



Whittier Union

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Aug. 16, 2023 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

Whittier Union Welcomes Students Back to Campuses, Embraces Growth for 2023-24 School Year

WHITTIER – Amid an air of excitement and anticipation, more than 10,000 Whittier Union High School District students stepped onto campuses adorned with vibrant posters, balloons and red carpets on the much-awaited first day of school on Aug. 16.

Across the District, students were welcomed onto campuses and greeted by energetic Associated Student Body (ASB) and Link Crew members, cheer and song teams, principals and administrators. During the morning rush, band and color guard ensembles played exhilarating tunes, creating an engaging and positive campus atmosphere for students and setting the stage for a successful 2023-24 academic year.

“I am looking forward to playing football and being around my friends again,” Pioneer High senior Ricky Campos said. “I am taking in the environment for my last first day of school at Pioneer. There is so much energy around campus today – it feels nice. Go Titans!”

The District also hosted its annual Freshman First Day (FFD) on Aug. 15 – a tradition that seeks to build camaraderie between incoming freshmen and their new school community. FFD helps students familiarize themselves with their new campus, teachers and administrators while also learning about the District’s best programs, activities, clubs, sports and more.

At Santa Fe High School, freshmen students packed the gymnasium, beginning a fun-filled and convivial day of activities to set the tone of achievement for the rest of the school year. The first-year students separated into small groups and met their Link Crew leaders, who took them to classrooms for introductions, orientations, games, snacks and prizes. Freshmen were then encouraged to sign up for extracurricular activities during Santa Fe’s annual Club Rush event before attending their first classes.

“As ASB President, I’m hoping to build a campus that embraces inclusivity,” Santa Fe senior Kaylie McMillen said. “I want to foster a healthy competition between all the grade levels, not just academically, but in ways that bring everyone together. It’s important for freshmen to be involved as much as they can. It’s what makes Santa Fe High School the best school ever!”

California, Pioneer, La Serna and Whittier high schools were also abuzz with energy on FFD, with students taking part in interactive games, navigating class schedules, enjoying student-led performances and interacting with teachers.

“The Link Crew leaders were so helpful and really made us feel welcomed,” Santa Fe freshman Juliet Hernandez said. “I was nervous about high school, but now I feel secure in my future.”

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Whittier Union began the school year with new leadership and policies in place. Such changes included a new Board of Trustees member for Trustee Area 3, Josefina E. Canchola, who was appointed following Dr. Ralph S. Pacheco’s retirement in July. Canchola took the oath of office during a July 18 Board meeting.

The 2023-24 school year also welcomed new policies that aim to boost student wellness and inclusion. The Board approved a Land Use Acknowledgement policy and an Alcohol and Other Drugs policy during the June 13 Board meeting.

The Land Use Acknowledgement policy recognizes and honors the rich history, art and culture of local Native Americans, and will also be used in the District’s comprehensive Ethnic Studies curriculum. The policy recognizes that each high school campus is located on the traditional land of California tribes and will establish a Native American advisory committee that will offer guidance, advice and protocols to increase inclusivity for the District community.

The new Alcohol and Other Drugs policy highlights the creation of intervention programs to promote safe and healthy environments, free from alcohol, marijuana and other drugs. The policy aims to “minimize disruption to a student’s academic program” by addressing the academic, physical and mental health needs of students first. This will include prevention and intervention programs, promoting parental/guardian involvement and active participation from students in research to understand drug use and its impact.

Finally, to ensure that all students have access to consistent and reliable transportation to school, Whittier Union has renewed its use of the GoPass program, which offers unlimited rides at no cost on the Metro bus and rail to all Whittier Union students. The pilot program began in October 2021 and has been a staple in the District since.

“The first day of school, and especially FFD, are fantastic representations of our amazing District – they outline our positive energy, goals for high achievement and support for our students to ensure academic excellence,” Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo said. “We’re excited to see what the future holds for all of our students as we begin another school year at Whittier Union, where we continue to do *Whatever It Takes* ‘To Achieve and Maintain Excellence.’”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

WUHS_D_FIRSTDAY1: A Pioneer High School student celebrates the first day of school on Aug. 16 and decorates the campus with balloons to start the 2023-24 school year.

WUHS_D_FIRSTDAY2: Santa Fe High School’s water polo team kicks off the 2023-24 school year during Santa Fe’s Freshmen First Day Club Rush event on Aug. 15.

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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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