



Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 18, 2023 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-445-1001

Santa Fe High School Educator Honored as Whittier Union High School District's 2023 Teacher of the Year

WHITTIER – There are few things that Santa Fe High School architectural design teacher Mike Griffie enjoys more than a good tailgate party and seeing his community come together to share a hamburger or hotdog before a home football game. As Santa Fe’s football announcer, Griffie revels in the opportunity to be the tight-knit school’s No. 1 booster.

Griffie, who has been at Santa Fe High for 30 years and is the director of the school’s Mechanical and Architectural Drafting (MAD) Academy, is fully committed to student achievement, whether by encouraging students to pursue careers in fields that interest them or by helping struggling students get back on track for graduation.

For his dedication and generosity, Griffie was named Whittier Union’s 2023 Teacher of the Year. The Whittier Union Board of Trustees presented Griffie with his award during the May 9 Board meeting.

“Santa Fe High School is a great school and great place to work. The administration and staff make it fun for me and the students make it a special place,” Griffie said. “If you come to the school and visit, you will see why. Whether they are deep in their studies, immersed in an extracurricular activity or helping a student with special needs, Santa Fe students have a tremendous amount of heart and pride.”

Griffie’s teaching career began nearly 40 years ago as a metal shop teacher in a neighboring school district. Upon coming to Whittier Union, he spent seven years teaching students with mild and moderate disabilities before moving into architectural design and mechanical drafting; the MAD Academy was launched in 2008. In his long career, Griffie said he has had many memorable experiences.

“I once had a woman go into labor in my class. That was about 15 years ago,” Griffie said. “This year I have at least two students who are grandchildren of students I taught in my first years at Santa Fe. Back when I started, we used overhead projectors for class lessons. Now, everything is done on computers. I can put an assignment in Google Classroom and the students can access it on their Chromebooks.”

The MAD Academy is a three-year California Partnership Academy pathway that prepares students for careers in design, engineering, architecture and other related fields. Santa Fe students enter the academy as a sophomore cohort, learning mechanical and architectural drawing and design, with the rest of their schedules geared toward fulfilling their A-G college requirements.

MAD Academy students take field trips to locations such as downtown Los Angeles for an architectural tour, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and even Dodger Stadium, where the students got to sit in Vin Scully’s chair.

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Griffie also arranges for professionals, such as architects, to visit the classroom as guest speakers. The MAD Academy's board of directors are students, ensuring that all activities are student-driven.

The bonds that Griffie has made at Santa Fe and throughout the community were solidified eight years ago after his wife became sick with a life-threatening illness. Faculty, staff and students responded by continually offering their assistance and encouraging words. After his wife died, he was stunned and humbled when more than 600 students attended a memorial service in her honor.

Griffie repaid Santa Fe for its benevolence when longtime football announcer and former Santa Fe soccer coach Carlos Casillas died in 2021, volunteering to become the new voice of the Chieftains. Griffie, who is careful to pronounce every athlete's name correctly, loves to chat with parents and fans in the stands, and said that he cannot wait for the start of the 2023-24 football season.

"Mike Griffie brings heart and passion to everything he does at Santa Fe," Principal Craig Campbell said. "Mike has been the backbone of this school for 30 years, always ready to lend a hand, help a fellow teacher, talk to a struggling student, or create opportunities for our students with special needs to grow. We are extremely proud that he is representing Santa Fe as Whittier Union Teacher of the Year. He has earned it."

PHOTO CAPTION

WUHSD_TOY1: For his dedication and generosity, Santa Fe High School teacher Mike Griffie was named Whittier Union's 2023 Teacher of the Year. The Whittier Union Board of Trustees celebrated and presented Griffie with his award during the May 9 Board meeting.

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OUR MISSION:

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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