

**NEWS RELEASE  
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**AALRR and CALSA's Hermanas Leading Network Honor  
Two Latina Leaders at the Helm of LAUSD**

On February 19, 2015, Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo (AALRR), in collaboration with the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA) Hermanas Leading Networking, hosted a cocktail reception at the AALRR office in Cerritos. The event, spearheaded by Elizabeth Zamora Mejia, AALRR Partner, and Dr. Irella Perez, CALSA Board member and recently appointed Superintendent of El Monte Union High School District, was held to honor two accomplished Latina school administrators, Dr. Ruth Perez, LAUSD Deputy Superintendent, and Dr. Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, LAUSD Chief Executive Officer of Educational Services.



Both honorees shared their inspiring journeys into education leadership roles. They also stressed the importance networking and mentoring play as key factors to help Latina administrators overcome the unique challenges and obstacles they face while moving into the higher ranks of educational leadership.

The mission of Hermanas Leading Network is to increase the number of capable, credible and highly effective Latina educational leaders to reflect and better serve the students and communities of school districts across California. Hermanas recognizes the disproportionate number of Latina leaders in California schools, and endeavors to help Latinas break the glass ceiling to create a more balanced representation. Recognizing the lack of adequate networking opportunities, Hermanas focuses on filling that void by creating opportunities for Latina administrators to network, provide mentorship and share advice on climbing the ladder into leadership roles.



This was the 13<sup>th</sup> successful Hermanas event since its founding in 2013. More than 100 people attended, including superintendents Dr. Lillian Maldonado French, (Mountain View School District), Dr. Sandy Thorstenson (Whittier Union High School District), former superintendents Carmella Franco, Dr. Maria Ott, and Dr. Rich Malfatti, Association of California Superintendents and Administrators (ACSA) Member Assistance Advocate and former Executive Director of CALSA, and Dr. Randy Delling, ACSA President. Also in attendance were Dr. David Verdugo, CALSA Executive Director, and Dr. David Gomez, former CALSA Executive Director. Numerous other administrators and elected officials also attended.



In her remarks at the reception, Ms. Zamora-Mejia described her involvement with CALSA leadership and Dr. Irella Perez to help form a women's group, efforts which culminated in the founding of Hermanas

Leading Network. She also explained AALRR's strong support of CALSA and Hermanas, stating, "Being legal counsel to an large number school districts across the state, many with predominately Latino student populations, AALRR believes that increasing the number of Latina administrators is not only good for promoting diversity in school administration, but also enriches the educational environment for all students."

### **About Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo**

With 35 years of unwavering commitment to client service, [AALRR](http://www.aalrr.com) has become one of California's leading law firms. Our diverse team brings a seasoned perspective to California's complex legal landscape for [private](#) and [public](#) entities, with particular strength in the areas of education, [labor and employment](#), [construction](#), [complex litigation](#), [corporate](#), taxation and bankruptcy. Our public sector clients include more than 400 K-12 school districts, community college districts and universities, as well as cities, counties and special districts. We also represent businesses of all shapes and sizes, from "mom and pop" companies to publicly traded corporations. At 145 lawyers and growing, we maintain eight offices in [Cerritos](#), [Pleasanton](#), [Riverside](#), [Irvine](#), [Fresno](#), [Sacramento](#), [San Diego](#) and [Pasadena](#). For more information about us, visit our website at [www.aalrr.com](http://www.aalrr.com) and sign up for our blogs, [www.aalrreducationlaw.com](http://www.aalrreducationlaw.com) and [www.aalrremloymentlaw.com](http://www.aalrremloymentlaw.com).