

West Spanish Teacher Named State's Global Educator of the Year

New Berlin, Wis. – New Berlin West Spanish teacher Jessica Santiago was named the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's 2024-25 Global Educator of the Year.

With 23 years teaching middle and high school Spanish, Santiago has distinguished herself as a passionate and inspiring leader, advocate, and model for global education in her school community and across the state. Her teaching goes beyond language instruction – she also teaches about the world through language, helping students become globally competent citizens.

"We're incredibly proud of Ms. Santiago not only for this recognition, but for the work she does to infuse her love of the Spanish language and culture into our school and community," Superintendent Joe Garza said. "Her students no doubt benefit from the language skills she shares with them, and the real-world experiences she provides."

Santiago was recognized May 20 at an event hosted at West and attended by school and district officials, State Superintendent Jill Underly and other DPI representatives.

As a recent participant in a U.S. Department of Education-funded Global Curriculum development Program, Santiago, through collaboration with other global educators, helped design an inquiry-based, standards-aligned Spanish unit to engage students with real-world environmental issues around the globe. She credits the experience as pivotal in motivating her to bring authentic, real-world content into her classroom.

Santiago also serves as president of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese and is a trained facilitator in global learning. Her commitment to professional growth and community partnership is evident in everything she does – from designing curriculum to building inclusive, globally aware school communities.

"Ms. Santiago exemplifies the very best of what it means to be a global educator," Underly said. "She ignites curiosity, encourages critical thinking, and creates meaningful opportunities for students to connect their learning to the world. Her leadership, both in and out of the classroom, is an inspiration. I am proud to recognize her as the Global Educator of the Year."

As the 2024-25 Global Educator of the Year, Santiago will receive a Council on International Educational Exchange scholarship to represent Wisconsin on a global site visit to Rome, Italy.

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