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**Student's Nomination for Teacher of the Year Wins Hearts of Administrators at
Pittsburg Unified School District**

Pittsburg, CA — During the spring of each year, nominations are gathered at Pittsburg Unified School District for the Contra Costa County Office of Education recognition program known as Teacher of the Year. One particular nomination proved to be very special and definitely made an impact on Pittsburg Unified School District's Teacher of the Year Committee. A fourth grader named Arriana asked her grandmother to help her fill out a nomination form for her teacher, Mrs. Krystal Figaroa. When asked to describe the qualities, skills, and accomplishments that support the nomination of your teacher as an outstanding educator, Arriana wrote, "She is funny, understanding, patient, and goes out of her way to make sure her students learn in a successful way. She is creative in her ways to teach her students the lessons and always makes it interesting. She has a special way of praising her students so that they want to learn. I feel she deserves this award because of her outstanding teaching abilities! She's the 'BEST' teacher!"

After reviewing dozens of nominations, the committee chose to recognize Mrs. Krystal Figaroa as the District's Teacher of the Year. "Honestly, when you work with a cadre of amazing administrators, teachers, and support staff, being named Teacher of the Year is a strange feeling," said Krystal Figaroa. "I am beyond grateful and humbled, and being nominated by a student has been the greatest gift of all. It's an honor I share with every person who has been on this journey with me. The leadership of Stoneman Elementary School Principal, Shelley Velasco has been monumental, and without her

impeccable balance of warmth and demand I would be a different teacher. The Stoneman staff is second to none, and they inspire me daily. Every student has left a fingerprint on my life, helping to perfect this imperfect craft we are fortunate to call a job.”

Pittsburg Unified School District congratulates Figaroa on her hard work, determination, and passion in the classroom. Mrs. Shelley Velasco who was recognized for the 2015/2016 school year as Contra Costa County’s Principal of the Year is thrilled to have a teacher from her school receive this prestigious honor. “I cannot state strongly enough that Krystal’s selection as Stoneman Elementary School’s and Pittsburg Unified School District’s teacher of the year is well-deserved, and I wish that every Principal in Contra Costa County the experience of working with someone who is not only an amazing teacher but fosters positive staff community and strong classroom resolve. She is the example of the outstanding teaching that occurs in our school district on a daily basis. She is an example of what it looks like when you have setbacks as a teacher and how you work even harder to overcome them. Krystal is one of the reasons why I believe in the future of public education; she can teach any student regardless of socio-economic background, ethnicity, culture and sex. Krystal makes every student believe he or she is unique and special!”

Figaroa’s nomination now moves to the next phase of the award recognition process as she is considered for a finalist position in Contra Costa County’s Board of Education Teacher of the Year program. Finalists for the county award will be announced on Wednesday, April 6, 2016.

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About 2016-2017 California Teacher of the Year Program:

The 2016-2017 California Teacher of the Year Program seeks nominations for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 teachers. The California Teacher of the Year Program actively encourages applicants that fully represent the diverse ethnic and cultural composition of our state’s teaching force, as well as of its varied geographical settings. The program seeks teachers with exemplary personal growth, commitment, personal attitude, and professional skills. Teachers are eligible to go on to county, state, and national competition. The California Teacher of the Year Program celebrates and pays special tribute to the tireless efforts of our state’s outstanding teachers. In doing so, the program brings well-deserved recognition to the whole teaching profession. The state program’s goals are to: Identify and honor outstanding teachers throughout California within a structure of local, regional, and statewide recognition activities; Select, for special commendation and responsibility, teachers who will effectively represent California teachers during the year, speaking for, energizing, and symbolizing the positive contributions of the teaching profession statewide; Focus attention on the positive accomplishments of students and teachers throughout California; and Emphasize maintaining and improving student achievement. **Selection Process:** A nomination is submitted on behalf of the teacher. Nominees/candidates are then asked to respond to a brief questionnaire that speaks to their passion for teaching, their ability

to differentiate instruction to meet students' needs, ways in which they provide equitable learning experiences for all the students in their class, specific strategies they utilize that directly affect student achievement, and how they connect with and support their school community. These responses are screened by the Pittsburg Unified School District Teacher of the Year Committee. The Committee then does interviews for selected candidates. One teacher is chosen to represent the District in the County Teacher of the Year selection process. The selected teacher will be honored at a reception at the Contra Costa County Office of Education on May 17, 2016. A dinner celebration will take place on September 22, 2016 at the Concord Hilton.

About Pittsburg Unified School District:

Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD) is a K-12 district serving the community of Pittsburg, California. Founded in 1933, the school system is committed to providing an excellent opportunity for all students to learn. Comprised of eight elementary schools, three junior high schools, one comprehensive high school, one alternative education high school, an adult school, independent study, alternative learning experiences, and early childhood education services, the school district serves more than 10,500 students. PUSD is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, fifty minutes outside of downtown San Francisco.