



CABE 2026 LEGACY BOARD AWARD

LAU V. NICHOLS

CABE proudly honors ***Lau v. Nichols***—a landmark decision by the **Supreme Court of the United States** in 1974 and one that forever transformed educational equity for English learners across the United States. *Lau v. Nichols* affirmed a simple but profound principle: equal access to education requires more than equal treatment; it requires meaningful participation.

At the time of the case, more than 1,800 Chinese-speaking students in the San Francisco Unified School District were placed in classrooms taught entirely in English, without any language support. The Court recognized that providing the same textbooks, teachers, and curriculum was not enough when students could not understand the language of instruction. Such conditions, the Court declared, rendered education “wholly incomprehensible” and amounted to discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Lau v. Nichols, together with the Equal Educational Opportunities Act enacted shortly thereafter, established a national mandate requiring public schools to take affirmative steps to meet the language needs of English learners. This decision reshaped educational policy and practice, leading to the widespread development of English learner programs nationwide. Today, approximately one in ten public school students in the United States is an English learner, representing hundreds of languages and cultures. The overwhelming participation of these students in language support programs stands as a testament to the enduring impact of this decision.

Lau v. Nichols is not only a legal milestone—it is a living commitment. For five decades, federal civil rights enforcement has worked to uphold its promise by addressing inequities in identification, instruction, access to advanced programs, special education, and family engagement. As CABE honors ***Lau v. Nichols*** with the **2026 Legacy Board Award**, we celebrate the courage of the students and families who demanded justice and reaffirm our collective responsibility to ensure that every multilingual learner has meaningful access to a high-quality education.

**The CABE Board of Directors is deeply honored to recognize
Lau v. Nichols with the CABE 2026 Legacy Board Award!**



CABE 2026 TRAILBLAZER— VISIONARY BOARD AWARD

GARDEN GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The **Garden Grove Unified School District** is a deserving recipient of the **CABE 2026 Trailblazer—Visionary Board Award** for its bold leadership, unwavering commitment to multilingual education, and visionary investment in culturally sustaining programs that uplift students, families, and community. GGUSD stands as only the second district in Orange County and the fourth in the nation to offer a **Vietnamese Dual Language Immersion (VDLI)** program—an extraordinary milestone that reflects intentional, equity-driven governance and long-term strategic planning.



The 2024–2025 school year marks the successful completion of the district's VDLI expansion and the establishment of a comprehensive TK–6 program, ensuring early and continuous biliteracy development for students. In the same year, GGUSD launched the nation's first **After-School Vietnamese Heritage Language Program**, designed to deepen language proficiency and cultural identity through storytelling and culturally rich learning experiences. Offered in two eight-week sessions, the program culminated in community-centered cultural celebrations at four elementary schools, strengthening school-family partnerships and affirming students' linguistic and cultural assets.

Approximately 150 students participated, generating tremendous enthusiasm and engagement from parents and the broader Vietnamese community. Due to its overwhelming success, the program will expand to five elementary schools this year, despite funding limitations, with the district actively seeking resources to grow to two or three additional sites. GGUSD's leadership exemplifies what it means to be a trailblazer and a visionary—demonstrating courage, innovation, and a steadfast belief that honoring students' home languages and cultures is essential to educational excellence and equity for all. CABE is proud to honor the Garden Grove Unified School District with the **CABE 2026 Trailblazer—Visionary Board Award**.

**The CABE Board of Directors is deeply honored
to recognize Garden Grove Unified School District with the
CABE 2026 Trailblazer—Visionary Board Award!**



CABE 2026 VISIONARY: FORGING THE PATH BOARD AWARD

BONIFACIO "BONNY" GARCÍA

Youth Cinema Project (YCP)

Bonifacio "Bonny" García is a visionary leader whose work has left a lasting legacy in the educational community by forging innovative pathways at the intersection of arts, culture, and learning. As President of the **Latino Film Institute** and founder of the **Youth Cinema Project**, Bonny García has transformed traditional classrooms into dynamic learning environments where students—particularly those from historically underserved communities—develop critical 21st-century skills through filmmaking and storytelling.



The Youth Cinema Project's innovative curriculum empowers students to become confident storytellers, cultivating creativity, technical expertise, collaboration, and critical thinking while honoring students' linguistic and cultural identities. Through hands-on learning, students not only master the art of filmmaking but also deepen their academic engagement, cultural pride, and sense of belonging. Bonny García's work has provided a powerful platform for aspiring young artists to see their voices reflected and valued, while building meaningful bridges between the arts and academic achievement.

In addition to his leadership in arts education, Bonny García brings a unique and holistic perspective through his legal expertise as co-founder of **García Hernández Sawhney, LLP**. This dual lens has enabled him to champion and sustain educational initiatives with strategic vision, integrity, and long-term impact—demonstrating a deep commitment to community empowerment that extends beyond a single discipline.

Bonny García's work exemplifies the transformative power of the arts as a vehicle for educational equity, innovation, and community building. In recognition of his vision, leadership, and enduring legacy in forging new paths for students, CABE is proud to honor him with the **CABE 2026 Visionary: Forging the Path Board Award**.

**The CABE Board of Directors is deeply honored
to recognize Bonifacio "Bonny" Garcia with the
CABE 2026 Visionary: Forging the Path Board Award!**



CABE 2026 COURAGE TO ACT BOARD AWARD

CRECENCIO "CHRIS" PADILLA

(1935-2017)

Crecencio "Chris" Padilla is posthumously honored with the **CABE 2026 Courage to Act Board Award** in recognition of a lifetime devoted to justice, equity, and unwavering advocacy for marginalized communities. For more than four decades, Mr. Padilla served as the guiding conscience and driving force behind **LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) Council 2055** in Monterey County. Affectionately known as the "Godfather of LULAC," he earned this distinction through steadfast leadership and fearless action on behalf of those whose voices were too often silenced.



Mr. Padilla believed deeply that justice is a birthright—not a privilege—and he lived this conviction through relentless service. He did not observe injustice from the sidelines; he confronted it head-on. His advocacy spanned civil rights, equitable education, housing justice, fair redistricting, and police accountability. As a key architect in establishing Monterey County's first civilian Police Review Board, and as a leader in the landmark Garza Consent Decree, he helped secure lasting representation and protections for Latino communities—impacts that continue today through ongoing oversight and civic engagement.

A steadfast supporter of education, Mr. Padilla viewed classrooms and community spaces as the foundation of lasting change. Through scholarships funded by his book, **LULAC Legacy in Monterey County**, and his family's continued support, his commitment to uplifting future generations endures. His legacy is further commemorated by the Statue of Lady Justice at the César Chávez Library—an enduring symbol of his moral courage.

Even in his final days, Mr. Padilla remained in service to others, embodying unity, compassion, and action. In an era when equity and inclusion face renewed challenges, his life stands as a powerful call to courage. CABE is proud to honor **Crecencio "Chris" Padilla**—whose legacy compels us not only to remember but also to act—with the **CABE 2026 Courage to Act Board Award**.

The CABE Board of Directors is deeply honored to recognize Crecencio "Chris" Padilla with the CABE 2026 Courage to Act Board Award!



CABE 2026 COURAGE TO ACT: LEGISLATIVE HERO BOARD AWARD

AL MURATSUCHI

California Assemblymember, District 66

Al Muratsuchi, District 66 California Assemblymember and Chair of the Assembly Education Committee, is a powerful and deserving recipient of the **CABE 2026 Courage to Act: Legislative Hero Board Award**. He has distinguished himself as one of California's most steadfast champions for English learners, immigrant families, and a strong, equitable public education system. His leadership embodies the very essence of this award—transforming values into bold legislative action that protects, empowers, and inspires.



In September 2025, Assemblymember Muratsuchi authored and passed the **California Safe Haven Schools Act (AB 49)**, a landmark piece of legislation that ensures schools remain safe and welcoming spaces for all students, regardless of immigration status. At a time of heightened fear and uncertainty for immigrant communities, AB 49 courageously reaffirmed every child's right to a public education by restricting immigration enforcement on school grounds, protecting student data, and upholding dignity and safety for families statewide.

Assemblymember Muratsuchi has also been a tireless advocate for English learners. Through **AB 2074 (2024)**, he ensured the California Department of Education developed a statewide implementation plan for the California English Learner Roadmap, moving policy into measurable practice. That same year, **AB 2268** exempted Transitional Kindergarten students from ELPAC testing, reflecting developmentally appropriate and equity-centered policymaking. In 2025, **AB 1306** expanded pathways to address the bilingual teacher shortage by authorizing local credentialing programs.

Beyond these efforts, his broader legislative work—supporting educator compensation, early literacy, workforce housing, and accountability—demonstrates an unwavering commitment to educational excellence for all. For his courage, vision, and enduring advocacy, CABE is proud to honor Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi with the **CABE 2026 Courage to Act: Legislative Hero Board Award**.

**The CABE Board of Directors is deeply honored to recognize
Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi with the
CABE 2026 Courage to Act: Legislative Hero Board Award!**