



# El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career

## PRESS RELEASE

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## El Monte Union Educator Named Among 16 LA County Teachers of the Year

Arroyo High School's Jamie Witt will advance to compete for state title

**EL MONTE** – Jamie Witt, a 20-year social science teacher in the El Monte Union High School District, has dedicated her entire career to ensuring that students are civically-engaged, prepared for the rigors of college and empowered to achieve what they might perceive to be the impossible.

The District's 2017-18 Teacher of the Year is known for her empathy in the classroom and for being an inspiration to students as coordinator of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at Arroyo High School, her alma mater.

Witt's efforts were recognized on Sept. 29 by the Los Angeles County Office of Education, which named her one of 16 Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year.

"I am excited and honored to represent my colleagues and I hope to showcase the hard work that educators of El Monte Union do for our students," Witt said. "I would like to thank my principal at Arroyo, Angelita Gonzales-Hernandez, for her overwhelming support, and for providing me with the opportunities to lead and shine on our campus. I feel privileged."

Now in its 36th year, the L.A. County Teacher of the Year competition is the largest in the state and is part of the nation's most prestigious honor for educators. Witt joins an elite group of teachers, who represent the best of the 72,000 public school educators in the county. She advances to the California Teacher of the Year competition. The winner will be announced in late October.

Currently Arroyo's Shields Up and AVID Coordinator, Witt has held a number of leadership positions over her tenure, working to create districtwide government and economics curriculum, collaborating with an Arroyo faculty team to develop the Shields Up embedded tutorial program, and advocating for ongoing professional development.

"Jamie brings energy, life, pride and the whole meaning of what education is about," Gonzales-Hernandez said. "She is an example of what an Arroyo Knight is. She's dedicated, works long hours and never says anything is impossible. We know that she can compete with the best out there."

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Witt helped found Arroyo's AVID program in 2000, expanding the college-readiness program from two sections to 10, championing the inclusion of AVID learning methods into Advanced Placement courses, and overseeing a curriculum that encompasses 12 percent of the Arroyo student population. The program boasts an 86 percent college-acceptance rate.

Striving to ensure that her students see themselves as active participants in society, Witt guides them through civic engagement and entrepreneurial projects, challenging them to identify needs within their community, seek solutions and understand the complexities of the world.

Each year, Witt stages an Arroyo High talent show that collects an average of \$6,000 annually for student scholarships. Witt also developed a partnership with Southern California Edison to provide additional scholarship money, while enabling students to connect with legal and business professionals.

As part of the LACOE Teacher of the Year honor, each of the 16 teachers was awarded \$1,000, along with \$100 gift cards to purchase classroom items.

"We are so excited for Jamie, a product of El Monte Union and whose enthusiasm and passion for teaching has helped to put our District and students on the map of educational excellence," Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. "Her dedication to the teaching profession is felt throughout the District and the El Monte Union community. We are proud to have an Arroyo Knight represent our District."

The County Office of Education also created a [video](#) that highlights Witt's journey to being a teacher.

### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**100917\_EMUHSW\_WITT1:** Arroyo High School social science teacher Jamie Witt was named one of 16 Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year by the Los Angeles County Office of Education on Sept. 29. The achievement was celebrated at the El Monte Union High School District Board of Trustees meeting on Oct. 4. Pictured are Board Vice President Maria Morgan, left, Board Clerk Maria-Elena Talamantes, Board Member Esthela Torres de Siegrist, Arroyo High School Principal Angelita Gonzales-Hernandez, teacher Jamie Witt, Board President Carlos G. Salcedo, student Julissa Saucedo, Board Member Ricardo Padilla, and Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga.

**100917\_EMUHSW\_WITT2:** Arroyo High School teacher Jamie Witt interact with students in her Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) class. Witt, who has been teaching at the El Monte Union High School District for 20 years, is the school's Shields Up and AVID Coordinator. As an L.A. County Teacher of the Year, Witt automatically advances to the California Teacher of the Year competition.

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*The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.*