



CARLOS PENICHET TEACHERSHIP AWARD

VANESSA GARCÍA

Region V, California State University, Channel Islands



Growing up as the youngest daughter of three, in a family of immigrant parents. I witnessed firsthand the challenges that come with navigating school, two different languages, the frustration of trying to understand my work, and hopelessness for not being able to ask for help from my family. I am the first in my family to pursue a higher education and my journey has been shaped by understanding and valuing our language, culture, and opportunities. Although Spanish is my first and home language, I did not begin learning academic Spanish until high school. This large gap highlighted the challenges many students face. I had difficulty understanding many things growing up, which motivated me to learn and improve my native language. By not letting go and not giving up on myself, I aspire to teach others to think the same way regarding whatever they are passionate about.

These personal experiences have inspired me to become a bilingual teacher. I want to provide students with the support I wish I had. Bilingual programs are essential because they allow students to maintain their native language while reaching their academic goals, fostering cognitive development, and building self-confidence.

Seeing how culturally responsive instruction and language support have helped our students thrive at my placement in Rio Plaza, I am inspired to do the same in my classroom. My goal is to empower students to embrace their identities, build strong academic skills, and become lifelong learners in a multilingual world.

CABE is proud to present to Vanessa García the CABE 2026 Carlos Penichet Teachership Award!



IVANNIA SOTO TEACHERSHIP AWARD

VANESSA ESPINOZA

Region III, University of California, Irvine



“Si Dios quiere.” Three words my parents have always told me. Words I repeat to myself whenever I feel lost. A reminder that faith and perseverance can guide me through any challenge.

When you ask kids what they want to be when they grow up, you usually hear superheroes, doctors, astronauts, or princesses. These are all wonderful, but mine was different. From a young age, I wanted to help, encourage, and inspire others, as a teacher.

My passion for bilingual education comes from my experiences as a bilingual learner. In school, there were often language barriers between my teachers and my parents. I quickly realized the power of language and how I could help not only my family but also others in my community, translating anywhere it was needed. Being a translator showed me how meaningful it is when someone truly feels heard.

Bilingual programs are important, especially today. They build bridges, not walls. They strengthen cultural identity and support students in developing proficiency in two languages, while recognizing bilingualism as a powerful asset.

I want to be a teacher who celebrates diversity and empowers students. I strive to celebrate their cultures and help them see that their voices matter in both English and Spanish, and ensure families feel included with access to resources in both languages. During my placement, I have witnessed the joy that bilingualism brings to the classroom and the sense of community it fosters. I am excited to bring that same experience to my own classroom

CABE is proud to present to Vanessa Espinoza the CABE 2026 Ivannia Soto Teachership Award!