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NEWS RELEASE

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Covina-Valley Unified’s Board of Education President Earns Doctorate Degree, Advocates for Latinas to Aim High

COVINA, CA – As Covina-Valley Unified students commemorated their academic achievements in five graduation ceremonies in the beginning of June, Board of Education President Dr. Maria Cruz celebrated a significant milestone of her own – earning her Doctorate of Social Work from Loma Linda University.

Dr. Cruz used her accomplishment and story to highlight the need for a more equitable educational landscape, highlighting how underrepresented Latinas are among doctoral degree recipients, making up only one percent of all doctoral graduates in the United States according to an [“Excelencia in Education” study](#).

“While I am proud to be among the one percent of Latinas with a doctoral degree, my story is a call to action,” Dr. Cruz said in a speech during a Board of Education meeting on May 20. “It is a reminder that with the right resources, support, and determination, we can break barriers and create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape. Together, let us pave the way for more Latinas to achieve their dreams and contribute to the rich tapestry of academic excellence.”

Dr. Cruz arrived in the United States as a nine-year-old, English-Language Learner. She attributes her success to the dedication of her teachers and the support of her parents. Encouraged by her high school counselor to pursue college, Dr. Cruz now works to ensure all students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, receive the support they need to achieve their goals.

Balancing numerous roles, including her full-time job as a social worker, her responsibilities on the Board of Education, owning a small business, and raising three school-age children as a single mother, Dr. Cruz completed her doctorate on June 6.

“As a Latina who has navigated this challenging path, I am committed to being a part of the solution for greater educational equity,” Dr. Cruz said. “I believe in the potential of every Latina student who dreams of higher education. We must work collectively to create an environment where their aspirations are not limited by their background but are nurtured and supported.”

Click [here](#) to read Dr. Cruz’s full biography and click [here](#) to listen to Dr. Cruz’s full remarks about her achievement, starting at 5:58:13.

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“Dr. Cruz's journey demonstrates the transformative power of education,” Superintendent Dr. Elizabeth Eminhizer said. “Her dedication to fostering educational equity, informed by her own experiences, promises to inspire a new generation of Latina scholars. Covina-Valley Unified School District is privileged to have such a committed and inspiring leader at its helm.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

CVUSD_CRUZ: Dr. Maria Cruz completed her Doctorate of Social Work from Loma Linda University on June 6. Dr. Cruz aims to use her accomplishments and story to highlight the need for a more equitable educational landscape, particularly among underrepresented Latinas.

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