

## The Canizales Group - Meet Our Team

### Mayra Canizales Cruz (she/hers/ella) - Founding Partner School Leadership & Dual Language Expert

Mayra Canizales Cruz is a Dual Language and English Language Learner expert and national award-winning instructional leader. Most recently served as the principal of Oyster-Adams Bilingual School in DC Public Schools from 2014-2021 where she was an equity-driven school leader, ultimately leading the school to be awarded a 2020 National Blue Ribbon in the Exemplary High Performing Schools category. In 2020, she was also recognized by the US Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon principal, being awarded the coveted Terrel H. Bell awards for outstanding school leadership. Sra. Cruz has served the students of Washington, DC since 2009 and held roles of teacher, instructional coach, and assistant principal. In 2012, she was awarded the Excellence in Teaching Award by DCPS. She is now a Founding Partner of The Canizales Group and teaches as an adjunct professor at Georgetown University.



Sra. Cruz was trained for school leadership through New Leaders and was a graduate of cohort 13 of the National Aspiring Principals program. She has also served as a teaching faculty member for the Institute for Recruitment of Teachers at the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, a Teaching for Results seminar leader for The New Teacher Project, and a curriculum and instruction fellow for the DCPS Teachers Central to Leadership program. She holds a bachelor's degree in American studies and urban education policy from the University of California, Berkeley, and a master's degree in elementary education from Boston College. Educational equity work resonates deeply with Sra. Cruz, as a daughter of immigrants, a first-generation college graduate, a former English language learner, and a product of bilingual school programming. Sra. Cruz is a native Spanish speaker and a balanced, bi-literate bilingual. She grew up in Hayward, California, and lives in Washington DC with her husband and sweet pup, Tank. In her free time, she enjoys cooking, working out on her Peloton, and reading young adult literature.

- ❖ **14 years experience:** PreK-12th, Teacher Coach, Assistant Principal, & Principal
- ❖ **Credentials:** MA in Elementary Education, Multi-subject Teaching Credential, School Administrator Credential, and Teaching English Language Learner Certificate (TELL)
- ❖ **Education:** UC Berkeley (BA), Boston College (MA, Credential, TELL)
- ❖ **Programs and Recognition:** National Blue Ribbon 2020 Awardee, New Leaders, cohort 13

## Yanira Canizales Wandera (she/hers/ella) - Founding Partner School Leadership, School Design & Community Engagement Expert

Since graduating from UC Berkeley as a first-generation college student, Yanira Canizales Wandera has dedicated the past 20 years to creating more equitable outcomes for all students in Bay Area Public Schools, specifically in Hayward and Oakland. Her passion for advocacy began as a youth advocate with La Familia Counseling where she actively participated in real-time justice movements, including local student walk-outs demanding school change as well as fighting statewide racist policies such as prop 187. As an adult, she has served in multiple roles in schools from the ground up, including beginning her career as an Instructional Aide, and then moving on as a Teacher, Assistant Principal, Head of School, and Founding Principal. As the founding principal of an innovative school model in Oakland focused on providing students/families/staff the conditions necessary for belonging and agency, her school was recognized within the first two years of opening its doors for accelerated growth in ELA and Math for underserved students.



In addition to her proximity within school systems, Yanira has also zoomed out to the broader educational landscape as Managing Director of an Oakland educational advocacy non-profit. In this role, she has focused on shifting power by ensuring equity efforts via policy and system-wide practices are led by the grassroots (families, teachers, community leaders). She is now a Founding Partner of The Canizales Group.

Sra. Canizales was trained for school leadership through New Leaders and was a graduate of cohort 8 of the National Aspiring Principals program. She has also served as a facilitator of adults as the founder of the New Leaders' Emerging Leader Program aimed at supporting teacher leaders to sharpen their adult leadership skills while via a job-embedded leadership program. She holds a bachelor's degree in Social Welfare and a minor in Education from the University of California, Berkeley, and a BCLAD teacher credential and master's degree in teaching from the Center for Justice from the University of San Francisco.

Educational equity is interwoven with Yanira's personal story, as a daughter of immigrants, a first-generation college graduate, a former English language learner, a mother of blacktino children, and a product of bilingual school programming. She grew up in Hayward, California, raised her family in East Oakland and now lives in Brentwood with her husband and three children. In her free time, she enjoys being a skateboarding and dance mom and routinely trying new foods at her local farmer's market.

- ❖ **19 years experience:** K-12 Teacher, Coach, Dean of Instruction, Founding Principal, Head of School, & Managing Director
- ❖ **Credentials:** MA in Teaching, School Administrator Credential, Multi-subject Teaching Credential, and Bilingual Crosscultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD)
- ❖ **Education:** UC Berkeley (BA), University of San Francisco (MA, Credential, BCLAD)
- ❖ **Programs and Recognition:** New Leaders, cohort 8



## Dr. Claudia Canizales Aguilar (she/hers/ella) - Founding Advisor College Access, Family Engagement & Adult Education Expert

Over the last 20 years, through her capacity as a college professor, counselor, researcher, and college access practitioner and trainer, Dr. Claudia Canizales Aguilar has worked directly with students, families, teachers, counselors, and administrators throughout the K-16 pipeline to ensure that students meet their academic and personal goals.

Dr. Aguilar's expertise lies in program development, specifically school counseling and college access programs that are equitable, systematic, student and family-centered, and effective in ensuring that students have a solid and actionable post-secondary education plan.

Because the work of preparing students for their college and career of choice can't be done effectively without strategic family engagement, Dr. Aguilar has dedicated significant efforts in creating family engagement programs that move away from the educator-as-expert parent-meeting model by embracing parents' hopes and experiences as central to any conversation regarding their children's education and future.

Dr. Aguilar has extensive experience in designing adult education and professional development opportunities in the areas of school counseling and college advising. She is passionate about designing and facilitating short-term and ongoing professional development, online asynchronous courses, and webinars to support the capacity building of school counselors and college access professionals.

- ❖ **20 years experience:** 4th-12th & Graduate School Counselor, HS Dean of Counseling, Professor, & Director of Training and Curriculum
- ❖ **Credentials:** Doctorate in Education, Masters in Counseling Psychology, and a Personnel Pupil Services Credential
- ❖ **Education:** UC Berkeley (BA), University of San Francisco (PPS, MA, Ed.D)

