



Press Release

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Whittier Union Stimulates STEM Exploration with Host of New Courses

WHITTIER – To prepare students for a future in technology and innovation, the Whittier Union High School District this year is launching a host of new courses in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields at its comprehensive high schools, with topics ranging from crime scene investigation to video game graphics and design.

Classes include an Advanced Placement course and three courses designed by Project Lead The Way (PLTW), the nation's leading provider of STEM curriculum. Additionally, the District kicked off a new visual and performing arts course in color guard. Nearly all courses are A-G-approved and meet the criteria for entrance into a four-year university.

"We know the impact STEM programs such as the ones we're launching have on transforming our students into the computer scientists, engineers and medical professionals of tomorrow," Superintendent Martin Plourde said. "These fields that demand a talented workforce and Whittier Union is proud to be a leader in educating generations of problem solvers."

At Pioneer High School, one of the new courses that students can explore is "Principals of Biomedical Science," where they will learn the skills of a crime scene investigator, including learning the process of DNA sequencing, matching fingerprints and analyzing hair samples.

"I'm excited about this new course because I didn't learn some of these biotech skills until I got to college, and these kids will get the opportunity to really delve into the topic in high school," said biology teacher Kenneth Guidry, who this summer attended an intense, two-week training camp at the University at San Diego to learn the PLTW curriculum that will guide the hands-on topic.

The following STEM classes will be offered during the 2016-17 school year:

Principles of Biomedical Science (PLTW) – Among the fields of study are crime scene investigations, human anatomy, physiology, microbiology, fingerprinting, DNA and hair samples. Pioneer High School can accommodate 28 ninth and 10th-grade students for this class.

Earth and Space Science – Students learn about earth's place in the universe, geology, hydrology, the atmosphere, and the impact humans have on the environment. The topic will be available to 844 students in grades 10 through 12 across the District's comprehensive high schools.

Digital Electronics (PLTW) – This course includes the study of electronic circuits used to process and control digital signals. Digital electronics is the foundation of all modern electronics, including cellular phones, MP3 players, laptop computers, digital cameras and high definition televisions. Whittier and California high schools will be able to accommodate 228 students in grades 10 through 12.

Food and Nutrition Science – Students in grades 11 and 12 will learn how to apply basic laws of chemistry, microbiology and physics to production, processing, preservation and packaging of food. They will examine the helpful and harmful effects of microorganisms in the food supply and how the complex mixtures found in foods are combined and separated. Whittier High School can accommodate 94 students in this class. This course is in the process of becoming A-G-approved.

Video Game Graphics and Design – This course teaches students about the technological and creative aspects of video game graphic design, including computerized gaming, perspective, design, animation, programming logic and the evolution of gaming. Whittier High can accommodate 70 10th- through 12th-grade students.

Principles of Engineering (PLTW) – Available to students at all grade levels, this class allows students to gain skills and understanding of college-level engineering concepts through hands-on activities, projects and problem-based learning. Whittier High can accommodate 67 students with this class.

Exploring Computer Science – Rather than focusing on learning particular software or programming languages, students in this class will focus on the conceptual ideas of computing. The goal is to instill in students computational practices for developing algorithms, problem solving and programming within the context of problems students face every day. It will be offered to ninth through 12th graders at California, Santa Fe and Whittier High schools. These classes can accommodate 135 students.

AP Computer Science Principles – Students will learn the foundational concepts of computer science, using the tools and processes incorporated by artists, writers, computer scientists and engineers. This is an Advanced Placement course for 10th, 11th and 12th grade students at La Serna and Whittier high schools, which can accommodate 88 students.

PHOTO CAPTION:

NEWSTEM: Pioneer High School biology teacher Kenneth Guidry teaches a group of students how to evaluate evidence as part of a crime scene investigation during a class he teaches on the principles of biomedical science, one of a host of new science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) courses Whittier Union launched this school year.

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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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