

Meet the Associate Dean

Zoila Morell, PhD



“My passion for this work stems from my own experience as an immigrant arriving in the US just in time to begin Kindergarten. I entered school speaking no English. My family struggled with poverty for my entire childhood. At a very personal level, I understand the significance of education in my life, and I want to apply everything I’ve learned to benefit my community. From my love of languages to my love of early childhood education and to my vision of educational leadership, my passions all stem from who I am and how I was shaped by what I overcame.”

Dr. Zoila Morell began at Lehman College in 2018 as an Associate Professor in Early Childhood and Childhood Education and joined the Dean’s office as Interim in 2022. In December of 2023, she was appointed as Associate Dean.

Dr. Morell’s research and scholarship examines bilingual education, school readiness, early childhood education, and conditions impacting educational achievement for Latine children. Her scholarship in early childhood education draws on decades as an early childhood professional and program administrator.

Dr. Morell worked in the public schools for over 15 years. For seven of those years, she was a School Principal where she administered several programs serving over 1,000 children under the age of six. In January of 2010, Dr. Morell received the “Pathways to Leadership” award from the *New York State Council of School Superintendents* in recognition of her leadership in education.

Dr. Morell obtained a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Urban Education from the City University of New York, Graduate Center, her dissertation studied the effects of bilingual instruction on the emergent literacy skills of Spanish-speaking preschool children. Her study was awarded second place nationally in the “Outstanding Dissertation” competition of the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE). In 2015, Dr. Morell was one of ten educators nationwide selected by *Big Picture Learning* for the Deeper Learning Equity Fellowship; her work in the fellowship focused on multilingual learners in prekindergarten.

As a scholar, she has served on multiple advisory boards and work groups for the New York State Education Department (NYSED) representing the instructional needs of young multilingual learners. She served on the NYSED Committee for ELLs and DLLs in Pre-Kindergarten where she developed a statewide protocol for the identification of language learners at the Pre-Kindergarten level. In addition, she was a member of the Early Childhood Blue Ribbon Committee for NYSED, which produced New York state’s guidance for integrated services for young children.

Dr. Morell collaborated with NYSED’s *Office of Early Learning and Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages* authoring the Introduction to New York State’s Next Generation Early Learning Standards, that remains the guidance for implementing standards-based curricula with young children.

Dr. Morell has over ten years of experience in higher education. In that time, she taught both pedagogy and leadership courses. Once at Lehman, she created the *Lehman College Initiative for Multilingualism in Early Childhood*, offering professional development in multilingual approaches for early childhood professionals in preschool programs.

To her role as Associate Dean, Dr. Morell brings years of practice as an educator, varied experience in the design and analysis of educational policy, as well as a substantial record in scholarship and research. Her professional experience includes over twelve years in administrative roles. In those roles, she supervised faculty and staff, regularly obtained grants, designed programming, implemented policy, analyzed achievement data, and administered school budgets of nearly one million dollars. As a result of her experience in management and organizational tasks, she developed a vision of educational leadership that emphasizes strong partnership where her contributions and responsibilities sustain a positive culture that promotes collective efficacy.

In addition to maintaining a research and scholarship agenda, Dr. Morell is also a bilingual poet with several publications in creative writing.