

BRIGHT SPOT HONOREES



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Every student should have the choice to go to college. Who are we to decide that for them when they're 13?

– MONICA OVIEDO,
ASSISTANT
SUPERINTENDENT,
BUSINESS SERVICES



Whittier Union High School District

Whittier Union High School District (WUHS) spans 42 square miles, serving the cities of Whittier, Santa Fe Springs, Norwalk, La Mirada, and unincorporated LA County areas of West Whittier and South Whittier. Located 10 miles southeast of the heart of Los Angeles, it serves 11,850 students in five comprehensive high schools, one continuation school, one adult school, and one independent study school. The majority of students, 88 percent, are Latino, followed by 8 percent White, 1 percent Asian, 1 percent Filipino, and 1 percent African American. More than 7 in 10 WUHS students are low income and almost 1 in 10 are English learners (EL).

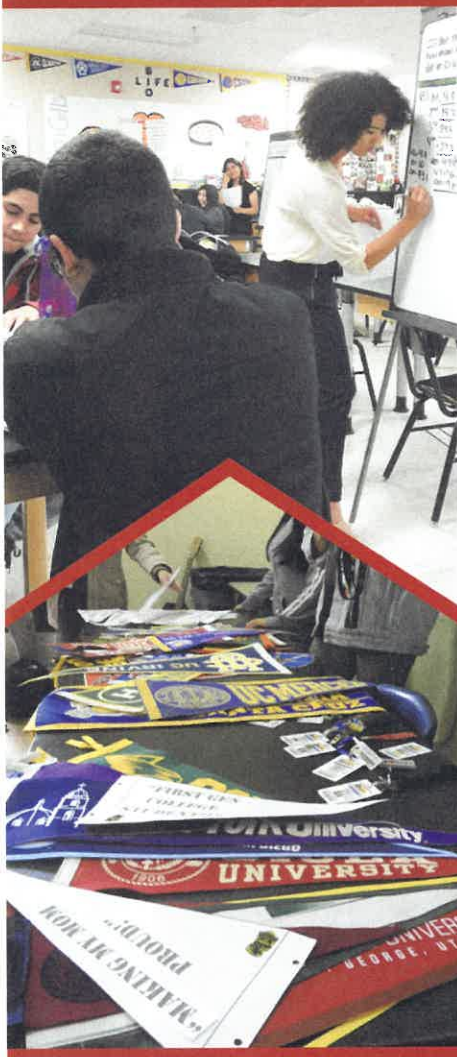
On the California School Dashboard, WUHS is “Blue” for its Graduation Rate and English Learner Progress indicators and “Green” for its Suspension Rate. In 2017, the district had a 97 percent graduation rate, 94 percent of students made progress on the EL Progress Indicator, and 3 percent of students were suspended. About 55 percent of the district’s 12th grade graduates complete the a-g course sequence required for eligibility to California’s public university systems – 8 percentage points higher than the state average. A-g completion rates for Latino students are almost 15 percentage points higher at WUHS than for Latino students statewide. (See Figure 1.)

School success is not random in WUHS. “Demographics don’t determine destiny” is a mantra often repeated by district leaders. They share the philosophy that all kids will have the opportunity to go to college, and they translate this philosophy into practice by intentionally creating systems and structures that eliminate barriers and expand access to college and career readiness courses and programs. Monica Oviedo, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, shared that district leaders believe “every student should have the choice” to go to college and ask themselves: “Who are we to decide that for them when they’re 13?” As a response, they made a-g the default curriculum.

With a-g as default, the district ensures every student is automatically enrolled in the fifteen-course sequence starting in 9th grade. They also centralize their a-g approval process to verify that every course, with a few exceptions, is a-g approved by the University of California Office of the President (UCOP). The district encourages “individual schools/programs to operate how they see fit, and encourage things to continue if they’re working and to stop if they’re not.” As a result, every school in the district has their own bell schedule and college-bound program, such as AVID or Puente, to ensure students have access to embedded supports during the school day and can succeed in rigorous college-preparatory courses.

District and school leaders lean heavily on the power of data to understand which

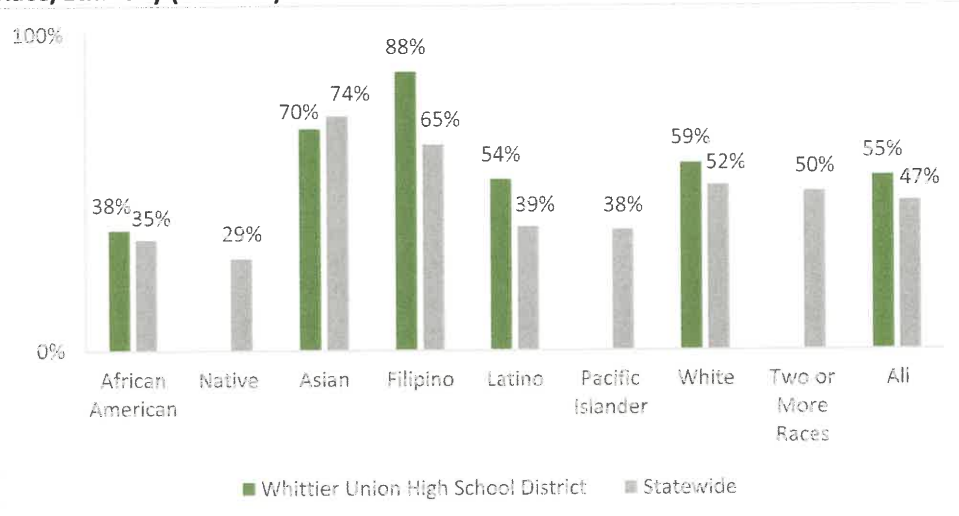
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students access and succeed in college and career preparatory coursework. They have built a strong data culture that, as Craig Campbell – principal at Santa Fe High School – explained, allows for “open, honest, transparent conversations about educator and student performance.” Their in-house data system, which they call the “kitchen sink,” enables users to access information about specific student groups in order to answer a variety of questions about college and career readiness, such as “How many English learners are enrolled in a-g courses?” or “How does AP enrollment differ by ethnicity in 11th grade?” Data analyses are carried out by a data lead at each school site, a classroom teacher who also acts as the data guru and monitors the school’s data system. Faculty and staff then use these data to refine and improve policies and practices and align resources to better support student interventions and success. For example, schools have modified their master schedules to reflect students’ needs, academic teams have modified instructional models to best support EL students, and teachers have made the case against the zero grade and developed common grading practices. These shifts ensure “all students, regardless of school, have the same expectations, curriculum, assessments, and opportunities” without the district mandating specific instructional practices.

The district’s mantra is visible in the data culture they’ve built and in their commitment to seeing students graduate college and career ready. Through these efforts, leaders have helped create an environment where educators share a collective vision for success, feel a deep connection to the community, and are deeply committed to students’ academic success.

Figure 1: Percent of 12th Grade Graduates Completing the A-G Course Sequence, by Race/Ethnicity (2016-17)



Source: California Department of Education, 2016-2017. Data not available for subgroups with <11 students.





The Education Trust—West

Educational Equity Services

PARTNER WITH THE EDUCATION TRUST—WEST TO INCREASE EQUITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS

Educational Equity Audits

A two-phase research and facilitation process to help districts identify the systemic barriers that limit students' success and develop action plans for change.

Phase I. District-wide Analysis & Equity Audit Report (6-9 months):

Through multilingual focus groups and public forums, site visits, transcript analysis, stakeholder surveys, and community meetings, ETW looks to answer key questions, such as:

- **Achievement and opportunity gap analysis** – What are the academic outcomes for students? What access do students have to rigorous courses? Do outcomes and access vary disproportionately by race, income, and/or other characteristics?
- **Quality of teaching and instruction** – To what degree is instruction aligned to the state standards and provided by qualified teachers distributed equitably across schools?
- **Professional Development** – How does the professional development provided by the district address equity, examine biases, and support teachers to offer culturally responsive and sustaining curricula?
- **Supports and Interventions** – How do schools provide supports and interventions for students who need it most?
- **Resource Equity** – How equitably distributed are the district's resources (funding, time, and people), and how well do they align with the district's goals and LCAP?
- **Family and Community Engagement** – How are community stakeholders engaged and families welcomed as partners to participate in school activities and decision making?

Findings from this qualitative and quantitative research, analysis, and stakeholder input process are compiled into a district Equity Audit Report.

Before transitioning to Phase II, ETW facilitates a set of meetings and presentations utilizing the Equity Audit Report.

- **Data Team Meeting:** a district-wide meeting geared toward understanding the findings in the report.
- **School Board Presentation:** a presentation providing an overview of the Equity Audit Report and identifying key areas of focus for Phase II of the process.

Phase II. Blueprint for Equity Action Planning (6-9 months):

This phase uses root cause analysis, constructive problem-solving, and facilitation to develop a roadmap for transformation — the Blueprint for Equity Action Plan. The Blueprint is developed by a working committee of teachers, counselors, administrators, and other key stakeholders and includes tangible, specific plans of action that are aligned with LCAP goals, timelines, roles, responsibilities and outcome measures. The actionable Blueprint plan provides recommendations to the superintendent and the school board.



SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE IN ENSURING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY. ETW'S TOOLS AND SERVICES HELP SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS TRANSFORM THEIR POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND SYSTEMS TO CREATE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RIGOROUS AND RELEVANT COURSE WORK WHILE PROVIDING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORTS STUDENTS NEED TO THRIVE.

Assignment Analysis

A process of identifying trends across assignments, subject areas, and grade levels to analyze the extent to which all students have access to high quality assignments.

ETW helps district leaders examine the quality of the instruction and curriculum that students receive through one of two models:

- **Research model:** our team reviews a number of assignments from core subject areas and analyzes them in six dimensions: alignment to the state standards, cognitive challenge, aspects of rigor, opportunities for communication, scaffolding, and the potential for motivation and engagement. ETW then shares research findings with instructional teams.
- **Professional learning model:** ETW facilitates professional development where participants assess if classroom tasks are aligned with grade-appropriate college- and career-ready standards and require high levels of cognitive challenge.



Equity Toolkit

Workshops to examine critical issues of race, identity, and bias in order to disrupt deficit thinking and systemic inequities.

ETW provides workshops tailored to the needs and goals of school, district, and county offices of education teams, with the goal of moving from theory to action. ETW facilitators lead a series of activities that are designed to:

- build a safe and productive group culture,
- develop an equity lens to examine current belief structures and systems,
- hone a set of practical skills to transform classroom, school, and district practices to ensure meaningful access to a rigorous curriculum in a culturally responsive and sustaining environment.

Consultancy Model

Thought partnership and strategic planning support to districts about their specific equity needs. Consultancies are tailored to district and schools' individual needs.

INTERESTED IN PARTNERING WITH ED TRUST–WEST?

Contact: PracticeTeam@edtrustwest.org

Feedback from participants:

"I REALLY ENJOYED WORKING WITH ED TRUST–WEST FOLKS. I LOVE THE KIND STEADY GUIDANCE YOU OFFER."

–School Counselor

"THE OPEN NATURE OF OUR DISCUSSIONS IN ADDRESSING THE STRENGTHS, ESPECIALLY THE STRUGGLES OF OUR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT, WAS GREAT."

–Teacher

"I LOVED ALL THE CONVERSATIONS. IT WAS SUCH MEATY STUFF. LOVED [THE] EQUITY TOOLKIT."

–District Administrator



The Education Trust–West

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