

Latinxs and Hispanics in the Mathematical Sciences



Manuela Gilbride

K-8 Teacher, Wrightson Ridge K-8

Manuela was raised in Mexico, in the small coastal town of Desemboque, where education was not valued, especially not for women. She couldn't attend school unless she finished her chores. Many days, she did not go. This was her life until 2nd grade when she came to the United States in hopes of a better future. She was plunged into a school where no one looked like her, spoke her language, or acknowledged her lack of education. The language/cultural differences were overwhelming. But despite these barriers, she found a common language: math. She was able to engage during hands-on math activities because numbers did not need to be translated. She felt successful for the first time in an educational setting.

Manuela did not immediately pursue college because of her lack of self-esteem as a learner. After four years of low paying jobs, she wanted more. Once in college, she found her strength and future in math/science education. Manuela has been teaching in the elementary field for 14 years with an endorsement in Math and ELD. She finds that, just like her younger self so long ago, her ELD students can break the language/cultural barriers through math and science. Because of her past, she knows how to reach these ELD students and others. Her future goals are to make a difference in students' lives through math and science. She wants to be a role model for all her students, but especially for her students that are both Hispanic and female. Through her passion, gift of understanding, and vision, she is making a difference.

Manuela's favorite thing about her job as an educator/teacher is that she makes a difference every day in her students' lives. She prides herself on designing creative, hands-on lessons that are fun for her as well as her students. She sees herself as a role model for her ELD students and families. Manuela's advice to those that are considering a career in the K-12 education field is that "you need to be ready and willing to handle constant change, be strong enough to not doubt yourself, and always be open to new ideas. Building a community of learners is as important as the academics, if not more. In education, it is critical to be able to learn from your peers and be an efficient part of a school community. Manuela's philosophy as an educator is that if you follow your heart, it will lead you to new adventures.

"I strongly believe that Hispanic Heritage Month is important to celebrate the culture of Hispanics in our nation. As a Latina, born in Mexico, it makes me proud of my roots to know that I, now as an American-Mexican citizen, can be a role model for other Latino Americans. I feel that Hispanic Heritage Month highlights and educates others of the struggles as well as the important contributions that my heritage has contributed to this country. Because of the many different countries that Latinos originate from, Hispanic Heritage Month is one small way of helping Latinos as well as non-Latinos understand the richness of their culture. I am honored to be a part of this celebration but wish that it could be a bigger part of American education."

Lathisms was founded in 2016 in order to showcase the contributions of Latinx and Hispanic mathematicians during Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated in the United States from September 15 and October 15 every year. During this time, we feature/reveal a prominent Latinx/Hispanic mathematician daily. See all the featured mathematical scientists at LATHISMS.ORG.