

# **OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR**

# Laylin Flores

For Laylin, teaching isn't just a career—it's a calling rooted in empathy, connection, and the joy of discovery. Her journey began 24 years ago when she moved from Venezuela to Madison, Wisconsin. As she navigated a new culture and language, she developed a deep understanding of what it means to learn, adapt, and belong—an experience that continues to shape her approach in the classroom today.

"I know what it feels like to be in a new environment and to have to find your voice," she says. "That's why I want every child in my classroom to feel supported, valued, and excited to learn."

Now in her 15th year teaching Dual Language Immersion Kindergarten, Laylin is known for creating a warm, dynamic learning environment where students grow in both language and confidence. She connects with her young learners by getting to know their interests and lives, creating a space where curiosity thrives and taking risks is celebrated.

One of her favorite teaching strategies blends movement and music with language learning, turning lessons into lively, memorable experiences. "It's incredible to see students light up when they use new words or express themselves in a new way," she says. "That excitement for learning is what it's all about."

As her school prepares to become an International Baccalaureate (IB) school, Laylin is embracing new opportunities to spark inquiry and give students ownership of their learning. "Every year brings a chance to grow," she reflects. "I learn right alongside my students."

Her motivation is simple yet powerful: helping students discover their potential. "For many of my students, kindergarten is their very first classroom experience," she says. "I want it to be a joyful and inspiring one, full of confidence, curiosity, and kindness." When asked what student success looks like, she doesn't hesitate. "It's when children feel proud of themselves, when they know they are capable and loved."

Receiving the Outstanding Educator Award came as a humbling surprise. "Our school is full of amazing teachers," she says. "To be recognized among them means so much. It reminds me that the love, care, and effort we pour into our students truly matter."

Outside the classroom, Laylin is an active member of her school's leadership team and a proud mom of two children, Isabella and Benjamin. Her commitment to both family and community is at the heart of everything she does.

"Teaching allows me to be part of something bigger," she says with a smile. "Watching students grow and knowing I've helped them believe in themselves is the greatest reward of all."