

PRESS RELEASE

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South Whittier School District Selects 30-Year Educator as New Superintendent

SOUTH WHITTIER – The South Whittier School District Board of Education on May 16 selected Dr. Gary Gonzales, a 30-year educator and longtime administrator at the Alhambra Unified School District, to helm the District as its next executive leader.

The selection follows an extensive search by consultant Leadership Associates, an online survey garnering input from District stakeholders, several discussions by the Board of Education on the characteristics, skills and qualities desired in a superintendent, and interviews with highly qualified candidates. Gonzales will assume his new role July 1.

“Dr. Gonzales has been an educational trailblazer at Alhambra Unified, always keeping in mind the individual needs of students and doing everything he can to support teachers and staff as they guide and educate students,” South Whittier Board President Francisco “Javi” Santana said. “We are ecstatic to welcome him and we are confident that he will augment the successes our District has had thus far, helping us to remove any barriers to student achievement.”

Gonzales will succeed Superintendent Gail Baxter, who will retire in June after 27 years as an educator and administrator in the District.

“I am blessed and honored to have the privilege to serve the students, families and community of the South Whittier School District,” Gonzales said. “I have seen firsthand the dedication of this District’s administrators, teachers and staff to increasing student learning and achievement. I look forward to joining the team and working with all stakeholders to continue this amazing momentum.”

Gonzales began his career in education in 1987, when he served as an adult education teacher and special education teacher in Bassett Unified.

In 1991, Gonzales established himself as an educational leader at Alhambra Unified, where he served in various capacities, including as a special education teacher, dean of students, assistant principal, coordinator of child welfare and attendance, principal and director of secondary education.

He was appointed assistant superintendent of educational services in 2007, helping the successful instructional improvement efforts across all grade levels and instituting a systemic approach to advancing equity and rigor for all students, particularly English learners.

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Under Gonzales' leadership, Alhambra Unified implemented innovative programs to meet the needs of students, including an early college program and PODER (Pursuing Our Dreams through Education and Responsibility), a course that provides students with the resources and skills to succeed in college.

Alhambra Unified's open enrollment policy for Advancement Placement (AP) courses has led to an increase in the number of students participating in the program, earning recognition from The Education Trust and College Board for making AP classes accessible to low-income students and students of color. Gonzales also helped establish Mandarin and Spanish Dual Immersion programs to ensure students have a competitive edge over their peers.

Over the last two years, the California Department of Education has awarded Alhambra Unified 10 Gold Ribbons and Title I Academic Achievement awards to elementary and high schools combined. Additionally, the District's student proficiency scores in math, English language arts and science outperform State and Los Angeles County averages.

"Dr. Gonzales has demonstrated over time and in multiple indicators a proven track record of advancing the achievement of students at Alhambra Unified, and I have no doubt that he can replicate that same success in South Whittier School District," Baxter said. "With Dr. Gonzales' guidance, leadership and mentorship, our talented pool of teachers and staff will continue to do what they do best – educating our students and preparing them for their future endeavors."

Gonzales has a masters of education degree from Azusa Pacific University and a doctorate of education from the University of La Verne. He is an adjunct professor at APU's School of Education.

PHOTO CAPTION:

051817_SWSD_GONZALES: Dr. Gary Gonzales, a 30-year educator and longtime administrator at the Alhambra Unified School District, has been selected to helm the South Whittier School District as its next executive leader.

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MISSION/VISION: The South Whittier School District holds students and staff to rigorous standards in order to prepare every scholar for 21st Century success in college and the workforce, within a safe and supportive environment. Our students are challenged to reach their full potential and develop their curiosity and thirst for discovery. Our district celebrates our families' diverse traditions, cultures, and languages as foundations for learning.