



Press Release

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Whittier Union Alumni Continue Legacy as Teachers to Next Generation of Students

WHITTIER – Whittier Union High School District’s culture of collaboration, support and inclusiveness has inspired dozens of alumni to return as teachers and provide new generations of students with the same great experience they received during their journeys through high school.

Over the past three years, 21 percent of the District’s certificated hires, or 14 of 65 teachers, have been Whittier Union graduates, adding to the legacy of dedicated educators who contribute to the success and academic achievements of every student.

“We are extremely proud of our alumni teachers and the work they do to make our District a better place in which to work and learn,” Superintendent Martin Plourde said. “It is through their dedication, encouragement and motivation that our former students continue to be successful in their ventures, and in many cases, return home to inspire a new generation of community leaders.”

One of the District’s newest alumni teachers is Matthew Lozano, a 2007 Santa Fe High graduate who was hired in 2015 as a Guided Studies teacher at Whittier High School. Lozano offers students homework help, guidance on developing essential study skills, and motivation to be successful in high school and college.

Lozano – who after graduating began coaching football at Santa Fe and Whittier high schools while pursuing a bachelor’s degree at Cal State L.A. and a master’s at the University of Phoenix – said the District’s “Whatever It Takes” motto inspired him to go into teaching.

“I remember all of my teachers being so generous with their time – they enjoyed being around the students whether it was just having conversations, watching athletic events or leaving their door open during lunch,” Lozano said. “After seeing that openness in my youth, I’ve tried to do the same with my students and show them that I care about their educational and emotional growth.”

Freshman Lena Meschke attests to Lozano’s ability to reach students on a personal level, motivating them by using his own experiences from his time as a Whittier Union student.

“Since Mr. Lozano is a Whittier Union graduate, it definitely impacts how he teaches us because he knows how we feel, the problems we’re going through and knows how to encourage us,” Meschke said.

While Lozano represents the wave of new alumni teachers, Whittier Union also has a number of graduates who have dedicated years – and in some cases decades – to the District, including California High School alumna Wendy Brandt.

Over her 29-year education career at Whittier Union, Brandt has taught physical education and biology at Santa Fe High School and served as a reading and Guided Studies teacher. For the last 20 years, she has also worked as a mentor teacher, consulting teacher and New Teacher Program specialist, providing development training to new hires.

Considered a teacher’s teacher by her colleagues, Brandt was selected Whittier Union’s 2012-13 Teacher of the Year.

“Throughout my four years at Cal High, I was fortunate to be taught by wonderful teachers who were dedicated to their craft and wanted the best for their students,” said Brandt, who jumped at the opportunity to re-join Whittier Union and replicate the same experience she had for new students. “I love teaching and mentoring in a district that believes creating positive relationships with students leads to greater academic success. When students feel that you value and care for them, they are more engaged in their learning and motivated to succeed.”

Lozano and Brandt represent just a small portion of Whittier Union teachers who have returned to their alma mater, but each has arrived with the intent to support students through their life trajectories.

“It’s not easy being on the teacher’s side of the desk, but these alumni are a testament to the power of our District’s unity and belief that every student deserves a quality education from teachers and staff who care about their success,” Plourde said. “I am heartened to see that the support has yet to waver.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

110317_WUHSD_ALUMNI1: Whittier High School teacher Matthew Lozano helps students budget their time and set up goals during a Guided Studies session. Lozano, a 2007 graduate of Santa Fe High School, is among the latest alumni to join the District as a teacher.

110317_WUHSD_ALUMNI2: Whittier High School teacher Matthew Lozano is one of the District’s 14 alumni teachers over the last three years. Lozano, a Santa Fe High graduate, credits his former teachers and the District for inspiring him to go into the teaching profession.

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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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