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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



Alhambra USD Fremont Spanish Dual Immersion Kick-Off Features LA Times' Esmeralda Bermudez

“You have double the power when you speak two languages,” Bermudez tells parents and students

Alhambra, CA - Prospective parents from the richly culturally diverse West San Gabriel Valley and excited Fremont Elementary Spanish Dual Immersion first graders gathered to meet a special guest. Esmeralda Bermudez, the award-winning Los Angeles Times reporter recently named one of 15 Latina Journalists of the Year, was on hand for the



Alhambra USD Spanish Dual Immersion Kick-off. “You have double the power when you speak two languages,” Ms. Bermudez told would-be parents and the students before she shared her own language story.

Bermudez, who is Salvadoran American, told her audiences that she and her Armenian American husband vowed to speak to their newborn daughter in each of their home languages in order for the daughter to be able to communicate with both sets of grandparents and to be able to absorb the two cultures. Her five-year-old daughter is now fluent in English, Spanish, and Armenian and recently asked to learn French.

One day last spring, a stranger at the park scolded Bermudez for speaking Spanish to her daughter, saying, “Speak English. You are confusing the poor girl.” Bermudez responded, “No need to worry. My daughter speaks four languages. How many do you speak?” The incident stayed with Bermudez and she decided to write about the experience and her daughter for the Los Angeles Times. Her story went viral on Twitter with nearly 400,000 likes and over 76, 000 retweets in less than 48 hours, followed by requests for television appearances, including from Univision34 and ABC7, among others. Bermudez’s story has helped change the national conversation about the value and importance of bilingualism and multilingualism. To read her story visit:

<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-speak-english-20180616-story.html>

“One of the best gifts you can give your child — a gift that keeps connection to all generations and keeps your culture — is the gift of teaching your home language,” says Bermudez who was raised in Whittier, CA. She says she is the first in her family to graduate from elementary school, middle school, high school and university. “Spanish is being lost within a generation when parents decide their children ‘should only speak English.’” Bermudez is such a supporter of the Alhambra USD Fremont Spanish Dual Immersion program, she agreed to the visit despite having just returned from two weeks in Rome where she reported for the LA Times on the historic canonization of the Salvadoran Bishop, Oscar Romero, at the Vatican. “It’s so important to have this conversation, “ explained Bermudez. “The benefits of learning two or languages are enormous.”

The California Department of Education agrees. The CDE’s new Global California 2030 Initiative wants all K-12 students in the state to be bilingual within 12 years. When Bermudez asked the Fremont first graders how many languages they spoke at home besides English and Spanish, she learned that students hailed from families that speak nearly ten languages. “That’s inspiring,” says Bermudez.

BENEFITS OF DUAL IMMERSION:

Studies show that students who learn two or more languages have stronger, healthier brains with more connections to both right and left hemispheres, more flexible thinking and are more sought-after job candidates. In addition, bilingualism unites communities, cultures, builds empathy, trust and creative problem solving. It is important to note that students who learn their home language proficiently learn English more swiftly and effectively.

To learn more about the AUSD Fremont Spanish Dual Immersion program visit www.ausd.us or <https://www.fremontelementary.us/apps/video/>

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