



# Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

*To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...*

## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Nov. 17, 2023    **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia    **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

## **Whittier Union Students Learn Money Management during ‘Bite of Reality’ Financial Literacy Event**

**WHITTIER** – La Serna High School students received a crash course in money management during “Bite of Reality,” an event held on Nov. 8 as part of the school’s Financial Wellness Program that saw nearly 250 La Serna students participate in an interactive financial education simulation designed to teach them how to budget their money as adults.

Using the Bite of Reality phone app, students were randomly assigned virtual personas, which provided them jobs, salaries and families, as well as debts from sources such as student loans and credit cards. Students then went “shopping” to find out how much various necessities – like housing, clothing, food and daycare – would cost them annually. The goal for students was to finish their assignment with zero debt.

"I am incredibly proud of our students who participated in the Bite of Reality event. These experiences are crucial for their growth, helping them become financially responsible adults," Board Member Irma Rodríguez Moisa said. "A big thank you to La Serna High School for hosting this event. At Whittier Union, we are dedicated to offering diverse opportunities that enrich our students' knowledge and support their overall development."

The event was sponsored by Credit Union of Southern California (CU SoCal), which has partnered with La Serna to provide a three-tiered Financial Wellness Program for the school’s OASIS and Haven students, as well as Consumer Math and Business Academy students, English learners and special education students enrolled in Economics.

"This is a wonderful event for our students and we are grateful to have partners like CU SoCal, who can interact so well with our kids and put them on the path to success," La Serna Intervention Specialist Lisa Barnes said. "The students learned about bills, financial setbacks and taxes, and had to walk back certain purchases, like a new car, because they could not afford them. It’s very encouraging to see the students with an understanding of real-world economics."

La Serna seniors Ben Barragan, Isaac Rojo and Jacob Moon all completed Bite of Reality with no debt but were stunned at the expense of basic necessities and how complicated it can be to balance a budget.

Moon said he felt Bite of Reality was a real eye-opener, especially in regard to raising children.

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Barragan realized the importance of having stability in life, and the need for married couples to be on the same page financially. Rojo, who has a part time job and has already opened a savings account on his own, said he appreciated the guidance from credit union representatives, who stressed the importance of thinking through future purchases.

“Think about your needs before your wants,” Rojo said.

CU SoCal also worked to provide materials and courses in Spanish, and made sure each station had one bilingual volunteer, allowing three classes of La Serna English learners to participate. La Serna sophomore Nolvis Maldonado successfully completed the workshop with no debt but was surprised at how much his monthly car payment would be, as well as day to day groceries.

“I was a little confused at first,” Maldonado said through an interpreter. “I bought a lot of expensive stuff, then I figured out to manage my money better and how to protect it.”

Bite of Reality is a service provided by CU SoCal’s Business and Community Development department. CU SoCal manager Joe Perez said it’s important for students to get an opportunity to practice financial literacy and gain knowledge on budgeting in an exercise where they can walk away without consequences.

“We’ve held workshops where we’ve explained the value of money to the students, but Bite of Reality is their chance to put it into practice,” Perez said. “We want our young adults to start their financial journey on the right path and help them to build successful lives for themselves.”

The CU SoCal Financial Wellness program also includes workshops centering on “Teens and Money” and “Money Management.” Students who successfully complete all three workshops, including Bite of Reality, are eligible to open a CU SoCal account, and receive a \$100 bonus deposit from the credit union.

“Understanding how finance works is as important for our students as passing a final exam or filling out a college application,” Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo said. “Kudos to Lisa Barnes and CU SoCal for staging a successful and engaging financial literacy event that resonated with the students.”

## PHOTO CAPTIONS

**WUHSD\_BITEOFREALITY1:** La Serna High School sophomore Nolvis Maldonado participates in Bite of Reality on Nov. 8, a financial education simulation designed to teach students how to budget their money as adults.

**WUHSD\_BITEOFREALITY2:** A CU SoCal volunteer assists La Serna High School students participating in Bite of Reality on Nov. 8, one of three programs in La Serna’s Financial Wellness Program.

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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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