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Dr. Gladys Cruz Honored with AESA's 2024 Excellence in Executive Leadership Award

The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AES) is proud to announce Dr. Gladys I. Cruz, District Superintendent and CEO of Questar III Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York's Capital Region, as the recipient of the 2024 **Excellence in Executive Leadership Award**. This prestigious honor recognizes exemplary leaders who drive innovation, champion equity, and transform education for students, staff, and communities.

Dr. Cruz exemplifies visionary leadership through her transformative work in New York's Rensselaer, Columbia, and Greene counties, as well as her far-reaching influence on education statewide and nationally. As the first Hispanic woman to lead an educational service agency in New York State and Past-President of AASA, The School Superintendents Association, Dr. Cruz has been a trailblazer in public education and a steadfast advocate for equity and inclusion.

"She has not forgotten about her experience growing up as a child struggling to speak a new language in a new place," said Nadine Gazzola, Board President of Questar III BOCES. "Since 1998, Dr. Cruz has mentored and trained more than 7,000 Hispanic and Latino students across the state as part of the Puerto Rican Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (PRHYLI). The program has leveled the playing field for young Latino women and men – and provided them with a voice to advocate for the issues impacting their communities."

Beyond her achievements at Questar III, Dr. Cruz's national impact is evident. As Past-President of AASA, she championed leadership development for aspiring superintendents, promoted equity-focused education initiatives, and addressed critical challenges in the field, including bilingual education and school safety. Her efforts have redefined what is possible for educational service agencies and public education at large.

Dr. Cruz's recognition as the 2024 Excellence in Executive Leadership Award recipient reflects her unwavering dedication to fostering a future where every student can succeed and thrive, regardless of their background or circumstances.

About AESA

The Association of Educational Service Agencies (AES) is a national organization dedicated to supporting regional educational service agencies in their mission to improve educational opportunities and student outcomes. AESA provides professional development, advocacy, and leadership support to its member agencies nationwide. For more information about AESA and its programs, please visit <https://aes.us>.