



PRESS RELEASE

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA August 14, 2009 – Dr. Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in July 2009 as Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, following her nomination to the U.S. Department of Education by President Barack Obama in May of this year. Dr. Meléndez de Santa Ana, former Superintendent of Pomona Unified School District (PUSD), is a longtime partner of Pivot Learning Partners, who honored her in 2008 for her extraordinary efforts to raise student achievement in the district.

Pivot Learning Partners would like to congratulate Dr. Meléndez de Santa Ana for her new appointment at the U.S. Department of Education. "The strongest leaders in public education are those who are guided by a clear vision about why education matters. Thelma Meléndez is someone who has that clear vision," Merrill Vargo, Executive Director of Pivot Learning Partners, said of Meléndez de Santa Ana. "Californians can trust her to be a voice in Washington for all our children, but especially for the millions of English language learners in California and across the nation."

Dr. Meléndez de Santa Ana served as Superintendent of Pomona Unified since 2006. During her tenure at PUSD, Meléndez de Santa Ana worked with Pivot Learning Partners (then known as Springboard Schools) to help turn the district around when dropout rates began to climb as high as 46 percent. Meléndez de Santa Ana's vision for the district included raising expectations and accountability in the district with the theme "every child, every classroom, every day". Her six essentials for Pomona Unified included responsive instruction, a strong focus on student work and data, shared leadership and increasing family and community involvement in the schools, to name a few. "Thelma's objective from day one was to raise expectations for every student, and she strived to see that all of the district's efforts aligned with that goal," said Rich Thome, Pivot Learning Project Lead in Pomona. "We will continue to support her visionary work by providing the support and coaching Pomona sees as essential to meet student needs through our collaborative work with principals and district leaders."

Pomona Unified serves some 33,000 students in more than 40 schools - and a challenging population of minority, English learning and at-risk students. Born to a family of Mexican immigrants, Meléndez de Santa Ana had a strong personal investment in providing an excellent and equitable education to her students. After being told by a high school counselor that she had no chance of attending a top college, Dr. Meléndez de Santa Ana went on to graduate cum laude in Sociology from UCLA, and then earned a Ph.D. in Language, Literacy and Learning from the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. She was named "Superintendent of the Year" by the Association of California School

Administrators (ACSA) in 2008. As Assistant Secretary, Meléndez de Santa Ana will be a top advisor for Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

About Pivot Learning Partners

Pivot Learning Partners (formerly Springboard Schools) is a non-profit public school change catalyst working with school districts throughout California to raise the achievement of students overall and close the achievement gap. We aim to help create a future in which all students learn to high levels and where race, class, language, gender, and culture are no longer good predictors of educational outcomes. Our work consists of three parts: we study what works in the most effective schools in the state and nation; we teach educators what we have learned; and we follow them back to school and coach them to make new ideas work in real schools and classrooms with real kids and the challenges they bring to school every day. In the 2008-09 school year, we worked with fifty districts serving 750,000 students. Our partners serve a higher percentage of low-income (55%), minority (60%), and non-native English speakers (28%) than the state of California as a whole, yet despite these demographic challenges they consistently outperform state averages. For more information about Pivot Learning Partners, visit www.pivotlearningpartners.org.

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