



WHITTIER UNION

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 23, 2025 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

Whittier Union Senior Receives Award of Merit for Leadership, Commitment to Mental Wellness

WHITTIER – Pioneer High School senior Nydia Palacios is known as a natural leader and an academic role model who loves to challenge herself, acquiring both high school and college credits at a lightning pace while enjoying as many extracurricular activities as she can fit into one day.

Palacios, who boasts a 4.05 GPA, entered her senior year with 286 credits, which far exceeds the traditional 220 credits needed to graduate. Palacios has also gotten a start on higher education, having completed seven community college dual enrollment courses, in addition to her myriad campus leadership positions and musical and athletic pursuits as a member of the PHS Jazz Band, track & field, and girl's cross-country teams.

Palacios' love of volunteering has seen her devote countless hours to help serve those in need, whether she is engaging in afterschool tutoring for the Boys and Girls Club, or serving as a Youth Leader for her church. Palacios has also emerged as a campus leader. She is currently president of Pioneer's PTSA Club and as a junior was vice president of the school site council.

Her interest in pursuing justice led her to be selected as a Girls State representative over the summer, where she connected and networked with her peers, passing the mock bar exam and performing in the Girls State talent show.

Palacios' passion for studying psychology has led to an internship with the Child Mind Institute's Mental Health Academy, as well as a collaboration with PHS staff on a Mental Health Handbook for future Pioneer High Titans.

For her leadership, volunteer spirit, and commitment to mental wellness, the Whittier Union Board of Trustees presented Palacios with an Award of Merit during its Sept. 9 Board meeting.

"Thank you to Pioneer High and to my parents," Palacios said. "My parents have guided me every step of the way, instilling a resilience and perseverance that I carry with me every day. Despite the hardships and challenges they faced, they never stopped pushing me to move forward. Thank you to my counselor, Lilia Torres-Cooper, who has supported me, along with so many others from Pioneer. They have all helped me get to where I am today."

– MORE –

Taking a deep dive into psychology during her junior and senior years, Palacios completed two award-winning psychology projects for Pioneer High’s science fair – a sophomore-year project that tested the Mandela Effect and a junior-year project on children’s picky eating, which was selected to be presented at the Los Angeles County Science Fair.

“Nydia demonstrates leadership, academic excellence, and a commitment to learning,” Principal Mary Chapman said. “She is a well-rounded student with a strong academic foundation, a passion for community service, student leadership, and a love for the arts and education. She is a Titan with a bright future, and we cannot wait to see what she will accomplish next.”

As Palacios addressed the Board of Trustees and meeting attendees, she paused to reflect on the impact of all that she has learned.

“Staying in tune with myself and the world around me has meant learning to appreciate the little things,” Palacios said. “It is about taking a moment to notice things we can count on. The sound of a leaf crunching under your foot, the specific knock a wooden table makes – these predictable moments bring a sense of comfort. They ground us and remind us to be present, no matter how unpredictable life gets.”

PHOTO CAPTION

WUHS _AWARDOFMERIT: Pioneer High School senior Nydia Palacios was honored with an Award of Merit, presented by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees on Sept. 9, recognizing her leadership, volunteer spirit, and commitment to mental wellness.

###

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.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dr. Russell Castañeda-Calleros
President

Irma Rodríguez Moisa
Vice President

Josefina E. Canchola
Clerk

Jaime López
Member

Gary Mendez
Member

Dr. Monica Oviedo
Superintendent