

November 17, 2009

Contact: Debra Colman, Families In Schools
(213) 484-2870, Ext 226

STUDENTS ENCOURAGED TO READ MILLIONS OF WORDS

County-wide literacy campaign launched to promote reading at home

What: The Million Word Challenge will be kicked-off at 9:00 am on November 19, 2009 at Gratts Elementary School, where community leaders will challenge Los Angeles County students to read millions of words outside of school time. Speakers will include Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, LAUSD School Board President Monica Garcia, LACOE Superintendent Darline Robles and many others. The highlight of the event will be 4th grade student, Catalina Garcia, who will speak about how reading opens the door to a better future. The initiative encourages Pre-K through 12th Grade students to read millions of words beyond the bell. In May 2010, each participating school will select one student winner to receive a \$50 gift certificate to purchase books at Feria Del Libro: A Family Book Fair. The campaign reaches **400** schools annually.

Why: Los Angeles County is challenged by some of the lowest literacy rates in the country with 60% of 3rd graders reading below grade level (*California Department of Education, 2009*). As a response to this crisis, civic, education, and business leaders have joined together to promote reading. The Million Word Challenge is an initiative of Families In Schools in partnership with the City of Los Angeles, First 5 LA, the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and the Los Angeles Unified School District with generous sponsorship from La Opinion, the Pearson Foundation, and Target.

When: Thursday, November 19, 2009

9:00A.M.

(Announcement of campaign, community leaders challenge students to read millions of words, student speaker, student performances, reception)

Where: Gratts Elementary School

309 S. Lucas Avenue Los Angeles, California 90017

Press Parking: In front of school on S. Lucas Ave

Who: Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor of Los Angeles

Monica Garcia, Board President, LAUSD Board of Education

Judy Elliot, Chief Academic Officer, LAUSD

Darline P. Robles, Superintendent, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)

Evangelina R. Stockwell, First 5 LA Commissioner

Sylvia Lopez, KCAL 9 and Families In Schools Board Member

Virgil Roberts, Families In Schools

Marisol Arenas, La Opinion

Connie Droge, Target

Titus Campos, Principal, Gratts Elementary School

Catalina Garcia, 4th Grade Student, Gratts Elementary School

The student body (K-5) of Gratts Elementary School

###

