

Los Angeles Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

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LAUSD BOARD OF EDUCATION RE-ELECTS MONICA GARCIA AS ITS PRESIDENT, SWEARS IN TWO NEW MEMBERS

García calls for faster District-wide reform following the model set forth by the Belmont Zone of Choice, nicknaming it the 'cradle of reform' in LAUSD

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education today re-elected Mónica García as its president – giving her a third year in the role – and swore in two new Boardmembers, Steve Zimmer and Nury Martinez, at its first meeting of the new fiscal and school year.

In remarks after her swearing in, García called for the District and community to take its reforms wider, citing the model of the Belmont Zone of Choice – what she called the “cradle of reform” in LAUSD – a project on which she has worked for over seven years.

“I believe that this year – with this Board, this Superintendent, this Mayor, this community support and this White House – we have a real opportunity to begin taking our grassroots reforms District-wide,” García said. “We cannot let the clouds of economic turmoil stand in the way of reform.”

Created with the support of community and reform groups, the Belmont Zone of Choice offers students in the Pico-Union neighborhood a variety of options for high school and has significantly improved graduation rates in an area once plagued by overcrowding. Incoming high school students and their parents select their preference from among three new traditional high schools, a restructured Belmont High School, five pilot schools, a new technology high school and 14 small learning communities.

The Los Angeles High School for the Arts – a Belmont-area pilot school that will begin its third year in September – two weeks ago was recognized by *Newsweek* as one of the top 350 high schools in America.

Another school, the Los Angeles School for Global Studies at Miguel Contreras Learning Complex, graduated its first class this spring, reaching a graduation rate of about 80 percent, according to its principal.

(more)

“Belmont has transformed from a synonym for failure into the cradle of reform, and it has given birth to one of the most promising schools in America,” García said, describing the changes in her district since she became a Board member in 2006. “But a handful of schools is just not enough.”

Pilot schools are small high schools of less than 425 students built on charter-like autonomies vis-à-vis budgeting and staff.

During today’s Board meeting, California Supreme Court Associate Justice Carlos Moreno administered the oath of office for García and Zimmer.

“Schools are not collections of positions. Schools are communities. Schools are families. Everyone has someone in the family who made sacrifices, whose hands toiled in the fields so our arms could cradle books,” Zimmer said after taking the oath. “We can’t be a collection of one; we must be a symphony of ‘we.’ ”

Former government and history teacher Quentin Panek swore in Martinez, a former student of his at San Fernando High School. She credits him with instilling in her a dedication to education and the value of public service.

Martinez described her childhood as a latchkey kid, the daughter of immigrants, walking home from school. She said, today, when she sees little girls walking in Pacoima she asks: “What are we going to do for that little girl? We are we going to do for her school? What are we going to do to help her to be able to look at the world from a different point of view?”

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