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Manzano Mesa Elementary Principal and Emerson Elementary School Teacher Recognized at Community Schools National Forum

Peggy Candelaria and Amanda Reyes Honored for Leadership

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – The Coalition for Community Schools will present the Community School Educator Leadership Award to Peggy Candelaria, principal of Manzano Mesa Elementary School, and to Amanda Reyes, teacher at Emerson Elementary School, at the *Community Schools National Forum*. The **award ceremony** will take place **Thursday, April 7 from 6-8p.m. at the Albuquerque Museum**.

The Community School Educator Leadership Award is presented to educators of excellence for their work in supporting and growing community school efforts. These educators are also models to others in their work on community school partnerships and their impact on students and families.

Principal Peggy Candelaria of Manzano Mesa Elementary School is one of two New Mexicans who will receive this prestigious award. Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. School and district leaders collaborate with organizations to bring a multitude of academic, health, and social services into schools and accessible to the community. Candelaria has been a driving force behind bringing these services to her students and their families, launching the largest afterschool program in the district, as well as the Community School Council with 29 organizations and individuals, which serves as the non-core academic decision making body for Manzano Mesa.

“Because of Ms. Candelaria, Manzano Mesa Elementary is a great example of how a community school strategy can be successful,” said Martin J. Blank, president of the Institute for Educational Leadership and director of the Coalition for Community Schools. ***“She has***

innovative vision for her school, students, and families, and has created a strong network of service providers and partners to help her students thrive.”

Under Candelaria’s leadership, Manzano Mesa Elementary has developed a robust and comprehensive menu of services that it offers to its students and families. She was one of the first principals to receive a grant from the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Community School Partnership to develop an on-the-ground community schools strategy, which has made the creation and growth of many of Manzano Mesa’s programs possible. Candelaria helped to start the Homework Diner program, an afterschool family engagement program that brings parents into schools one evening every week to help their children with homework and other academic opportunities for the whole family. Homework Dinners have been highlighted on the NBC Nightly News twice, and have expanded to 11 Albuquerque schools and 11 states. A strong supporter of family engagement, Candelaria was instrumental in developing a volunteer-run childcare center and a partnership with Spanish-speaking parents, and it is now in the process of being licensed by the State of New Mexico as a Pre-School Co-Op.

Amanda Reyes, teacher at Emerson Elementary School, will also be honored with the Community School Educator Leadership Award. ***“Ms. Reyes is a shining example of how teachers are a key part of the community schools strategy,”*** said Martin J. Blank, president of the Institute for Educational Leadership and director of the Coalition for Community Schools. ***“Her dedication to Emerson students and their families has a lasting impact on their academic success and her behind-the-scenes work coordinating community school activities and efforts at the school is an important factor in Emerson’s success.”***

Reyes is a leader of much of the community schools work being done at Emerson Elementary in partnership with Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Community Schools Partnership. She has been an integral part of Emerson’s efforts to reduce the school’s student mobility, which saw a 15 percent reduction in one year. She also assisted in surveying 100 percent of students for afterschool programs, which led to a 300 percent increase in participation, and schedules teachers and learning activities for the school’s weekly Homework Diner. In addition, Reyes co-facilitates the Community School Council meetings with the school’s Community School Coordinator to set goals, objectives, and action steps for its continued growth. Through the Council’s work, teachers and principals regularly collaborate with families and local organizations such as the neighborhood association, Albuquerque Public Schools district leaders, the local Boys & Girls Club, the University of New Mexico Health Clinic, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Streetwise, Inc.

The awardees will be recognized at the 2016 Community Schools National Forum, a gathering of more than 1,700 community school advocates, educators, and partners in Albuquerque, NM. The Forum is co-sponsored by the [Coalition for Community Schools](#) at the [Institute for Educational Leadership](#) (IEL) together with the [Albuquerque/Bernalillo Community Schools Partnership](#).

The theme of this year's Forum, "*Rising Together: Learning Across School, Family, and Community*," reflects the belief of the Coalition that in community schools all children can thrive, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or economic status. In fact, as leaders "*rise together*," community schools pay particular attention to building on the assets of children and youth in families facing the greatest inequities. That is why equity and opportunity for all has been a central tenet of the Coalition's work.

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About the Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education K–16, youth development, community planning and development, higher education, family support, health and human services, government, and philanthropy as well as national, state, and local community school networks. The Coalition advocates for community schools as a strategy to leverage local resources and programs, changing the look and feel of the traditional school structure to best meet the needs of children and families in the 21st century.

About the Institute for Educational Leadership

For a half-century, the Institute for Educational Leadership has championed the need for leaders at all levels to shake off their institutional constraints and work across boundaries to address the needs of young people and their families. Bound by no constituency, IEL serves as a catalyst that helps policymakers, administrators, and practitioners at all levels to bridge bureaucratic silos and undo gridlock to improve outcomes for all young people and their families. The work of IEL focuses on three pillars required for young people and their communities to succeed: Involving the broader community with public education to support the learning and development of young people; building more effective pathways into the workforce for all young people and supporting the transition to adulthood; and preparing generations of leaders with the know-how to drive collaborative efforts at all levels.

About the ABC Community School Partnership

The Albuquerque - Bernalillo County (ABC) Community School Partnership is a unique network of leaders across multiple agencies and sectors: The City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, Albuquerque Public Schools, the United Way of Central New Mexico, and the Albuquerque Business Education Compact. As the united voice of the community schools movement in New Mexico, ABC promotes collaboration and cooperation, and amplifies the shared vision of community schools as the path forward to improving child well-being, helping students to learn, building stronger families, and creating healthier communities. For more information: <http://www.bernco.gov/community-services/about-albuquerque-community-schools.aspx>.

