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Dr. Sharon L. Contreras, CEO of The Innovation Project, Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award

[Raleigh, NC] – In recognition of a distinguished career in public education, Dr. Sharon L. Contreras, CEO of [The Innovation Project](#) (TIP), is the 2024 recipient of the [Voice4Equity](#) Lifetime Achievement Award, an award presented each year honoring outstanding career accomplishments in public education.

In announcing the Lifetime Achievement Award, Voice4Equity, a national organization committed to promoting equity in public education, celebrated Dr. Contreras, who “has achieved herculean feats around funding and access for the children of North Carolina.” They further noted her “commitment and transformational leadership has inspired many women to lead boldly for social justice.”

“It is an incredible honor to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Flamboyan Group,” said Dr. Contreras. “This recognition is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the many educators and communities with whom I have had the privilege to serve. Education is freedom, and I will continue to advocate for policies and practices that ensure every single student has the opportunity to succeed.”

With a career spanning more than 30 years in public education, Dr. Contreras has held transformative leadership roles, including two superintendencies. She became the first woman of color to lead one of New York’s “Big 5” school systems, and the first woman and Latina to lead Guilford County Schools in North Carolina. She was the first Latina superintendent in the state of North Carolina.

Throughout her career, Dr. Contreras has championed policies, systems and structures aimed at closing achievement gaps that continue to persist from generation to generation. She has developed and implemented innovative initiatives that improve outcomes for all students. Under her leadership, Dr. Contreras has expanded career technical education programming, advanced placement offerings, and dual enrollment opportunities, ensuring improvement of life outcomes for students *and their parents*.

Dr. Contreras' vision for education extends beyond traditional boundaries, emphasizing the importance of innovation, accountability, equitable resource allocation, modern school facility design, and leveraging technologies to enhance operational efficiency and academic outcomes — empowering students and educators alike.

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About The Innovation Project:

The Innovation Project (TIP) is a collaborative of forward-thinking education leaders unleashing student potential and shaping the future of education. Comprised of 23 public school districts from across North Carolina, TIP serves as a catalyst for change through innovation, collaborative partnerships, and pioneering initiatives.

For more information about The Innovation Project and its initiatives, visit their website tipnc.org.