



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pioneer High Summer Math Academy Channels Legendary Calculus Teacher

WHITTIER – Hundreds of friends and family members cheered as over 500 students were awarded certificates on July 18 for completing the 29th annual Pioneer High School Summer Math Academy, an accelerated six-week mathematics program inspired by renowned educator Jaime Escalante.

More than 80% of students received an A or B, enabling them to advance one course level. High school students earned 10 credits for completing a one-year math course during the summer session.

The program, which targets Whittier-area students in grades five through 12, has grown considerably since the addition of East Los Angeles College's (ELAC) Jaime Escalante Math Program in 2012.

"Jaime Escalante once told me that to make a difference you have to reach them when they're young," Pioneer Math Academy director Javier Gonzalez said. "You plant the seed that students can reach calculus during their high school years and greatly increase their chances of attending college."

Gonzalez first met Escalante – the former Garfield High School calculus teacher whose life was profiled in the 1988 movie "Stand and Deliver" – as a student. Channeling Escalante's methods, Gonzalez created the Pioneer Math Academy in 1990, recruiting middle school students to take Algebra 1 and pre-Algebra in the summer to be able to take Geometry as incoming freshmen.

Nearly 30 years later, Gonzalez, known as Mr. G, guides a faculty and staff of 19 college professors and high school teachers, 18 college tutors and 50 high school mentors who assist in teaching pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II and Math Analysis classes.

ELAC added Pioneer to its Escalante Program network in 2012, when the academy had just three classes. Support from the Escalante Program helped Pioneer expand its summer classes to a high of 16 this year.

"When I came to Pioneer in 2012, I thought that it was a school like no other," Escalante Program coordinator Edgar Perez said. "I saw the support Mr. G gave to the teachers and the students and I decided that I wanted to be a part of it."

Perez calls the staff a dream team of educators who unite once a year to promote student achievement.

“We hire only the best of the best, and we have grown close over the years,” Perez said. “My favorite part of the year is our first meeting of the summer. There are hugs all around, and everyone is happy to be back working at Pioneer. The kids here are amazing.”

Math Academy students come primarily from the five Whittier Union comprehensive high schools, as well as District feeder schools.

PHOTO CAPTION

072419_WUHSD_ESCALANTE: Over 500 Pioneer High School Math Academy students received certificates of completion during a ceremony in front of friends and family on July 18. The program gave students from grades five through 12 the opportunity to complete a one-year math course during a six-week summer session.

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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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