



LEADERSHIP KNOWLEDGE COMMONS

Join:



LEADER AND LEARNER PROFILE

DR. DAVIA MADARIAGA

The **Making Champions of Change** Team believes that knowledge, growth, and connection are built in shared moments. **Leadership Knowledge Commons** aims to share research and the stories of leaders from a more holistic lens, so we asked: **“Share your journey from the lens of the small moments that took you from one role to the next. The story may include items that often would be left out on a resume, or the duties that were encompassed by the bullet “other duties as assigned” that allowed for projects or learning opportunities that changed your leader and learner path that led you to being where you are now.”** Here is this leader’s story:



in @davia-madariaga-edd

Dr. Davia Madariaga’s leadership journey reflects a career shaped by real-world problem solving, systems thinking, and a willingness to step into complex challenges others often avoid. Her path into education was not linear. She began her professional career in law, working as a lead trial paralegal in medical malpractice and asbestos litigation. That work developed her ability to analyze systems at both the strategic and operational levels—seeing how policy, process, and daily practice intersect. Her entry into education began during a season of family transition, when substitute teaching introduced her to the structure and rhythm of schools.

What began as a temporary role quickly became a calling. She returned to earn her teaching certification and entered the classroom, where her background in law and analytical thinking quickly distinguished her. District leaders recognized her ability to design coherent systems, and she was invited to serve on curriculum writing teams and later moved into district leadership roles. As Director of Special Programs, Dr. Madariaga oversaw complex federal and state-funded initiatives, including literacy grants, MTSS implementation, and 504 systems. In multiple cases, she built foundational infrastructure where none existed, including authoring district handbooks and aligning procedures with federal and state law. Her work required balancing compliance, instructional leadership, and operational implementation under aggressive timelines and high accountability.

Her lived experience also shaped her leadership lens. Growing up in poverty in East Texas and working in historically underserved communities gave her a deep understanding of equity, access, and the structural barriers students and families face. She has worked extensively in Title I systems and communities, navigating generational inequities. After relocating to Washington State, Dr. Madariaga transitioned into consulting and corporate learning and development roles, while continuing to support school districts through grant implementation, leadership coaching, and program design. She currently works with districts such as the Laramie County School District to translate grant commitments into operational practice, facilitate difficult conversations, and strengthen leadership capacity.

Her expertise spans adult learning, change management, grant implementation, and systems alignment. She holds certifications in Prosci Change Management, Crucial Conversations facilitation, mediation, and business law/contracts from Cornell Law. She has also served on multiple nonprofit and advisory boards. Dr. Madariaga’s work reflects a consistent focus: helping leaders turn plans into practice and ensuring systems function in ways that truly support the people they are designed to serve.

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