

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dr. Carolyn Castillo Honored with AESA's Women of Inspiration in Leadership Award

Ripon, WI — The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESa) is proud to announce Dr. Carolyn Castillo, Deputy Director for Administrative and Instructional Services at Education Service Center, Region 20 (ESC-20), as the recipient of the 2025 Women of Inspiration in Leadership Award.

Dr. Castillo has dedicated over two decades to advancing educational equity across South Texas. Her leadership at ESC-20 spans oversight of more than 300 employees and \$60 million in funding, supporting 94 school districts and charters that serve over 500,000 students across 18 counties.

Dr. Castillo's impact reaches far beyond her region. As Chairwoman of the Texas ESC CORE Group, she has led statewide coordination among all 20 Education Service Centers, working closely with the Texas Education Agency to implement key initiatives and shape policy. Her peers nominated her for this role, recognizing her strategic insight and collaborative leadership.



Carolyn Castillo

"Dr. Castillo is an educator who performs at an exceptionally high level and inspires other women in the profession," said Dr. Jeff Goldhorn, Executive Director of ESC-20. "She exemplifies the leadership characteristics she teaches and is a humble, thoughtful leader whose impact is far and wide."

Her commitment to leadership development is evident in her work with the ESC-20 Leadership Development Academy, where she trains new leaders using Franklin Covey's "The 4 Essential Roles of Leadership." She also co-directs the Transformational Leadership Development Series with the San Antonio Women's Chamber of Commerce, helping aspiring leaders cultivate executive-level skills.

Dr. Castillo's influence extends to statewide initiatives, including her role in developing and implementing the *Effective District Framework* in partnership with the Texas Education Agency. Her efforts have positioned ESC-20 as a host for this systemic improvement model, supporting districts across Texas.

"Dr. Castillo genuinely invests in the growth of others," said Laura Strube, Deputy Director at ESC Region 15. "She nurtures those around her, even when their path leads beyond the organization. Her leadership has inspired a new generation of women leaders, including seven staff members who earned doctorates under her mentorship."

AESA congratulates Dr. Carolyn Castillo on this well-deserved honor and celebrates her enduring contributions to leadership, equity, and educational service.