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Riverside Unified School District Appoints New Superintendent

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The Board of Education is pleased to announce the selection of Dr. Sonia Llamas as the next Superintendent of the Riverside Unified School District. Tonight, at its June 26 meeting, the Riverside Unified Board of Education approved the appointment of Dr. Llamas. Her first day as Superintendent will be July 14.

Dr. Llamas brings a wealth of experience to Riverside Unified, having served as Chief Academic Officer and Associate Superintendent of Educational and Student Services at the Orange County Department of Education. She has also held leadership positions in Santa Ana Unified, Los Angeles Unified, and Pasadena Unified, where she helped design, implement, and scale student success systems rooted in community engagement, holistic student wellbeing and academic excellence.

Riverside Unified Board President Brent Lee took the lead in the search for a new superintendent and welcomed Dr. Llamas on behalf of his fellow Board members. “The Board is committed to high standards for our students’ education, and we believe Dr. Llamas’ expertise, experience, advocacy, and empathy make her well-suited as our next leader. Our community spoke clearly about the need for a dynamic, visionary administrator and we believe we have found that in Dr. Llamas.”

Dr. Llamas expressed both gratitude and a deep sense of purpose. “For more than thirty years, I’ve dedicated myself to making public education not just a pathway, but a promise—one that sees, values, and uplifts every student. RUSD’s commitment to equity, excellence, and community mirrors the foundation of my leadership journey. It reflects not just what I do, but who I am. I am humbled and honored to serve this incredible community—and I will lead with transparency, integrity, and a deep responsibility to earn and build trust every single day. My purpose has always been rooted in service—ensuring we create the conditions for all students to thrive, for every staff member to feel supported and empowered, and for families and communities to feel seen, heard, and engaged as valued partners in our shared journey.”

The Board conducted a comprehensive search across California, guided by community feedback, and considered several highly-qualified candidates. Dr. Llamas ultimately stood out for her commitment to student needs, her comprehensive focus on data-based decision making, and her expertise in building high-performing, mission-driven teams.

Dr. Llamas earned her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Southern California (USC). She holds a Master of Social Work (MSW) and a Pupil Personnel Services Credential (PPSC) from California State University, Long Beach, and a Bachelor of Arts in Social Welfare from the University of California, Berkeley. Additionally, she is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and holds a Clear Administrative Services Credential. She is fluent in Spanish.



Dr. Llamas is an active member of several professional organizations, including the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and the California Association of Latino School Administrators (CALSA). She was recently recognized as the 2025 Woman of the Year in Education by Congressman Lou Correa for her commitment to transformative leadership and service to the community. Dr. Llamas and her husband of 21 years, a middle school teacher, have three sons who attend public schools. Along with spending quality time with her family, she enjoys hiking, softball and soccer, traveling, and indulging in her love for reading, movies and the arts.

On behalf of Riverside Unified, the Board extends a warm welcome to Dr. Llamas and is eager to introduce her to our community.

Established in the 1870s, the award-winning Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) is the 17th largest in California. With more than 5,000 employees, RUSD educates nearly 40,000 students across 51 schools in Riverside. Led by Superintendent Ms. Renee Hill, RUSD is governed by a Board of Education with elected officials from five trustee areas.

For more information, please contact Liz Pinney-Muglia at epinney-muglia@riversideunified.org.

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