



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 8, 2024

CONTACT: Maria Hernandez

PHONE: (909) 447-2406

## **South El Monte Athletic Director Recognized as El Monte Union's 2024-25 Teacher of the Year**

**EL MONTE** – Over the last three decades, South El Monte High School (SEMHS) Athletic Director Sonia Ayala has been instrumental in shaping the school's 17 competitive sports teams while also committing herself to the physical wellness of her students as a freshman physical education (PE) teacher.

In recognition of her dedication to student success in her hybrid role at SEMHS, Ayala was named the District's 2024-25 Teacher of the Year. She received the award at the Oct. 2 Board meeting and was also honored as a 2024 Educator of Distinction by 56th District Assemblymember Lisa Calderon.

With 33 years at South El Monte High, including 27 as athletic director, Ayala said she is committed to leading with passion and dedication, ensuring SEMHS student-athletes and coaches are ready to compete in the Mission Valley League while also supporting students transitioning from middle to high school.

"This is exciting for me. It's rewarding to be recognized by my peers for all the hard work that goes into maintaining an athletic department, as well as making sure our PE students are prioritizing their health and well-being," Ayala said. "Although the ultimate goal for our sports teams is to win and stay competitive, we want to make sure every student who participates in the athletic program is supported, along with our coaches."

South El Monte High's athletic programs have enjoyed many successes over the years. Most recently, the baseball team won the Mission Valley League championship and advanced to the CIF Southern Section Division 7 championship game during the 2023-24 season. SEMHS also offers football, volleyball, tennis, cross country, basketball, soccer, wrestling, baseball, softball, track & field, drill team, cheer squad, and band & color guard.

In her role as athletic director, Ayala is responsible for ensuring all student-athletes and coaches are following procedures, protocols, and guidelines. She also manages the programs and budgets, ensures compliance with athletic regulations, arranges for transportation to and from venues, supervises conditioning, provides athletic equipment, and plays a role in the hiring process of head coaches.

"When we bring in coaches to South El Monte High, we want to make sure they have everything they need to succeed," said Ayala, who also teaches summer school biology at SEMHS. "My job is to make sure everything is on the straight and narrow."

Ayala said her goal as a PE teacher is to instill the principles of exercise in her students, guiding them through a 15-to-20-minute, full-body workout every day, working to increase a student's cardio, flexibility, and strength so they can be successful in the classroom.

– MORE –

“Sonia Ayala has been the embodiment of South El Monte gold and blue for more than 30 years, and we are so proud to see her hard work and dedication rewarded as El Monte Union’s Teacher of the Year,” SEMHS Principal Dr. Jorge Morales said. “Sonia is the glue that holds everything together on campus and makes our Eagles soar.”

Similarly, she works with South El Monte faculty and staff to support academic initiatives across the board as a department chair, whether the school is launching a schoolwide reading program or planning a special event on campus.

“As a District, we are honored to have and recognize Sonia Ayala for her incredible work throughout our El Monte Union community,” Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. “Her devotion to student success, both in the classroom and on the athletic field, is truly inspiring. Sonia’s passion for teaching and her ability to motivate and support our students make her a remarkable leader and an outstanding role model for the entire community.”

### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**EMUHSD TEACHER OF THE YEAR 1:** South El Monte High School athletic director and physical education teacher Sonia Ayala receives her award on the honoree plaque after being named the El Monte Union’s 2024-25 Teacher of the Year during an Oct. 2 Board meeting.

**EMUHSD TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2:** South El Monte High School athletic director and physical education teacher Sonia Ayala delivers a heartfelt speech and celebrates on stage with students after being announced as El Monte Union’s 2024-25 Teacher of the Year during the Opening of Schools celebration on Aug. 15.

###

*The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.*