



**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 8:45 a.m. ET MAY 6, 2021**

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## **Nevada Special Education Teacher Named 2021 National Teacher of the Year**

**Washington, D.C. (May 6, 2021)** – The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) today announced that Juliana Urtubey, an elementary school special education teacher, is the 2021 National Teacher of the Year.

Urtubey, an educator for 11 years, teaches at Kermit R. Booker, Sr. Innovative Elementary School in Las Vegas, where she serves as a co-teacher in pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade special education settings and as an instructional strategist developing supports to meet students' differing academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs.

Known as "Ms. Earth" for her efforts to beautify schools and unify the community through murals and gardens, Urtubey has helped raise funds for garden programs at two Las Vegas schools. In one program, the garden was tended to by the student "Garden Gnomies" club and offered opportunities for innovative student learning and intergenerational learning and connections to the wider community.

"I am tremendously grateful and honored to be recognized as the 2021 National Teacher of the Year," Urtubey said. "The privilege and honor to represent our nation's brilliant students, diverse families, and resilient educators brings me unending joy. I am strongly committed to leveraging our collective power to build educational spaces where all children may thrive. By centering the strengths of our children and families, we create more just systems for all students, valuing their diverse cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and experiential gifts."

CCSSO's National Teacher of the Year Program identifies exceptional teachers across the country, recognizes their effective work in the classroom, engages them in a year of professional learning, amplifies their voices, and empowers them to participate in policy discussions at the state and national levels.

As the 2021 National Teacher of the Year (NTOY), Urtubey will spend a year representing educators and serving as an ambassador for students and teachers across the nation. She advocates for a "joyful and

just education” for all students, one that is inclusive and celebratory of all students’ identities, families and communities.

“Juliana Urtubey exemplifies the dedication, creativity and heart teachers bring to their students and communities,” said CCSSO Chief Executive Officer Carissa Moffat Miller. “CCSSO has been honored to support outstanding educators through the National Teacher of the Year program for 70 years. I congratulate Juliana Urtubey and look forward to her leadership and advocacy for a ‘joyful and just’ education for all students.”

Every year, exemplary teachers from each state, U.S. extra-state territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity are selected as State Teachers of the Year. From that group, the National Teacher of the Year is chosen by a selection committee composed of 16 renowned education organizations.

The selection committee said in a statement: “Juliana is a dedicated educator who has fostered growth in her students and a greater connection with her community through her innovative school garden program. She aims to lift up others, a true example of a teacher with an asset mindset who aims to help people see their own strengths. Juliana is also an expert in differentiating teaching practices for diverse student backgrounds and needs. A thoughtful and authentic advocate for the students and community she serves, Juliana has the expertise, passion and heart to serve as the 2021 National Teacher of the Year.”

Urtubey is the first Latinx National Teacher of the Year since at least 2005 and the first National Teacher of the Year from Nevada. She is a National Board Certified Teacher.

“Juliana is an exceptional teacher leader and we are so proud to have her represent educators from Nevada and across the nation,” said Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction Jhone Ebert. “It is fitting that Juliana is Nevada’s first-ever National Teacher of the Year, as she exemplifies the values of equity and inclusivity that drive our collective work to support students and families. Juliana celebrates and values the knowledge and experiences that students bring to the classroom, which contributes to her keen ability to understand and meet the academic and social-emotional needs of children. Juliana’s work has made an immeasurable difference in the lives of students, families, staff, and educators in Nevada, and we are excited for this opportunity to expand her positive influence and impact.”

The National Teacher of the Year Program is sponsored by Curriculum Associates, ETS, Google for Education, NWEA, Pearson, Verizon Business, and Voya Financial.

The finalists for the 2021 National Teacher of the Year are John Arthur (Utah), Alejandro Diasgranados (District of Columbia), and Maureen Stover (North Carolina). You can read more about the finalists [here](#).

Learn more about Juliana Urtubey (HOO-lee-on-a ER-two-bay), including her biography and photos, at [www.ntoy.org](http://www.ntoy.org). Urtubey is also available for interviews in Spanish.

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*The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Bureau of Indian Education, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major*

*educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.*