



# Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 28, 2024    **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia    **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

## **Whittier Union High School District's Teacher of the Year Inspires Next Generation of STEM Leaders**

**WHITTIER** – Whittier High School chemistry teacher Thelma Krikorian can always be found in her classroom or lab, tutoring students after hours, guiding academic mentors as a peer-support network, and helping individuals realize their passions in the sciences.

Krikorian, who joined Whittier High School in 2005, has honed her skills over the last 23 years, teaching math and a range of science courses but always finding a home in the chemistry department. For her engaging labs and dedication to implementing numerous support systems, Krikorian has been named Whittier Union's 2024 Teacher of the Year.

"My favorite thing is inspiring students to pursue a career in the sciences," Krikorian said. "My mission is to not just teach chemistry but to prepare students and give them the skills needed to be successful when they transition to college and career."

Krikorian said she always knew she wanted a career in the sciences, but when she left high school she was unclear on a direction. While in her first chemistry class in college, she not only soared personally but helped many of her friends understand concepts that they were not able to fully master alone, which resulted in her tutoring many classmates and finding joy in their successes.

Just like in college, the lab is where Krikorian blossoms, and it's where she strives to inspire her students to develop the same love for learning that she has.

"I'm trying to provide my students the opportunities to see cool things, and not just solve problems, but have those important hands-on experiences that will lead them to continued success after high school," Krikorian said.

A typical day in her class begins with a lesson and notes, followed by time in the lab to apply those notes. Krikorian's classroom and lab are right next door, so it is easy travel for her and her students, and ensures the year is packed with visual, hands-on activities.

"My teaching philosophy is that you learn by doing and you learn by your mistakes," Krikorian said.

Every Friday, Krikorian holds tutoring hours as a chance for students to work on labs, make up exams, and receive extra help on lessons.

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Some tutoring days have around 10 students, but often the classroom is at full capacity with future chemistry and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) majors. Krikorian provides her classes with an additional layer of support with academic mentors who help in the classroom and honors students who help during the Friday tutoring sessions.

“Even though I have high expectations for my students, they are never alone in the journey,” Krikorian said. “I am committed to always providing the support they need to be successful.”

Krikorian also serves as advisor for the school’s Chemistry Club, sponsored by the American Chemistry Society. The club hosts schoolwide events like a science show at the end of the year and Mole Day, an unofficial holiday celebrated among chemists on October 23 between 6:02 a.m. and 6:02 p.m. – making the date 6:02 10/23 to commemorate Avogadro’s Number ( $6.02 \times 10^{23}$ ), a basic measuring unit in the field.

“Thelma Krikorian is an outstanding educator who takes an intimidating and complex subject like chemistry and makes it accessible for her students by providing them multiple opportunities to grow and learn through hands-on lessons,” Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo said. “Whittier High School’s STEM education is bolstered by the direction and collaboration of Thelma, and we are so proud that she represents our District as a leading STEM educator. Congratulations!”

### PHOTO CAPTION

**WUHSD\_TOY1:** For her engaging labs and dedication to implementing numerous support systems for her students, Whittier High School chemistry teacher Thelma Krikorian has been named Whittier Union’s 2024 Teacher of the Year. The Whittier Union Board of Trustees presented Krikorian with her award during the May 14 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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