



WHITTIER UNION

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 22, 2026 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

Santa Fe High School Mariachi Performers Tune Up for Independence Day Celebration

WHITTIER – Santa Fe High School’s student-led Mariachi Los Dorados is tuning up for its biggest performance to date, when it joins with the Whittier community to celebrate Mexican Independence Day during “El Grito De Dolores,” to be held on Sunday, Aug. 30 from 2 to 5 p.m. at Whittier High School’s Vic Lopez Auditorium.

Mariachi Los Dorados was created in the spring of 2025 as a club, with about a dozen students. Spurred on by the music and culture of mariachi, and learning the basics of playing such instruments as the guitarrón, vihuela, violin, and trumpet, the club evolved into an elective class during the fall of 2025, with 21 students and three mariachi coaches.

The mariachi class is led by Santa Fe choir director David Kwon, who has always been a fan of Latin jazz. Kwon had been exploring ways to get more students into music classes and began attending mariachi conferences to learn more about the art form, and possibly recruit experienced players to come to the school and teach.

At the same time, the Whittier Union Board of Trustees voted to provide Santa Fe and Kwon with funding to hire the three current coaches.

“The program really took off after we hired the new coaches. The interest is coming from all areas of the campus,” Kwon said. “We were hoping to bring in new students and ideas to the music department and it’s gone much farther than I expected. We are so appreciative of the Board for allowing this program to grow and expand.”

With less than a year to learn their instruments and prepare for live performances, Mariachi Los Dorados has already made an impact throughout the community with a series of performances during the 2025-26 school year, including the school’s Expanded Horizons Posada celebration, sitting in at a Santa Fe marching band concert, and a performance for the Board of Trustees during a Board meeting.

Though mariachi is a cherished Mexican tradition, Kwon says that interest in the music class cuts across demographics with Mariachi Los Dorados members representing a range of ethnicities, including a large group of students of Central American descent.

“It doesn’t matter if the kids grew up with the music or they are just experiencing it for the first time, Mariachi feeds into the culture of Santa Fe,” Kwon said. “Mariachi Los Dorados works not just because our coaches are so amazing, but because we are bringing together students with similar interests and encouraging them to be as creative as they want to be.”

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“El Grito de Dolores” (“The Cry of Dolores”) is presented by the Hispanic Outreach Taskforce (HOT) in partnership with Whittier Union to celebrate Mexican Independence Day, commemorating Sept. 16, 1810.

The show will also include live performances by Mariachi Las Colibri and Angeles de Pepe Martinez Jr., and Ballet Folklorico Asi Es Mi Tierra. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for seniors and students w/ID. Proceeds will go to HOT’s scholarship fund and the purchase of *trajes de charro*, the traditional suits worn by mariachi players, for the Santa Fe High School group.

“David Kwon has done an amazing job building the Mariachi program from scratch,” Santa Fe Principal Craig Campbell said. “Our school and community have really embraced it and are really excited about how it has grown. We can’t wait for their next performance.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

WUHSD_MARIACHI1: Santa Fe High School’s Mariachi Los Dorados are all smiles during a performance at a Whittier Union Board meeting in March. The group, active since spring 2025, will lend their talents to the upcoming “El Grito de Dolores” Mexican Independence Day celebration on Sunday, Aug. 30 from 2 to 5 p.m. at Whittier High School’s Vic Lopez Auditorium.

WUHSD_MARIACHI2: Santa Fe High School Mariachi Los Dorados violin players display their technique during a performance at a Whittier Union Board meeting in March.

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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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