



# WHITTIER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Aug. 16, 2024 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

## **Whittier Union Starts 2024-25 Strong, Unveiling New Theme and Athletic Program for Students**

WHITTIER – With a District theme of “Standing Strong Together,” the 2024-25 school year got off to a rousing start for more than 10,000 Whittier Union High School District students, who strode cheerfully and purposefully through their school gates on Aug. 14, ready to reconnect with friends and faculty and make new memories, as they take the next step in their academic journeys.

All five Whittier Union comprehensive high schools, as well as its continuation and independent study schools, greeted students with red carpets, welcome posters, balloons representing the school colors, cheer performances, band performances, and more.

"I am thrilled to be here welcoming students back onto campus for the fourth year in a row alongside my fellow ASB members," Whittier High School senior and Associated Student Body (ASB) president Emily Mata said. "Being a senior and stepping into this leadership role is incredibly exciting, but I would be lying if I said I wasn't a little nervous about the changes ahead. That is why I am determined to make the most of every moment and give it my all."

The arrival of returning students capped three days of back-to-school activities which included the District's Staff Day One event on Aug. 12, the annual Freshmen First Day to assist incoming freshmen on Aug. 13, and the official first day for all students and staff on Aug. 14.

Freshmen First Day (FFD) is a longstanding tradition at Whittier Union and aims to build camaraderie between incoming freshmen and their new school community. Led by ASB and Link Crew groups, administrators, and teachers and staff, FFD includes a variety of engaging activities such as team-building exercises, campus tours, and interactive games. Highlights of the day include orientations, student performances, icebreakers, and a prize giveaway.

Additionally, several schools hosted their annual Club Rush, offering new students the opportunity to explore and enroll in various clubs.

Among the new faces at the District this year is Whittier High School principal Andres Favela, who replaced longtime WHS principal and current Director of Assessment and Accountability Tim Liggett. Favela is one of two new principals at Whittier Union this year, along with recently appointed California High School principal Shana Jones.

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The new school year is set to bring many new opportunities for students, especially for female scholar-athletes who have for years been looking forward to playing in an organized flag football league. They will receive that chance this year, as flag football was approved by the CIF Southern Section as an official sport beginning this school year, after a year as a pilot program. Whittier, La Serna, Santa Fe, Pioneer, and Cal high schools will all field varsity teams.

“We are excited to have girls flag football this year,” Whittier Union Director of Student Activities and Athletics Sean Steward said. “This is a significant step in expanding opportunities for our female athletes. The game is played 7-on-7, with no major contact. With the NCAA considering adding flag football, this program could create new pathways.”

The new school year’s theme – “Standing Strong Together” – was initiated by Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo, who likened the education process to the growth and solidarity of majestic California redwoods, which find strength in unity, have value in diversity, have strong foundations, protect and nurture the next generation, and support each other by standing together.

“Together, like the mighty redwoods, we can weather any storm, reach incredible heights, and create a lasting legacy that will benefit generations to come,” Dr. Oviedo said. “Let’s continue to grow, support each other, and stand tall – for our students, for our community, and for each other. We are incredibly excited for the start of what is sure to be another successful and exciting year at Whittier Union. Welcome back, students!”

#### PHOTO CAPTIONS:

**WUHSB\_BACKTOSCHOOL1:** Whittier Union High School District held its annual Freshmen First Day on Aug. 13, welcoming incoming freshmen to campus to learn about their new environment and take part in a series of icebreaker games/campus tours led by ASB and Link Crew leaders.

**WUHSB\_BACKTOSCHOOL2:** Whittier Union welcomed more than 10,000 students onto campuses on Aug. 14, ringing in the start of the 2024-25 school year with welcome posters, balloons, and cheer and band performances.

**WUHSB\_BACKTOSCHOOL3:** Whittier Union kicked off the 2024-25 school year with its annual Staff Day One event on Aug. 12, which welcomed teachers, staff, and administrators onto campus to break bread, share about the summer months, and plan for the new year.

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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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