

Dr. Rony Ortega

Professional Biography

November 23, 2022

Dr. Rony Ortega is an accomplished bilingual executive leader with 20 years of experience in K-12 public education. He has held numerous roles in urban and suburban schools and districts. Dr. Ortega is endorsed as a teacher, counselor, principal, and school superintendent. He has a track record of improving student achievement and outcomes throughout his career. Dr. Ortega's notable accomplishments include leading a 5-8 middle school from "great" to "excellent" and to the top 10% of all schools in the state of Nebraska. He also led the turnaround of a large urban high school from persistently "needs improvement" to "good" while elevating expectations and increasing college and career access to all students by transforming the high school from a pocket academy school to a wall-to-wall college and career academy high school. As a central office executive, he directed improvements across multiple K-12 schools and introduced and implemented nationally known Freshman On-Track system across all high schools and programs to improve district graduation rates. Dr. Ortega considers himself a life-long learner and has earned five college degrees. He believes he works in the greatest profession that allows him both the possibility for continuous learning as well as the opportunity to influence and change lives through education. Dr. Ortega is married to Cara Ortega who is also a career educator and is employed at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Together they have three daughters, Gabriela, Ariana, and Natalia, and a son, Sebastian.

Side notes:

- I am the proud son of immigrant parents. My family moved from California to Nebraska when I was a junior in high school. I give credit to the people, educators, and schools in Nebraska for changing the trajectory of my life.
- I graduated from Schuyler Central High School in Schuyler, NE. After graduating from high school, I attended Central Community College in Columbus, NE. I then transferred to the University of Nebraska in Lincoln

where I completed my bachelor's in secondary education and met my wife, Cara. We got married and moved to Omaha, where I began my teaching career with the Elkhorn Public Schools. I then earned a master's degree in school counseling and became a school counselor in the Papillion-LaVista Public Schools. Later I earned a second master's in educational administration and began my career in administration with the Omaha Public Schools where I also earned my doctorate from the University of Nebraska at Omaha as well as my superintendent's endorsement through the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

- In 20 years of education, I have served as a high school teacher, high school counselor, assistant principal (both middle and high school), principal (both middle and high school), and central office administrator as an Executive Director of School Support and Supervision (K-12).
- I have worked with diverse school communities, ranging from affluent to less affluent and from predominantly English speaking to mostly Spanish speaking communities.
- I have earned recognition from the Nebraska Association for the Gifted for my work in supporting high ability learners. I was also recognized by the Latino Center of the Midlands in Omaha for my involvement and making a difference in the community. Most recently I was honored and recognized as the Administrator of the Year by the Nebraska School Counseling Association for my work in supporting school counseling.
- I have three wonderful daughters and a son. Gabriela (19) and Ariana (18) are both on a full ride scholarship at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Gabriela is in her second year of college and Ariana is in her first year, both will be staying in Omaha. However, Natalia (12) is in the 6th grade and will be coming to SSC with her younger brother Sebastian (17 mos). We have raised our children as bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural.
- My wife, Cara, is born and raised in Omaha. She has worked in higher education all her life and is currently the associate registrar at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.
- My hobbies include kickboxing, running, and lifting. I also enjoy reading, gaming, gardening, and ponding.