



Press Release

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La Serna High English Instructor Named Whittier Union's 2018-19 Teacher of the Year

Shelly DeSimone is driven by passion to help English learners

WHITTIER – La Serna High School English teacher Shelly DeSimone's dream to be an English instructor began in second grade when a teacher asked her to help a struggling English learner. The joy she felt when her classmate completed the year fluent in English inspired DeSimone to dedicate her life to ensuring equity to English learners.

Over 34 years at La Serna, DeSimone has helped hundreds of English language development (ELD) students to speak, read and write English, guided La Serna's Puente Program since its inception and established herself as an author of teen fiction for English learners.

For DeSimone's commitment to preparing English learners for college, she was named Whittier Union's 2018-19 Teacher of the Year.

"This is a tremendous honor which I accept on behalf of all of my students, whose enthusiasm and determination have provided me inspiration and fulfillment," DeSimone said. "Even after 34 years, I still wake up every morning feeling I have the best job in the world. Thank you so much for this distinction."

DeSimone teaches English Advanced Placement and Honors classes and was La Serna's newspaper and yearbook adviser for nearly 20 years. But her passion remains the Puente Program, a rigorous interdisciplinary college prep program that focuses on increasing the number of students who enroll in a four-year university. DeSimone was a founding member of La Serna's Puente cohort.

"For many La Serna Puente students, Shelly DeSimone is both teacher and confidante, a compassionate voice who has guided generations of Lancers onto the path of higher education," Principal Ann Fitzgerald said. "I am so proud of what Shelly has accomplished as an educator. She is the gold standard by which teachers should be measured."

DeSimone's contributions to English language development go well beyond her classroom. Seeing a need for more reading material geared toward teenagers with limited English skills, DeSimone wrote "Paulo's Wall," which was published in 2002 by Perfection Learning and is used in schools across the United States.

DeSimone has also published several children's short stories and, in her spare time, writes museum exhibit text. DeSimone's work can be seen on reader rails at the George H.W. Bush Presidential Museum and Carbon Canyon Regional Park in Brea.

"Shelly DeSimone sees the promise of every student and, with great energy and insight, works to develop them into scholars ready to meet the challenges of higher education," Superintendent Martin Plourde said. "Shelly has created a legacy of academic excellence and is greatly admired by her peers as a tireless advocate of English language development."

PHOTO CAPTION

053118_WUHSD_TEACHEROFYEAR: La Serna High School English teacher Shelly DeSimone, pictured with Principal Ann Fitzgerald and Superintendent Martin Plourde, has been named Whittier Union's 2018-19 Teacher of the Year. DeSimone has been a teacher at La Serna for 34 years, helping English learners to speak, read and write English and guiding the Puente program.

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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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