access to education by equipping teachers with the necessary tools to serve diverse learners and in removing the barriers that stand in the way of a high quality educational experience.

Melissa holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing with a minor in Psychology from St. Mary's University and a Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Texas at Arlington. She holds Texas certifications for Principal, Bilingual Teacher and Special Education Teacher. Additionally she is a Pre-K GLAD Certified Agency Trainer, Apple Teacher Certified and Google for Education Certified Teacher.



YVONNE W. MERRIT

Outreach and Education Manager for the Grant Halliburton Foundation, Yvonne has a passion for helping students, parents, and educators identify, manage, and overcome mental health obstacles. For more than six years, Yvonne was an educator in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Through that experience, she gained social-emotional learning skills to help convey vital topics to students, parents, and educators to help and equip youth with coping skills. Yvonne is committed to educating and spreading the word about mental health and suicide prevention and believes that learning how to cope or support others with mental health conditions can be the first step toward resilience.



DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



MARENID PLANELL
CAMACHO

Marenid Planell Camacho is the Outreach and Education Manager for the Grant Halliburton Foundation. With more than 10 years of nonprofit experience providing services to multicultural families, Marenid is passionate about serving communities in North Texas. She's committed to creating opportunities to educate and raise awareness about mental health and suicide prevention. As an outreach and education manager, Marenid focuses on ensuring the Foundation's life-saving education is accessible to all communities in a culturally sensitive and inclusive way.



MARGARET GISALA
RUTAQUIO

Margaret Gisala Rutaquio was born in Sampaloc, Manila, Philippines. She received a full scholarship from De La Salle University, Manila, where she graduated with a double degree in BS Secondary Education and BA Literature. She taught English for eight years in the Philippines and was blessed with the opportunity to migrate to the United States. She taught ESL in the Garland Independent School District in Texas and completed her Master in Secondary Education with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction in Bilingual/ESL from Texas A&M Commerce through a scholarship grant. After 17 years in the classroom, she moved on to a district-level position as an Instructional Interventionist and then as the Newcomer Facilitator for K-12. Her recent work and passion then concentrated on programming and support for recently arrived English Learners/Emergent Bilinguals, creating and implementing a district-wide intake system to support newcomers, SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education), asylees, and refugees. Her hard work and dedication led her to receive numerous awards, including the District Evidence of Excellence Award and the GEM (Going the Extra Mile) Award. She became a speaker at different National and Statewide conferences in the United States, such as the National SLIFE Conference, Texas Migrant Interstate Program, Texas Education Telecommunications Network, TexTESOL, Region 10, Title III, the Seidlitz Conference, and a guest speaker at Dr. Carol Salva's Boosting Achievement Podcast. She was featured in the book *Motivating ELLs* by Dr. Lorabeth Escalante and invited as a panelist with other experts of newcomers and English Learners/Emergent bilinguals. She continues to pursue her passion for teaching and improving the education system for students.



DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



FAITH CHRISTIE

Faith Christie is a Student Intern for the Eco-Synergistic Connections Program and a College Ambassador at Texas A&M University. She was born in Far Rock Away, New York, but grew up in Houston, Texas. She is currently attending the University of Texas at Arlington studying Criminal Justice and is planning to add Psychology as a minor to help achieve her goal. Faith aspires to become a forensic psychologist because she has always been fascinated with studying people, their behaviors, and their actions. This curiosity stemmed from spending time with her father watching many crime documentaries and shows. When she is not working, she practices music with her group/friends and performs in various churches or volunteers to help with the children's groups at those churches. She enjoys baking, painting/drawing, reading, singing, and gardening in her spare time. One fun fact about her is that she recently picked up crocheting and bread-making.



FATIMA CRUZ

Fatima Cruz is a Student Intern and Student Ambassador for the Eco-Synergistic Connections Program at Texas A&M University. She is currently a student at The University of Texas at Dallas studying Neuroscience, on the pre-med track. Prior to her transfer to UT Dallas, Fatima was a student at Dallas College where she received her Associates in Liberal Sciences. She aspires to go into the medical field and pursue a career in neurosurgery. Fatima is a first-generation college student that carries on a legacy of success from her parents who immigrated from El Salvador and Mexico. She has displayed leadership through various student lead organizations and volunteer opportunities such as Student Government, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the North Texas Food Bank and Dallas LIFE. In her free time, Fatima enjoys traveling, reading, cooking, learning new languages, and spending time with her family.



DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



SUSANA RODRIGUEZ

Susana Rodríguez facilitates workshops and presentations for parents on topics related to socio emotional learning, effective parenting skills, healthy coping skills, and information that can help parents to be more involved in their children's education and lives. Susana has experience facilitating workshops for students and teachers as well.

Susana received her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Texas at Arlington. She was trained in mental health first aid and volunteers for the Here for Texas mental health navigation line. Susana has a passion for helping people to take care of their mental health.

In her personal life, Susana is a wife and mother of four children. She was born and raised in Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. with her family in 2012. She loves spending time with her family eating outside, cooking together, watching movies, playing with their two dogs, and visiting parks.



SOFÍA NÚÑEZ

Sofía Núñez, is an energetic, enthusiastic, and committed educator. She was recognized as Teacher of the Year for Handley El. (2014). Her passion to support and empower families is evident in the programs she oversees which include: ESL classes for adults, citizenship preparation, GED & computer literacy programs for district families, the creation of parent advisory committees, building the capacity of parents to support education, professional development for teachers and district staff. In 2018 she attended the Harvard Institute for Family Engagement. In 2021 she completed her M.Ed in Education at SMU. She has also been a presenter at multiple conferences such as the Statewide Parental Involvement Conference, Title III Symposium, Region 10, Seidlitz, and the Texas Migrant Interstate Program. She believes that working with families in meaningful and empowering ways requires essential conditions that will improve the way we see, communicate, and connect with our families, ultimately helping us build authentic relationships where we can trust and respect each other. Schools, families, and communities must come together to ensure high-quality education so our children can successfully be launched to a brighter future.



DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS



AALIYAH MIRANDA

Dr. Aaliyah Miranda has 18 years of experience in public education. Dr. Miranda has served in the capacity of Dual Language teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal. She graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington where she received a Master's of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies degree, as well as a Doctor of Education in Educational Administration from Texas A&M-Commerce. Dr. Miranda is a mother and wife, she enjoys working with families, students, staff and the community to build strong partnerships to impact student achievement in a positive way. She believes we need to do our best, be your best and try your best to reach all families.

Dr. Miranda is the Senior Director of Residential Services for The Family Place. The Family Place empowers survivors of family violence by providing safe housing, counseling, and skills that create independence while building community engagement and advocating for social change to stop family violence.

Dr. Aaliyah Miranda provides leadership, supervision, and program development for all residential services programming to ensure quality service and coordination of services to adult and child clients impacted by domestic violence. She provides supervision to four program directors (two Emergency Women's Shelter, the Men's Emergency Shelter and the Child Development Center).





ECO-SYNERGISTIC CONNECTIONS **TEAM**



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SESSION DESCRIPTIONS



THRIVING THROUGH THE 3E'S - EMPOWER, EXAMINE, ELEVATE

How do you stay true to the calling that once inspired you to believe that you had what it takes to become a teacher, a leader, and that individual who would make a difference in the lives of others because education was what truly made a difference in your life?

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CREATING A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR STRUGGLING LEARNERS

Participants in this webinar will learn the importance of understanding learning disabilities and how they impact and manifest in our classrooms. Diverse and inclusive classrooms should represent the best context for all learners to achieve high academic standards, regardless of the labels affixed to them by our schools. In this webinar you will receive information about the most common learning disabilities and their socio-emotional impact in academic performance. You will leave with recommendations on how to help struggling learners create a sense of belonging and feel a meaningful part of your learning community.

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TEACHERS: THE CHAMPIONS FOR KIDS!

In this session we will be exploring what identity is and how our personal identity impacts our professional identity. Participants will have the opportunity to learn a little bit about the 8 Dimensions of Wellbeing and reflect on which dimensions are most meaningful for them based on their identity. Participants will also reflect on how as human beings and teachers we have a need for belonging and building relationships. Finally, we will be exploring how effective communication supports building relationships and how we can truly be champions for kids when we keep our identity and wellbeing present and we work on communications in relationships.



SESSION DESCRIPTIONS



CREATING A SAFE SPACE: FOSTERING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN THE CLASSROOM

A presentation that focuses on how educators can create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment that fosters positive mental health for their students. It will also explore the importance of self-care for educators and ways to promote mental wellness. (Also available in Spanish).

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BREAKING NEWS: A MESSAGE FROM STUDENTS

During this session, teachers will receive input on how to help a student with their sense of well-being, identity, and belonging in and out of the classroom. Students answered questions centered around this year's Summit theme and have given their own experiences. The goal of this video is to provide teachers with the understanding and tools they might need to identify a struggling student and ways to help the students as well as themselves.

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NEWCOMER AMBASSADORS: USING INSIGHTFUL INTAKING TO BUILD ON THE ASSETS NEWCOMERS BRING

In supporting language learners, educators are always divergently thinking of ways out of the norm. Supporting Newcomer Emergent Bilinguals/English Learners and Students with Interrupted Formal Education, however, requires a different level of openness, creativity, insight, and innovation. It also requires collaboration, building capacity, and enlightening different stakeholders in order to provide equitable support for recently arrived emergent bilinguals.

The Newcomer Ambassador program provides the first line of intake and support for Newcomers. During this intake, two interviews are utilized in order to gather information on what the students can do and where they need support. These interviews are the Newcomer Achievement Interview and the SIFE Questionnaire. This gathering of crucial information paves the way for a Newcomer Support Plan that ensures that every Newcomer will have a plan catered to his/her specific needs. This video session will show the process and highlight how as educators, we are ambassadors who can use the insights from this process to build on the assets that newcomers bring. This video will also share newcomer/SIFE student stories, as well as ideas for programming and templates for implementation that support Newcomer ELs/SIFE/Asylee/Refugees to ensure that we can ease the transition of these students in US schools and set them up for success.



SESSION DESCRIPTIONS



SUPPORTING PARENTS WELLBEING: TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR TAKING CARE OF PARENTS

With parents being their children's first and most influential teachers; schools, teachers, and community leaders are constantly looking for ways to promote their wellbeing. Using her experiences working with and supporting parents for the past six years, as well as her own experiences as the mother of four emergent bilingual students, Susana will explore some common challenges faced by parents today. Participants will learn practical strategies to support parent's wellbeing and help them to be more involved in their children's education.

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BUILDING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES TO INCREASE TEACHER WELL-BEING

Our jobs in education are increasingly demanding. Despite our love for teaching, more and more educators are feeling exhausted and burned out. When it comes to teacher well-being, leveraging our relationships with families is essential. In this session we will explore the importance of teacher well-being and benefits of engaging with families; we will analyze the challenges for engaging with families; and explore foundational strategies to get your school year started on the right foot with families and start building authentic relationships with them.

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TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE FOR CHILDREN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE: TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Children are the silent victims of domestic violence. Their voices may not be heard and their pain often goes unnoticed. Teachers can play a critical role in preventing and reducing the impact of exposure to violence on children. Teachers can help children by creating a predictable environment, listening to students' stories, and assuring children and adolescents that whatever happened was not their fault.



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