

# 2025 CCOG EDUCATORS SUMMIT @The Beach



CENTER TO CLOSE  
THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

CSU The California State University

## ROOTED IN CARE: TAKING CARE OF OUR STUDENTS, OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER



**FRIDAY, JULY 25TH**



**9:00AM - 1:00 PM**



**UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION BALLROOM**



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

**LONG BEACH**

College of Education

# CCOG EDUCATORS SUMMIT AGENDA

USU BALLROOM  
FOYER

8:00-8:45AM

CHECK-IN

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

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USU BALLROOM

9:00-9:30AM

**WELCOME**

EDTALK: **NICHI AVIÑA**

9:30-10:10AM

TEACHER PANEL  
MODERATION BY CYNDI TING

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USU CLASSROOMS

10:30-11:15AM

BREAKOUT SESSION 1

11:30-12:15PM

BREAKOUT SESSION 2

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USU BALLROOM

12:25-1:00 PM

EDTALK: **ALEX KAJITANI**

CLOSING REMARKS

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USU COURTYARD

1:00-1:30 PM

LUNCH



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# EDTALK SPEAKER

**NICHI AVIÑA**

**2022 CA Teacher of the Year**



Nichi Renea Aviña is a 2022 California Teacher of the Year and nationally recognized trauma-informed educator transforming classrooms into spaces of healing and resilience. A first-generation immigrant and middle school science teacher in Palm Springs Unified, she integrates somatic education, social-emotional learning (SEL), and sustainable innovation to support academic success and nervous system well-being.

After earning a biology degree from UC San Diego, Nichi began her career in cancer research focused on clinical trials. Inspired to pursue broader healing, she earned a master's in education at UCSD. Her personal experiences with displacement, systemic hardship, and the early loss of her brother shaped her commitment to equity, resilience, and nervous system literacy.

A Certified Community Resiliency Model® (CRM) Teacher and Somatic Experiencing®-trained educator, Nichi conducts nationwide trainings applying neuroscience to education. At her school, she pioneered a STEAM Lab, art mentoring, and the Eco-Hero Program with a sustainable garden, empowering students as wellness leaders.

She co-hosts trauma-informed workshops with expert Maggie Kline and is authoring *Regulate to Educate: An EduProtocols SEL Field Guide*, a toolkit for building connection and resilience.

Nichi's mission is to make schools sanctuaries of healing and joy—one regulated nervous system at a time.

# EDTALK SPEAKER

**ALEX KAJITANI**

**2009 CA Teacher of the Year**



Alex Kajitani is the 2009 California Teacher of the Year, and a Top-4 Finalist for National Teacher of the Year. He is the author of several books, including *Owning It*, which was named “Recommended Reading” by the U.S. Department of Education. His most recent book for new teachers, *You’re a Teacher Now! What’s Next?* is getting rave reviews.

Alex is known around the world as “The Rappin’ Mathematician, and his rap music videos have received hundreds of thousands of views and are being used in homes and classrooms around the world. He has a popular TED Talk, and was honored at The White House. He was also featured on *The CBS Evening News*, where Katie Couric exclaimed, “I LOVE that guy!” (and you will too!).

Twenty years ago, Alex left his lucrative job as a restaurant manager to pursue his dream of becoming a teacher. He earned his Master’s Degree in Education from San Diego State University, and has dedicated his career to teaching high poverty, culturally rich neighborhoods.

A native of southern California, when he’s not talking about education, you can find Alex hanging out with his family, or at the beach surfing.

For more info, visit [www.AlexKajitani.com](http://www.AlexKajitani.com)



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# TEACHER PANEL

## Cyndi Ting

Cyndi Abundabar Ting, a Filipina American educator and community organizer, integrates neuroscience and data analysis into her work as a high school Special Education teacher. A late-diagnosed ADHD parent of neurodiverse children and former teen mom, she brings unique perspectives to her classrooms and workshops. She holds leadership roles with FANHS, NABT JEDI, FACC Cerritos, and Teofilo Coffee Company.



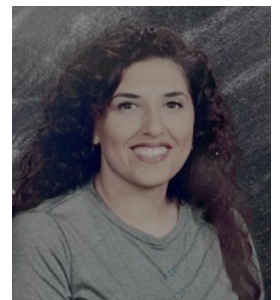
## Tino Gutierrez

Tino Gutierrez is an educator with 30 years of experience supporting diverse learners and advancing equity. In the early 1990s at UCSB, he co-founded C.E.P.A.N. to tutor Latino youth and later taught Sex and Reproductive Education for at-risk teens. After substitute teaching in New York City and school districts in L.A. county, Tino earned his Education Specialist Credential at CSULB and teaches Special Education at El Rancho High School, where he helped launch the Ethnic Studies program.



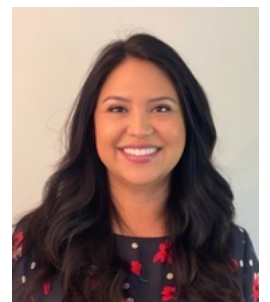
## Marine Karapetyan

Marine completed her BS and MS in Mathematics with a focus on Secondary Mathematics Education at CSULB. She has been teaching for almost 15 years, all of which at inner city/Title 1 schools in Los Angeles and Long Beach.



## Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez

Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez is a second-grade teacher in Montebello Unified School District and a member of the California State Board of Education. With over two decades of experience teaching kindergarten through eighth grade, she brings the perspective of a seasoned classroom educator to state-level policy decisions, advocating for student-centered learning, equity, and teacher voice in shaping education systems.



# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

## Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez

Ballroom

### ***From the Classroom Up: Elevating Educator Voice in Policy Decisions*** (PK-12 Audience)

Teachers are passionate advocates of equitable change. In this interactive session, learn how your classroom experience can influence school, district, and state policy. By means of story, collective policy design lab, and on-the-ground demonstration, participants will identify critical education issues and translate them into actionable advocacy ideas. Leave with the tools to get your voice heard where it is needed most.

**Bio:** Gabriela Orozco Gonzalez is a second-grade teacher in Montebello Unified School District and a member of the California State Board of Education. With over two decades of experience teaching kindergarten through eighth grade, she brings the perspective of a seasoned classroom educator to state-level policy decisions, advocating for student-centered learning, equity, and teacher voice in shaping education systems.

Gabriela is widely recognized for her leadership in literacy, mathematics, English language development, and professional learning. She has co-authored districtwide curriculum in both English language arts and mathematics, with an emphasis on academic language, rigorous instruction, and meaningful access for English learners. She also contributed to the design of performance tasks for California's Smarter Balanced assessments, and has supported the implementation of state standards through professional learning efforts with the California Teachers Association, Stanford University, and the National Education Association.

She founded the Common Core Café, a grassroots network that brings educators together to strengthen instruction and collaboration, and launched the Parent-Teacher Connection Project, which empowers families to support learning at home. A two-time Teacher of the Year and featured voice in California Educator magazine, Gabriela remains deeply rooted in the classroom while helping shape policy to ensure every student in California has access to a high-quality, inclusive public education.



# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

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## Jose Rivas

Alamitos Bay (Adjacent to Ballroom)

### *AI is Taking Over!* (PK-12 Audience)

As educators, we are faced with another challenge disrupting how we teach and engage students in the process of learning. In this interactive workshop, we will explore as a community the following:

- How does AI work?
- The State of AI in education
- AI citizenship and guidelines
- Transforming the classroom into an AI ready learning environment.

We will work together to develop guidelines to help navigate AI use and implement sound strategies that will reduce misuse of AI systems by both students and teachers.

**Bio:** Jose Rivas served as one of the lead teachers for UDL implementation and instructional coaching at Lennox Academy under a LACOE program on UDL. He left the engineering field to teach high school physics and engineering. His contributions include multiple presentations at Infiniscope and the Above and Beyond Teacher Leadership Academy, emphasizing the pivotal role of UDL in educational settings. In partnership with Teach Plus, as an Emergent Bilingual Change Agent, Jose and his educator cohort developed a science literacy framework rooted in UDL principles. This framework aims to enhance student literacy in science and engineering through comprehensive instructional strategies supported by UDL theory and practice. He received the 2017 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science (PAEMST), the Shell Science Teaching Award in 2015, and the Northrop Excellence in Engineering Education Award in 2016. Jose Rivas is also one of ten teachers nationally selected for The Leading Edge AI in Education Fellowship this year.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

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## Maria Rodriguez

USU 304 Hermosa Beach

### ***Building Heart-Centered Connections for Neurodiversity in Classrooms*** (PK-12 Audience)

As the number of students with autism, ADHD, dyslexia and mental health diagnoses continues to increase, educators need more awareness of how to provide optimal support in the general education environment. This interactive session will introduce the Heart-Centered Connections program and share the 7 essential skills educators need to serve neurodiverse students effectively.

**Bio:** Maria Rodriguez is a parent of a child with Autism who has been her true inspiration in her journey. Her background as an educator started as a Special Education teacher. She has continuously been an advocate for neurodiverse individuals both in the classroom and in the community. Learning the impact of inclusive practices have in our nervous system and educating others in authentic relationships has become her passion. As a district leader, Maria focuses on creating trauma informed system change to address disproportionality in discipline for marginalized communities.



# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

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## Sovey Long-Latterer and Carissa Cordero

USU 306 Venice Beach

### *Partnering with Paraeducators* (PK-12 Audience)

Paraeducators play a vital role in supporting the success of students with disabilities, yet many special education teachers receive little formal training on how to work with them effectively. This presentation will provide practical strategies for building positive, collaborative relationships with paraeducators to enhance student outcomes. Drawing on real-world classroom examples and research-based practices, participants will explore ways to clarify roles and responsibilities, provide constructive feedback, foster mutual respect, and ensure consistent communication. Emphasis will be placed on establishing shared expectations, developing instructional routines, and creating a culture of teamwork. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to strengthen their partnerships with paraeducators and create more cohesive, student-centered learning environments.

**Bio:** Sovey Long-Latterer teaches students in extended support needs, ages 18-22 at Fullerton Joint Union High School district. She was named California Teacher of the Year in 2022 for her dedication to this vulnerable population. Sovey has earned her trauma-informed master certification and has been working to modify valuable strategies to be accessible and meaningful for all students. She is a part-time lecturer at CSULB and teaches in the Urban Dual Credential Program.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

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**Jessica King**

USU 307 Santa Monica Beach

## ***Supporting Neurodivergent Students in Traditional Classrooms: Success Plans With/out an IEP*** (PK-12 Audience)

As awareness and research of neurodivergence grows, K-12 educators are increasingly called to support students whose learning needs may or may not be formally identified through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Despite this call, limited time and resources often constrain teachers' ability to ensure students' academic development while managing full classrooms. Drawing from the lived experience of an undiagnosed neurodivergent student, participants will explore how traditional classrooms can serve as neuroinclusive and accessible support systems. During this interactive session, participants will also discuss strategies for administrators and teachers in creating success plans for neurodivergent students with/out IEPs.

**Bio:** Jessica King (she/they) is a recent graduate of California State University, Long Beach, finishing her undergraduate education with two bachelor degrees and two minors in the humanities and social sciences. Motivated by her experiences as a diversely neurodivergent and chronically ill woman, she specializes her activism in disability culture, disability justice, accessibility, and ableism. While pursuing her MA in Disability Studies at City University of New York, Jessica is launching a disability empowerment nonprofit, White Dove Disability Advocacy, to coordinate community-driven projects such as a digital archive, research labs, and a publishing house.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

## Sam Lee

USU 205 Huntington Beach (West Wing)

### **Session 1: *Science and Language: Leveraging students' multiple ways of communicating, cultures, and histories.***

Students bring with them cultural and linguistic resources that can enrich learning environments. However, it's difficult to notice and leverage these practices, especially in science. In this session, I introduce multimodal language surveys to better understand our own and our students' language resources. I describe that language resources not only include what languages individuals speak (i.e., Spanish, Portuguese, English) but also how phrases and drawings are used to represent ideas. Participants will look at examples of completed student surveys to interrogate how students communicate their ideas and identify their language resources.

### **Session 2: *Using language and doing science: Instructional strategies to support multilingual learners' sense-making in science.***

Doing science requires students to participate in science and engineering practices to figure out natural and designed phenomena, like analyzing and interpreting data, and engaging in argument from evidence. However, these practices involve students to “use language” as they make sense of the natural world. For multilingual learners, this is especially difficult when instruction is often presented or expected in English. In this session, I introduce a strategies list to help consider how to adapt instructional materials to support multilingual learners' in “using language(s) and doing science.” Participants will reflect and unpack how the instructional strategies can be used and support multilingual learners. Then, participants will reflect and share how they could use the strategies in their instruction.

**Bio:** Samuel Lee (They/He), Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Science Education at CSULB. Sam was a former middle and high school science teacher in inclusion classrooms for students with disabilities and multilingual students in Brooklyn, NY. He earned his bachelor's in biology and secondary education at Boston College, an M.S.E. in Adolescent Literacy at Fordham University, and a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from Boston College. Generally, Sam's research focuses on partnering with educators to position racialized bi/multilingual students' multiple ways of communication as a part of rather than an obstacle to science learning. Specifically, they are curious about how language can be used to expand how we “figure out” the natural and designed world.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

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## Pavneet Kaur Bharaj

USU 204 Laguna Beach (West Wing)

### ***Making Eighths: Exploring Fundamental but Challenging Fraction Concepts*** (Elementary Audience)

Supporting students in building a conceptual understanding of fractions is perhaps the most challenging endeavor for elementary teachers...and let's face it, the students aren't having much fun either! :( In this session, we will explore how to make the words "fractions" and "fun" synonymous by playing with manipulatives and drawing pictures. Discussions in this session will focus on ideas primarily addressed in the upper elementary grades (grades 4-6).

**Bio:** Dr. Pavneet Kaur Bharaj is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at California State University, Long Beach. Her research centers on how teachers' beliefs, emotions, and identities influence their instructional choices and how targeted support—such as coaching, reflection, and practice-based teacher education—can foster meaningful change. She teaches and mentors future educators, preparing them to create meaningful and student-centered mathematics classrooms. Dr. Kaur Bharaj is committed to cultivating humanizing, culturally responsive learning environments that center student thinking and well-being.



# CCOG Clearinghouse

The CCOG Clearinghouse is a virtual library of searchable, FREE resources all with the goal of closing the opportunity gaps in CA. This statewide repository includes practices, programs, and policies that promote equity and have been demonstrated to improve student outcomes. The peer-reviewed resources are designed to advance the work of educators, counselors, administrators, higher education faculty, and community partners.

Submissions are open for the practices, programs, and policies that are closing the opportunity gap in your schools & organizations.

<https://ccog.calstate.edu/clearinghouse>



**VISIT THE CCOG  
CLEARINGHOUSE**

## CCOG Mission

The CSU Center to Close the Opportunity Gap is a state supported multi-campus initiative with regional networks that will collaboratively learn, work, and leverage opportunities across sectors, to support systemic change and advance PK-12 students' academic success. Established at California State University Long Beach, and in partnership with San Diego State University, California State University Fullerton and San Jose State University, the Center will focus on identifying and refining proven strategies to eliminate equity gaps at all levels of education and will share resources, tools and evidence-based best practices with colleges of education across the CSU and education partners across California.

## What We Do

### Our goals are to

1. Strengthen professional preparation of educators-teachers, education specialists, and administrators;
2. Conduct original research in PK-12 school to identify valid, reliable, and sustainable teaching practices that impact the opportunities and achievement of PK-12 students;
3. Develop and disseminate tools and resources to implement these practices in PK-12 and educator preparation programs.

## Follow Us

