



Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 16, 2020 **CONTACT:** Juliette Funes, William Diepenbrock **PHONE:** 909-445-1001

Whittier Union Develops 4-Stage Back-to-School Learning Plan that Ensures Flexibility Amid Uncertainty

WHITTIER – Whittier Union High School District is exploring adopting a quarter system for the fall semester of the 2020-21 school year, which begins Wednesday, Aug. 12. The instructional model is part of a four-stage teaching and learning plan that is adaptable to the continuously changing environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the surge of positive coronavirus cases across the state and Los Angeles County, school districts are developing flexible back-to-school learning plans that ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff and provide robust instruction to students – whether delivered online or in-person.

“We are four weeks away from restarting school, but we have seen how much can change in a short period of time, and we must be ready and prepared for any scenario,” Superintendent Martin Plourde said. “Using our formula of collaboration, we have been able to establish a plan with various stages for reopening that is responsive to the conditions of the pandemic, ensures instructional continuity for our students and protects the safety of our staff, students and community-at-large.”

As part of the 3x9 instructional model, students would take three classes each nine-week quarter, enabling them to still complete six classes, or 30 credits, in the semester. The model would be implemented in each of the District’s [four stages for reopening](#):

- Stage 1: 100% online learning with daily student/teacher interaction.
- Stage 2: Online instruction with in-person support/office hours.
- Stage 3: Hybrid model with 50% attendance. Students would receive a combination of virtual and in-classroom instruction. Live Zoom office hours would be available to all students.
- Stage 4: 100% in-person attendance with live Zoom office hours available to all students.

In each stage, Mondays are dedicated in live interaction with students to set the plan for the week, along with teacher planning, collaboration, staff meetings and student outreach. The other four days will have dedicated instructional time for the three classes in which students are enrolled. Families would still have the option to pursue distance learning only.

The Board of Trustees is expected to vote on the recommended instructional model and the stage in which schools will reopen at a special meeting **Tuesday, July 28**, when health conditions will be clearer.

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“As we have done since our schools closed in March, our Board and our District have shown prudence and patience throughout this process,” Plourde said. “We will continue following a measured approach and look to county data to inform our final decision as to how to safely move forward.”

To guide efforts to create safe learning environments, the District formed a Coronavirus Taskforce, which includes 27 District administrators and union representatives; a Reopening Think Tank composed of teachers and principals; a Student Well-Being Taskforce that includes 14 counselors, school psychologists and licensed social workers; and a COVID-19 compliance team. The District is also working in collaboration with its partner elementary school districts (East Whittier, Little Lake, Los Nietos, South Whittier and Whittier City).

Whittier Union also solicited feedback from families to gauge their preferences for instruction and comfort level with returning to school through surveys. Another survey will be provided to families in the coming days. Each school site will also host virtual meetings next week to answer any questions families may have.

The District continues to work with federal, state and local public health and education departments for guidance on the reopening of schools and is monitoring health orders, which are revised often.

Under state guidelines, Districts are required to meet 180 days of instruction for the year and 240 instructional minutes-per-day (live interaction and online work), engage with students daily, monitor their progress and maintain school connectedness.

If campuses physically reopen in Stage 2 or higher, vulnerable employees would be able to work from home; temperature checks, health screenings and face coverings will be required for all students, staff and visitors; work stations and desks must be placed 6 feet apart; hand sanitizer must be widely available and restrooms must be cleaned and disinfected frequently; staff must monitor campuses to ensure social distancing; and buses will operate at a 25% capacity. Lab and art supplies are to be disinfected between uses; air filters must be upgraded; doors and windows must be kept open during the school day; HVAC systems are to be set to maximum air exchange; and high-efficiency air cleaners are to be installed.

Anyone exhibiting symptoms while on campus will be sent home for self-quarantine and referred for testing. If a close contact (i.e. family member) of a student/staff member tests positive, they will be required to self-quarantine. If a student/staff member on a campus tests positive, they will be required to quarantine and those impacted will be notified. If there are three or more isolated positive cases on campus, the L.A. County Department of Public Health will be notified.

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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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