



WHITTIER UNION

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Aug. 28, 2026 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

Whittier Union Schools Recognized as National PTA Schools of Excellence

WHITTIER – Two Whittier Union high schools have been named Schools of Excellence by the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), recognizing their leadership in creating welcoming and inclusive school communities.

Whittier and Pioneer high schools were among 300 schools across the country to receive the two-year designation, highlighting parent, teacher, and student volunteers who work tirelessly to increase family engagement, advocate for teachers, support student achievement, and celebrate school spirit.

Whittier High School Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) president Genoa Stewart and treasurer Marlena Quintana joined the PTSA when their children were freshmen and the group had 35 members. In just two years, participation has increased to nearly 150 members. During the 2025-26 school year, Whittier High's PTSA awarded seven scholarships, worth more than \$5,200, to Cardinal seniors.

The student-led Whittier High PTSA gained national recognition in January after finishing first place in the USAgain America Recycles Day Challenge, which came with a grand prize of \$1,500. The PTSA was also awarded a \$3,000 TikTok Create with Kindness grant, which helped to fund a student/parent seminar focused on online safety.

Through its fundraising efforts, the PTSA supported 15 student events during the 2025-26 school year, including senior award nights and Red Ribbon Week activities. Other popular activities included a Topgolf fundraiser held at Montebello Golf Course in January, and a family Spirit Night which brought Cardinal families together for a night of community bonding.

The PTSA also supports teachers through its Teacher Appreciation Day event in May and the Day One staff lunch, and helps raise funds for Whittier High alumni.

"Our main goal is to increase awareness of the PTSA, so we hold separate membership drives for teachers and students, we create little spirit boxes and gift packs, things that capture people's attention," Quintana said. "Every member has a voice, contributing ideas and deciding where the money is spent."

Pioneer High's PTSA raised more than \$3,000 during the 2025-26 school year for scholarships, including one given to Class of 2026 senior standout Diego Reynoso, who is attending Cal Poly Humboldt. The PTSA also gave selected students prom tickets and graduation tickets.

The Titan PTSA is a family affair, led by Pioneer High Class of 1999 graduate and Horizons director Karen Verduzco, one of six family members to graduate from Pioneer. Verduzco's mother, Marta Lobos, still volunteers at PTSA events 30 years after first joining.

– MORE –

"Through our student-led PTSA Executive Board to our amazing staff, we look to identify opportunities for growth and create meaningful ways for families to engage and support activities that strengthen school culture," Verduzco said. "We're very proud of our PTSA presidents, whose leaderships skills have served them well after high school."

At Pioneer PTSA's first membership drive of the 2026-27 school year, four past PTSA presidents spoke to families about their experiences leading the PTSA. The alumna included Class of 2022 graduate Fernanda Reyes, Class of 2024 graduate Isabel Gonzalez, Class of 2025 graduate Maya Roman, and Class of 2026 graduate Nydia Palacios.

Reyes recently graduated from UCLA with a bachelor's degree in environmental science. The skills she acquired reviving the PTSA after the pandemic have helped her to communicate with her professors, and gave her the confidence to obtain an internship in Prague, where she worked with the Czech government and the European Union.

Gonzalez, who was co-president with her sister Galilea, is entering her third year at UCLA, where she is double majoring in political science and public affairs. Her experience working with different demographics helped lead to a job with the California Department of Justice and Attorney General Rob Bonta, where she used her skills to inform policy discussions.

Roman is a Cal State Long Beach sophomore, where she is studying speech pathology. Leading the PTSA allowed Roman to overcome her shyness and take advantage of academic opportunities. At Cal State Long Beach, Roman has joined the Mariachi Club and currently works at Knott's Berry Farm.

Palacios is a freshman at Irvine Community College and plans to transfer to UC Berkeley to study psychology. Palacios said she loved the opportunity to work with students and parents of all ages, allowing her to work closely with her professors and peers at college. Palacios, who received an Award of Merit from the Board of Trustees in 2026, is a strong proponent of mental wellness and spent the summer working for a substance abuse recovery center.

"Through the phenomenal support of District PTSAs, our schools are thriving," Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo said. "Congratulations to the Whittier and Pioneer PTSAs for their recognition. They fully support their schools with pride, innovation, and fun."

PHOTO CAPTIONS

WUHS_PTSA1: Whittier High School's Parent Teacher Student Association was recently named a PTA School of Excellence by the National PTA. The group's fundraising efforts, including bake sales at the Cardinal 75 Awards Ceremony, support student achievement and the Whittier community.

WUHS_PTSA2: Pioneer High School's Parent Teacher Student Association was recently named a PTA School of Excellence by the National PTA. Pioneer's PTSA has a long history of student leadership. During its first fundraiser of the 2026-27 school year, the PTSA brought back four of its past presidents to speak to Titan families.

###

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

Irma Rodríguez Moisa President	Jaime López Clerk	Armando Urteaga Member
Josefina E. Canchola Vice President	Dr. Russell Castañeda-Calleros Member	Dr. Monica Oviedo Superintendent