



Press Release

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Whittier Union Emergency Preparedness Workshop Raises Awareness of Campus Safety

Staff learns proactive measures to identify threats, examine safety protocols

WHITTIER – To ensure that its campuses continue to maintain safe environments for students and staff, the Whittier Union High School District recently held a safety review meeting for dozens of District administrators, safety personnel and partner elementary school districts to review security practices in the event of a crisis and learn more about the District’s proactive approach to helping students cope.

The meeting also provided staff insight into the psychology of attackers, a discussion led by noted clinical and forensic psychologist Dr. Manny Tau, as well as information on how the District’s law enforcement partners (Whittier Police Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department) respond to incidences that occur on campus.

“In Whittier Union, the safety, care and education of our students and staff are of the utmost importance,” Board of Trustees President Dr. Ralph Pacheco said. “After the tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida, and the increased prevalence of school shootings across the country, it is important now more than ever to assess our own school safety plans, update them with the newest information and continue to proactively work hand-in-hand with our community partners to address any concerns.”

The meeting included an overview of mental health services provided by the District in partnership with such agencies as The Whole Child, Pacific Clinics and others. Under its Student Well-Being program, the District proactively identifies students who are hurting or struggling and provide students and their families with social and emotional support through counseling and wellness centers. Administrators, counselors and staff at each school have undergone extensive training in suicide and threat assessment.

The District’s security practices include practicing a “see/hear something, say something” approach and having school resource officers on every campus, strengthened by outstanding relationships with the Whittier Police Department and Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department

“I appreciate the fact that aside from the role of law enforcement, WUHSD and its leaders continue to focus on all phases of emergency management including prevention-mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery,” Whittier Police Department Chief Jeff Piper said. “Conducting vulnerability assessments, security plan reviews, and incorporating an interdisciplinary threat assessment team encompasses a thorough approach to maximize campus security and student safety. Our strong relationships will continue to foster communication and collaboration with law enforcement, school districts, community partners and the public.”

Whittier Union also schedules regular lockdown drills to prepare in the event of an active shooter on campus. After any school shooting across the nation, administrators meet to review what occurred and to revise plans.

Tau, who has specialized in threat assessment for 20 years, discussed risk factors, targeted violence, how to tell the difference between noncredible and credible threats, and personality traits of those who are likely to pose a real threat.

The meeting also included discussion on what happens after an incident, from communication with families, community and the media to how the District's crisis response team provides support to families and students impacted.

"Whittier Union goes above and beyond to help our students who are either hurting or coping with trauma, making sure that we build strong relationships with them and support them in every way possible," Superintendent Martin Plourde said. "It's important to remember that despite recent high-profile school shootings, our schools continue to be safe places for students and staff. With the help of our parents and community, we are committed to maintaining the highest levels of safety for everyone in Whittier Union."

PHOTO CAPTION:

031418_WUHSD_SAFETY: The Whittier Union High School District recently held a safety review meeting for dozens of District administrators, safety personnel and partner elementary school districts to review security practices and discuss the proactive approaches the District takes to ensure it provides students a nurturing environment.

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The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

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