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**WRD Launches Inaugural Water Leaders Academy with Compton Unified**  
*Workforce development initiative exposes students to fulfilling water careers.*



**Lakewood, CA – May 21, 2026** – The Water Replenishment District (WRD) is proud to announce the launch of its inaugural Water Leaders Academy, an immersive internship designed to introduce rising high school seniors to climate-resilient careers in the water industry. This initiative, created in partnership with the Compton Unified School District and Tomorrow's Talent, aims to attract new water professionals as the industry prepares for significant retirements known as the "silver tsunami."

This pilot internship program will engage 20 scholars in a two-week paid experience, where they will receive hands-on exposure to water treatment operations, groundwater, water systems and field operations, and utility management through site tours, technical workshops, and mentorship from industry professionals. Student wages will be funded through a partnership with Long Beach Community College.

"This program is about more than education; it's about career exploration, exposure to middle-skilled and professional career opportunities, and critical utility infrastructure workforce development," said WRD Board President Sergio Calderon. "We're investing in the next generation of water professionals by providing real-world experiences and career pathways that are sustainable, impactful, and accessible. This partnership demonstrates our commitment to preparing students for the future while addressing critical community needs."

"We are thrilled to partner with WRD on this groundbreaking initiative," said Compton Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Darin Brawley. "The Water Leaders Program not only provides our scholars with invaluable career experiences, but also inspires them to become stewards of our precious water resources."

Ginger Ontiveros, CEO of Tomorrow's Talent, shared, "We believe access creates opportunity. Through our partnership with the Water Replenishment District, 20 Compton Unified students will step into internships that not only build skills, but also confidence, networks, and long-term career pathways."

The dynamic list of participating agencies includes the Long Beach Utilities Department, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, Los Angeles County Public Works, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, West Basin Municipal Water District, and more. Highlights of the internship include:

- **Daily career-focused sessions** covering topics such as wastewater treatment, hydrogeology, engineering, and environmental sustainability.
- **Capstone projects** where students will explore real water challenges facing Southern California.
- **Professional development training**, including resume writing and interview preparation.
- **Networking opportunities** with experts from WRD and partner organizations.
- **Paid participation**, with students earning **\$1,000 for 50 hours** of engagement.

The program builds on WRD's broader commitment to workforce development and civic engagement, complementing initiatives like its college intern program and the annual Careers in Water Workshop. To learn more about water industry careers, visit [www.wrd.org/careers-in-water](http://www.wrd.org/careers-in-water).

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*The Water Replenishment District of Southern California is the regional groundwater management agency that protects and preserves the quantity and quality of groundwater for two of the most utilized urban basins in the State of California. The service area is home to over ten percent of California's population residing in 43 cities in southern Los Angeles County. WRD is governed by a publicly elected Board of Directors which includes Joy Langford, Rob Katherman, John D. S. Allen, Sergio Calderon, and Vera Robles-DeWitt.*