

# AATSP Teacher of the Year Awards

The AATSP Outstanding Teacher of the Year Awards are given to teachers of Spanish or Portuguese representing the following four categories:

*Elementary Level: Grades K–8*

*Two-year College Level*

*Secondary Level: Grades 9–12*

*College or University Level*

## ELEMENTARY LEVEL (K–8)



**EDGAR SERRANO**

*Oxford University School; Oxford, Mississippi*

After a career in the business world, Edgar Serrano returned to the university to obtain a master's degree in Spanish and has since become a highly successful language teacher at the elementary level. Edgar believes in the empowerment of students and his goal is to create a positive learning experience, taking into consideration the age of his students and the resources on hand. Edgar believes that selecting the most appropriate activities and materials for the students to learn and use in their daily lives is invaluable in gaining and keeping their interest and having a dynamic class. Edgar's lessons include authentic materials offered through a variety of media and always include songs and scaffolding activities that focus on the national standards and IPA assessment tasks. Active participation is encouraged and communication among the students in the target language is expected. Edgar's principal noted that Edgar uses active listening, response commands, and thoughtful questioning techniques to assist children in challenging learning situations. The principal also noted that Edgar has "a wonderful rapport with students. His kind and caring manner helps him build relationships and excitement about learning." In a letter of support, a parent commented that "I like that Señor Edgar has a high expectation for the students in his class as it relates to academic excellence and behavior. Additionally, I like that he introduces them to other cultures and inspires them to think about and appreciate their differences and beauty." A colleague summarized Edgar's contribution as a teacher by stating that Edgar "...brings a level of enthusiasm to our school that is inspiring to both faculty and students alike. He is a great asset to our school."

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## SECONDARY LEVEL (9–12)



**CÁNDIDA KRASKA**

*Millard West High School; Omaha, NE*

Cándida Kraska is a highly effective secondary teacher who constantly searches for teaching practices conducive to successful learning. In a letter of support, a colleague stated that “Cándida is one of the most innovative professionals that I have had the pleasure of working with. She is a lifelong learner who is always challenging her teaching through new technologies and best practices.” Within the classroom Cándida creates a warm and comfortable learning environment and develops lessons that engage high cognitive demands by exploring and providing opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems. Cándida also believes that students need to experience activities outside of the classroom in order to improve their language and cultural proficiency and to that end she organizes extra-curricular events such as community cleanups, activities with senior citizens, and cultural fairs that place students in contact with native and heritage Spanish speakers. In addition to her classroom teaching, Cándida serves as a mentor to many. Teachers, young and veteran, seek her advice and knowledge about classroom strategies in order to improve their own language teaching. Because of her outstanding teaching and service to the profession, Cándida has earned recognition across the state of Nebraska for her innovative approach to instruction and learning; among her list of awards are the Nebraska Board of Education Star Award, the Nebraska AATSP Outstanding Spanish Teacher of the Year Award, and the Nebraska Hispanic Heritage Award. A colleague best summarized Cándida’s career by stating that Cándida “is a remarkable educator and inspiring individual who deserves recognition for her dedication to her profession, her students, and Nebraska schools.”

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## COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY LEVEL



**ISRAEL F. HERRERA**

*Indiana University Bloomington; Bloomington, IN*

Israel F. Herrera is a truly distinguished teacher who has had a stellar impact on a large number of students and on the profession of language teaching at the local, state, national, and international levels. Students attest to his engaging classroom presence and his diversity of technique that create a positive learning environment. His department colleagues attest to the variety of courses that he has created and taught and consistently rate him as outstanding on his yearly evaluations. Given his talents, skills, and passion for reflective, inspired teaching, he has been recognized by many organizations with teaching awards including the prestigious President's Award for Distinguished Teaching given by his university as well as the Indiana Latino Educator of the Year Award. Beyond his traditional teaching inside the classroom. Israel has engaged students in a variety of ways outside the classroom from the development of the Spanish and Portuguese Festival of Song, his service as faculty advisor to the Spanish language drama club, his involvement with the city of Bloomington, Indiana, through outreach and educational efforts including his service as President of the Commission on Hispanic and Latino affairs and his key role in organizing Bloomington's Hispanic Heritage Month. At the state level Israel's passion for language education and ability to communicate with officials have resulted in the establishment of early language education programs in several school districts, programs in libraries in Monroe County, Indiana, and the Indiana Seal of Biliteracy for graduating high school students. At the national and international levels Israel serves on numerous boards and committees for the promotion of language programs and the improvement of language teaching. In summary, Israel has devoted his life to enriching the lives of students and teachers K-16+ through effective teaching practices and his enthusiasm for the acquisition of functional Spanish language skills.