

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Friday Memo
May 17, 2019

Upcoming Events – Matthew Duffy

May 20: 20th Annual Reclassification Ceremony, Richmond Auditorium, 6:00-8:00 PM
May 21: African American Students of Honor Celebration, Craneway Pavilion, 6:00 PM
May 22: Board of Education Meeting, DeJean, 6:30 PM
May 23: District Retirement Event, Richmond Country Club, 5:00-7:00 PM
May 25: Middle College Graduation, Richmond Auditorium, 10:00 AM
May 27: Memorial Day Holiday, Schools and Offices Closed
May 28: Safety Committee, Alvarado, 6:00 PM
May 28: DLCAP, Kennedy, 6:30 PM
May 29: Board Retreat, Alvarado, 9:00 - 1:00
May 30: Transition Program Graduation, Vista Hills, 11:00 AM
May 30: Employee Recognition Event, Richmond Auditorium, 4:00 PM
May 30: MDAC, Helms, 6:30 PM
May 31: MDAC, Kennedy, 9:00 AM
June 1: African American Graduation Ceremony, Richmond Auditorium, 12-3 PM

Upcoming Agenda Items - May 22 - Matt Duffy

Food Service Presentation
Youth Commission Update
Positive Climate Update

Kennedy Family STR Data Trends - Matt Duffy

Partners in School Innovation has provided the attached data trends regarding the Kenney Family.

Friday Memo - 19/20 Facilities Use Agreements (Invictus and Voices) – Lisa LeBlanc

On May 22, 2019, the Facilities Use Agreements for Invictus and Voices are on the board agenda. Staff is recommending approval to fulfill our legal obligations to provide reasonably equivalent facilities to charter schools that have at least 80 ADA.

As previously communicated to the Board, the District received two charter facilities requests for the 2019/20 school year. Voices, currently co-located at Pinole Middle School, requested additional facilities to accommodate their projected ADA of 161.02. Voices is approved for and anticipates growing to approximately 500 K-6 students over the next several years. Voices will be serving TK-3 for school year 19/20. Invictus, currently co-located at Crespi Middle School, requested additional facilities to accommodate their projected ADA of 163.2 for school year 19/20. Invictus is approved for and anticipates growing to 640 7-12 students over the next several years. Invictus will be serving 7th and 8th graders for 19/20.

November 1	Charter School's written request for facilities
December 1	District's objections to Charter's average daily attendance (ADA)
January 2	Charter's response to District's objections of ADA

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

February 1	District provides preliminary offer of facilities and draft agreement
March 1	Charter to respond to District's preliminary offer
April 1	School District to provide final facilities offer
May 1	Charter may accept school district's final facilities offer

The District provided the charters final offers on or about April 1, 2019, subject to Board approval. After negotiation, both charters have accepted the offer for the 19/20 school year. The Facilities Use Agreements are for a term of one year commencing July 1, 2019.

Media Stories of Note – Marcus Walton

The following media stories may be of interest. Copies are also attached to this memo.

<https://richmondconfidential.org/2019/05/16/west-county-leads-the-state-in-pushing-for-a-moratorium-on-new-charter-schools/> - West County leads the state in pushing for a moratorium on new charter schools

<https://edsources.org/2019/putting-a-focus-on-bay-area-district-superintendent-and-union-president-team-up/612361> - Putting a focus on Bay Area district: superintendent and union president team up

<https://edsources.org/2019/saving-stege-what-will-it-take-to-redesign-this-struggling-california-school/611947> - Saving Stege: What will it take to redesign this struggling California school?

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/05/09/high-school-sports-roundup-el-cerrito-tennis-player-wins-ncs-title/> - High School Sports Roundup: El Cerrito tennis player wins NCS title


Kennedy Family STR Data Trends

STR Background and Purpose

The School Transformation Rubric specifies research-based best practices in instruction, teacher professional learning and leadership and thus provides a roadmap for the work that school leaders and teachers undertake to continuously improve their instructional programs and accelerate student learning. We use the tool to support instructional leaders in reflecting on their current capacity to carry out the essential practices necessary for school transformation and help them use the resulting insights to guide school priorities, planning, resource allocation and practice.

Stages of Implementation

The criteria are used to assign an implementation stage to each essential practice described in the rubric. The scale looks at how well, how consistently, and how intentionally a practice is being implemented across the school setting. It is not designed to be an evaluation of the practice of any individual leader or teacher.

		Consistency	Frequency	Quality	Intentionality	
	No Evidence	Not Present	0%	N/A	N/A	1
	Readiness	Rare/Sporadic	1-25%	Minimal	N/A	2
	Emerging	Sometimes True	26-50%	Fair	Not systematic	3
	Implementing	Often True	51-75%	Good	Systematic	4
	Transforming	Almost always true	76-100%	Excellent	Systematic	5
	Sustaining	Almost always true	76-100%	Excellent Continuously improving quality	Systematic Policies & culture support sustainability	6

STRs were conducted in the Spring of 2016-17, prior to our engagement, have happened each spring since. The charts below represent the Kennedy Family average ratings in each domain of the School Transformation Rubric. Each school team will receive an Executive Summary, detailing specific themes that emerged from their school visit and data analysis, along with strengths and opportunities to grow, in each domain. These data reports should be used alongside a school's own quantitative and qualitative data to analyze progress and set priorities for upcoming Theories of Action.

Kennedy Family STR Data Trends

Results-Oriented Leadership



Systems for Professional Learning



Core Instructional Program



Line Item strengths in each domain:

Results-Oriented Leadership

Line items with highest average scores:

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| 1.2.02 | Theory of Action | School leaders identify annual priorities for improving the instructional program (including curriculum, instruction, assessment and intervention) and for strengthening the culture of the school community to meet their student learning goals. |
| 1.3.01 | Implement Plans | School leaders stay focused on priority areas and follow through on implementation of plans. |
| 1.3.10 | Establish Instructional Leadership Team | School leaders establish and charter an instructional leadership team that reflects a diversity of perspectives and shares collective responsibility for working toward the school's vision, mission and core values. |

Line items with highest growth from last year:

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| 1.3.06 | Examination of Race, Culture, Class & Power | School leaders model an ongoing commitment to developing cultural proficiency (examples may include: framing conversations/meetings with an equity lens, modeling analysis of disaggregated data, reflecting on their own cultural proficiency, modeling an assets-based orientation, demonstrating respect/allyship for staff, families and students, etc.) |
| 1.4.03 | Adjust Professional Learning Plan | School leaders systematically adjust professional development, collaboration, and instructional coaching based on student outcomes and teacher practice data. |

Systems for Professional Learning

Line items with **highest average scores:**

- | | | |
|--------|---------------------------|--|
| 2.1.01 | Time for Collaboration | Regular and sufficient time for teacher collaboration is protected within the school schedule. |
| 2.1.08 | Collective Responsibility | Teachers demonstrate commitment to supporting one another to reach student goals (examples may include: sharing best practices, observing one another in action, pooling resources, engaging in lesson study, etc.). |
| 2.1.02 | Collaboration Agreements | School-wide agreements exist that clarify expectations for how teachers use collaborative time. |

Line items with **highest growth from last year:**

- | | | |
|--------|---|---|
| 2.3.03 | Enables Teachers to Take Action | Professional development enables teachers to take immediate action (examples may include: includes clear models and examples, provides time to plan next steps, uses protocols and learning strategies that can be used in the classroom, is adaptive to different learning styles, etc). |
| 2.3.05 | Collective Learning around Race, Culture, Class and Power | Professional development includes opportunities for developing and applying personal and collective cultural proficiency, including the knowledge and skills needed to be culturally responsive in interactions with students and families |

Core Instructional Program

Line items with highest average scores:

- | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 3.3.01 | Comprehensive Set of Assessments | Teachers use a comprehensive set of assessments (e.g. diagnostic, formative, benchmark, and summative) designed to diagnose skill levels and monitor progress toward key academic content and English proficiency (as needed). |
| 3.2.04 | Learning Space | Teachers create a learning space that is inviting and supportive to diverse learners (examples may include: pictures/posters that display information about students or their families, students are able to access materials they need, clearly defined areas for independent work/group work, etc.). |
| 3.2.03 | Classroom Community and Relationship | Teachers intentionally cultivate relationships with and among their students, creating a classroom community that encourages a sense of belonging, caring and mutual respect (examples may include: taking time to learn about students, welcoming families into the classroom, making connections to student interests and hobbies, creating space to share relevant personal stories, etc.). |

Line items with highest growth from last year:

- | | | |
|--------|------------------------------|---|
| 3.2.06 | Communicate Objectives | Teachers make the purpose and objective of lessons clear for their students (e.g. posting objectives, discussing why a skill is important, connecting the lesson to larger goals, etc.). |
| 3.2.20 | Structured Language Practice | Teachers provide regular and purposeful opportunities for students to practice oral language (examples may include: discussions with sentence frames, pair-shares that target specific vocabulary/grammar, structured small group conversations, etc.). |

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Richmond business hub opens with co-working spaces, pop-up restaurants

[Betty Marquez Rosales](#) on May 13, 2019

West County leads the state in pushing for a moratorium on new charter schools

[Edward Booth](#) on May 16, 2019

In December, the Dejean Middle School multipurpose room brimmed with onlookers—community leaders, public officials, parents and students—who cheered wildly as Stephanie Hernández-Jarvis and Consuelo Lara took their new seats on the West Contra Costa Unified Board of Education.

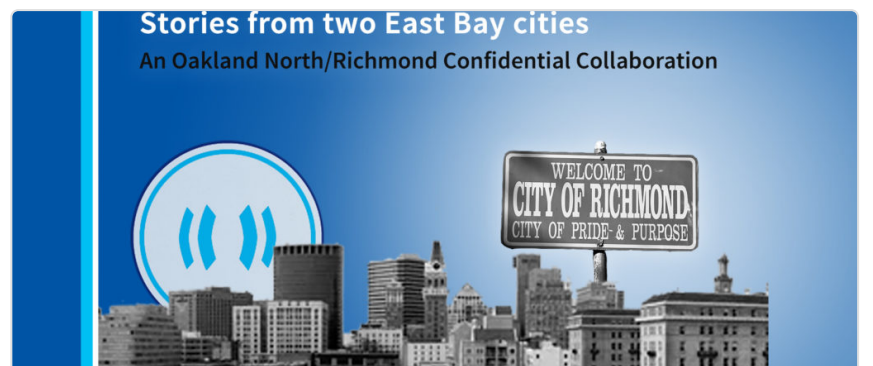
The two newcomers had arrived ready and confident. The celebration was a pleasant, gratifying end to their campaigns, and they were prepared to make the hard-fought decisions of public office, including one that day: Whether to re-approve the charter of Benito Juarez Elementary, one of 14 charter schools that have emerged in the district over the past 20 years.

But, unexpectedly, Lara and Hernández-Jarvis could not vote. They thanked the community, sat upon the dais and offered comments—but their voting power was conspicuously absent, stripped away, according to district Superintendent Matthew Duffy, by a law that requires newly-elected school board members to begin their terms on the first Friday of December. That would be two days *after* this Wednesday meeting.

As a result, the board possessed only three votes—the exact number needed to make any decision regarding charter school renewals. Adding to the urgency: Unlike everything else on the agenda, the renewal could not be pushed to future meetings because of a prior arrangement the district had made with Amethod Public Schools, the parent organization of Benito Juarez.

Stories from two East Bay cities

An Oakland North/Richmond Confidential Collaboration



Tales of Two Cities: Endings

[Nina Sparling](#) on May 6, 2019



District staff had recommended the board approve the charter, but with several minor oversight conditions. Because of California state law, school boards generally have little oversight over charter schools in their districts, with much of their control limited to their ability to accept or revoke charters.

But board member Mister Phillips argued for approval without any additional conditions—among other reasons, he felt that the board had been too harsh on Amethod in the past. To force a default, he walked away from the dais as the vote occurred, leaving the board without enough votes to legally stand.

The Benito Juarez charter passed by default—with no conditions.

Lara, an opponent of the charter school industry, was not amused by this turn of events. “I get sworn in. I’m so happy, I’m so surprised, I’m so thrilled,” Lara said, recalling that day. “I get up there and oh, ‘You’re not going to be able to vote. And, by the way, this charter is going to come up for renewal.’”

This first meeting prompted Lara, a retired teacher of 38 years—16 in the West Contra Costa County Unified School District—to strengthen her feeling that the proliferation of charter schools is the most pressing issue facing both the district and California education as a whole. As in other California districts, the number of charter schools in West Contra Costa has grown in the past five years, from eight schools in 2014 to the current 14, with three being approved by the Contra Costa County Board of Education on appeal. The enrollment in charter schools has also risen from 1,234 students to 3,639 over roughly the same period.

Soon after, on a Christmas vacation to Mexico City, the charter school issue lingered in the back of Lara’s mind. Still on vacation, she began drafting a school board resolution to call for a state moratorium on charter schools. She didn’t believe the resolution would pass, but she felt it would at least cause board members to publicly declare a stance on charter schools.

“I thought it would just be me against everybody else,” Lara said. “I wanted the board to have the debate and the discussion. I wanted to force that, because the public needs to know what this issue is, who supports it and who does not.”



Staff members from Benito Juarez Elementary celebrate after their charter is renewed

With the Charter School Act of 1992, California became the second state after Minnesota to allow for the creation of charter schools. There are now some 1,300 in the state.

But widespread criticism of the charter school industry has arisen over the past several years. People have criticized them for operating without enough oversight, which can lead to a host of other problems, including financial mismanagement and illegal enrollment policies. A 2016 [report](#) produced by the Southern California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union along with Public Advocates, a non-profit law firm and advocacy group, found that over 20 percent of charter schools in California operated with illegal enrollment policies that exclude some students. The report gave examples of enrollment barriers tied to academic achievement, English proficiency, onerous pre-enrollment requirements like parent/guardian essays and interviews, and discouragement or preclusion of immigrant students by requiring Social Security numbers or other citizenship information prior to enrollment. These barriers don’t exist in traditional public schools.

According to the report, one school in Riverside County required students to earn either “A” or “B” grades in both geometry and biology classes and maintain a 3.0 grade point average with no failing grades. Another, in Yuba County, required 20 hours of annual volunteer service from each parent, which could be bought out “only as a last option,” according to language included in the report, at a rate of \$15 an hour.

Council votes to enter exclusive negotiations with SunCal on Point Molate

[Ricky Rodas](#) on April 25, 2019

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Others critics have accused charter schools of draining students—and therefore state average daily attendance (ADA) funds—from district-run public schools. Last fall, as teachers in Oakland debated whether or not to go on strike, they argued that the proliferation of charter schools had [led to under-enrollment at district schools and was leading to their closure](#). About a third of Oakland students currently attend charter schools.

To Lara, Oakland represents the future for West Contra Costa if charter schools continue to proliferate at their current rate. “It’s unfortunate that Oakland is going through all this destruction, but for us it’s very educational,” Lara said. “I felt like, oh, if you wanted to look into the crystal ball at what could happen if we let [charter school growth] go unchecked, that is what’s going to happen. So we have to start checking them.”

But proponents argue that the experimentation allowed by charter schools—because they operate under less oversight than district-run schools—can improve primary education as a whole. They also offer more school choices. At WCCUSD board meetings, the parents of charter school students often tell similar stories about how moving their child from a low performing, district-run school to a charter school greatly improves their educational experience.

For example, last October, at a [revocation hearing](#) for John Henry High School, which is overseen by Amethod, hundreds of students, teachers, and administrators—most wearing yellow shirts, which had been handed out by Amethod staff earlier—poured into the DeJean Middle School auditorium to protest. Many students shared stories about how their grades had improved after choosing to attend John Henry.



In October, students and staff from Amethod schools headed to protest a revocation hearing regarding John Henry High School.

Eric Munoz, a senior at John Henry, said he was going to be the first person in his family to graduate from college. He added that he wanted his two younger siblings to have the same opportunities that he’d had. John Henry senior Maria Contreras talked about how the stress of having to come to a revocation hearing only added to stress of being a student, and said she felt safe as a student at John Henry.

“At this very moment, I should be studying for my test and as well for my upcoming SAT, but I chose to speak today for my school,” said Contreras. “John Henry makes sure that each individual’s learning experience is accompanied by care and security. If it weren’t, people who care about their security—slash the parents of John Henry students—would not maintain their kids in the school they are in now.”

The revocation issue—which was unrelated to the school’s charter—was later resolved. (A previous, now largely-resolved [notice of violation](#), had alleged that Amethod ran an enrollment lottery which gave preference to students with siblings at any Amethod school. The notice also mentioned several other alleged violations, including the failure to hire properly-credentialed teachers; inadequate special education services; and a failure to comply with a conditional use permit that allowed Amethod to set up a school in an area not zoned for schools.)

Representatives from Amethod, as well as local pro-charter-school advocacy groups Education for Change Public Schools and Lighthouse Community Public Schools, did not return requests for comment by press time.

But boardmember Phillips, who argued against the revocation of John Henry, said that though he thinks the current system is unfair to public schools, and though he agrees charter school laws should be updated, he doesn’t like seeing some Richmond-based charter schools lose out. “I hate to see homegrown charter schools like John Henry High School and Richmond College Prep caught in the crossfire,” Phillips wrote in an email, referring to a charter school that’s been operating in the district since 2004. Richmond



College Prep officials recently attempted to expand their program into a tech-heavy high school, but their request was denied in a 2-2 vote at a board meeting in April. “I believe these two schools add significant value to our community,” Phillips wrote.

During the November 2018 election, the battle against the charter school industry played out in political campaigns, both at local and state government levels, and the idea for a moratorium on new charter schools was already circulating.

The election for State Superintendent of Public Education, a largely symbolic role, involved combined campaign spending of over \$50 million, shattering all previous records. Tony Thurmond, a former West Contra Costa school board member, ran on a platform that favored a moratorium on new charter schools while the state determines their financial effect on district-run schools. Thurmond was opposed by Marshall Tuck, a former president of a charter school organization in Los Angeles, who opposed such a moratorium. Thurmond was supported by organized labor, including the California Teachers Association, while Tuck, who held a 2-1 funding advantage over Thurmond, was backed by wealthy charter school donors.

Charter schools were also a major issue in the campaign between gubernatorial candidates Gavin Newsom and Antonio Villaraigosa—with more than \$23 million spent on Villaraigosa’s campaign by the California Charter Schools Association Advocates. During his campaign, Newsom, though he had supported charter schools as mayor of San Francisco, made calls for transparency in charter school organizations, while Villaraigosa—who as mayor of Los Angeles had a record of opposing teachers’ unions and supporting charter schools—made his support for charter schools known.

When the dust settled, the candidates who had been heavily funded by charter school interests were defeated. Newsom took over as the governor of California and Thurmond won the race for State Superintendent.

As governor, Newsom was ready to sign legislation that would curb the power of charter school companies. But first, local education advocates would have to start pressing for specific legislation. In several cities in the state, the germ of that legislation looked like what Lara had been writing over her Christmas break—a call for a state moratorium.

To Lara, 70-years-old and Latina, the fight against charter schools was more personal than for most. She became a teacher partly because public schools offered a safe space for her while she was growing up, a place where she could find consistency, care and respite from the alcoholism, depression and poverty that she said was prevalent in her family.

“I was really quiet, I was very shy, very timid, I didn’t talk hardly at all. And part of that was just fear, and shame. There was a lot of shame.” Lara said. “I just felt like teachers could sense it. And they nurtured me.”

Lara became passionate about helping poor schools and students. As a teacher, she helped take the English language development department of Helms Middle School, located in San Pablo, from the worst in the district to the best. “I love working with those individuals, those children, those schools that have the most challenges to overcome,” Lara said, “because I’ve seen when they can overcome those challenges. I’ve done it myself, you know. Who’d have thought I’d be where I am, if they knew me as a little girl?”

Lara said that she doesn’t have a problem with specific charter schools, and says she doesn’t want to shut any schools down. Even so, she stresses her belief that the charter school industry is destructive to public education because they lack transparency about their spending. She feels that the economic incentives underpinning the industry have led to a profiteering mindset.

“I know there’s people who say, ‘Oh find common ground,’ or ‘Understand both sides’ and I think that’s impossible,” Lara said.

In her school board resolution, Lara called for the board to push the state to enact a moratorium on new charter schools. The resolution noted the extreme proliferation of charter schools in recent years, the lack of accountability and transparency in charter school organizations, and mentioned the shortage of resources caused by co-locating charter schools within district-run schools. As Thurmond had also done, she argued that a state moratorium would allow the California government enough time to review the effect of charter schools on public education, leading to possible changes in the law.

The resolution also cited a 2018 [study](#) by research group In The Public Interest which calculated the financial cost of charter schools on three districts: Oakland Unified, San Diego Unified, and the East Side Union High School District in San Jose. Specifically, the study found that charter schools cost Oakland’s district \$57.3 million, San Diego’s \$65.9



million, and the East Side Union's \$19.3 million annually. For Oakland, this amounts to a yearly loss of approximately \$1,500 for each student attending a district-run school, according to the study.

Responding to the study last May, the California Charter Schools Association issued a [statement](#) which claimed that it "unfairly scapegoats" charter schools. These schools "are not responsible for, nor do they have control over, any district's financial decisions," the group's statement reads.

Meanwhile, in early 2019, teachers' strikes in the Oakland and Los Angeles school districts—which are among the most charter school-heavy districts in California—were echoing Lara's call for a moratorium. While both strikes principally called for better wages, the financial strain caused by charter schools was among the striking teachers' chief concerns.

At 277 charter schools, the Los Angeles district has the highest number of charter schools of any district in California. As a condition to resolve the strike, in January the Los Angeles Unified School Board (LAUSD) called for the state to enact a moratorium on new charter schools. In Oakland, teachers struck in February, also asking for [an agreement that Oakland's school board enact a five-month moratorium](#) on new charter schools, and ask state officials to pursue a California-wide one.

But pro-charter school organizations have opposed the call for a moratorium. In January, just before the LAUSD school board voted for their moratorium resolution, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools issued a statement in opposition. "We strongly oppose placing a moratorium on charter schools because it does not put students first," wrote Nina Rees, the group's president. "A vote for a moratorium on charter schools is a vote against students and a vote against families."

As the debate was heating up statewide, Lara's moratorium resolution rattled through two contentious February board meetings. Members of the audience expressed differing opinions on the resolution during the public comment period, though most argued for the moratorium.

Charter school supporters argued that the option had personally benefited them. Gabriella Rodriguez said she was a parent of two daughters in charter schools, and told the story of how she chose to transfer her children out of district-run schools. "Five years later, I can tell you that transferring my daughter to that school was the best decision I ever made," said Rodriguez.

But others directly criticized the drain charter schools were having on district funding. Demetrio Gonzalez, president of United Teachers of Richmond, said that five years ago, when the Aspire Richmond Technology Academy charter school opened, about 200 students left Bayview Elementary School, where he was in his second year of teaching. As a result, Gonzales said, Bayview had to cut teachers and programs.

"Our school went to chaos," Gonzalez said. "And the worst part is that the kids that they took from my class were my six highest-achieving students. They didn't take the students that I pushed for them to take. They didn't take my special ed students. They didn't take my newcomers. They took my highest-achieving kids."

The board agreed, for the most part, with the intent of the moratorium, but they initially disagreed with how to carry it out. Board President Tom Panas was the sole board member opposed to the resolution, though he said he agreed with it in principle. At the first meeting, Panas argued that the board shouldn't hinder the ability of parents to choose the schools they want, especially considering the low performance of many district-run schools.

At a second meeting, board members debated the language of such a resolution, including considering a version edited by Panas. The board president said he wouldn't vote for Lara's version of the resolution because it did nothing to address student outcomes, which he argued the board should focus on with razor sharpness. He brought up a litany of issues that have plagued the district for 30 years—low test scores, overspending on infrastructure, lawsuits—before the charter school law had materialized. "I think the resolution makes an important statement, but this board needs to be focused, in my mind, on student outcomes this year, next year, and the following year," said Panas.

Boardmember Valerie Cuevas, who had cosponsored Lara's resolution, rebuked his argument. "I know what the problem was in terms of underserved students for the last 30 years, Mr. Panas. I appreciate your comments," Cuevas said. "But at some point I have to believe in hope. This board has an opportunity to say, 'We will be the change.'"

"I'm going to stop using failing kids as an excuse to drain dollars out of the public school system," she continued. "I'm happy there's solutions for some; I need it for all."

Ultimately, it became clear that Lara's original moratorium had enough votes to pass. In the end, the resolution passed 4-1, with only Panas voting against.



The state still has not passed a moratorium on charter school openings, but related legislation is now winding its way towards the governor's desk. While none of the bills are exact duplicates of the resolutions passed by the school boards in West County, Oakland or Los Angeles, all of them are fed by the pressure local teachers and school board officials have been placing on state legislators.

In March, Newsom signed Senate Bill 126 into law, which requires charter school boards to comply with public record, open meeting, and conflict of interest laws that regular district school boards must also obey. It will go into effect on January 1. The bill, introduced by Sen. Connie Leyva (D-Chino), received support from both the California Teachers Association and the California Charter Schools Association, though it did not address the calls for a moratorium.

A package of four other charter school bills, all sponsored by the California Teachers' Association, are also currently running through the legislature. Senate Bill 756, by Maria Elena Durazo (D-Los Angeles), would establish a 5-year moratorium on new charter schools. Assembly Bill 1505, by Patrick O'Donnell (D-Long Beach), would give districts where charter schools are located full power to approve and deny charter petitions—patching up the ability of charter schools to appeal denials to a county board of education, and then to the State Board of Education.

Assembly Bill 1506, by Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento), would cap new charter schools at their current number—about 1,300—meaning that new charter schools could arise only as old ones close. And Assembly Bill 1507, by Christy Smith (D-Santa Clarita), would remove an exemption that allows charter schools to locate outside their chartering district, but within the same county, if they are unable to locate within their district's jurisdiction.

On April 10, the Assembly Education Committee passed the bills out of committee, and they now await further action.

But they will likely face considerable resistance from charter school advocates. On April 24, after SB 756, the bill calling for a 5-year moratorium, passed through the senate education committee, Myrna Castrejón, president of the CCSA, issued a statement: "Today's vote by Sacramento politicians was a setback for parents and kids wanting better public schools that put their needs first," she wrote. "But the fight is far from over; we will not accept legislation that forces students out of schools where they are finding success, often for the first time."

Outside of legislation, other changes could be on the way. An 11-member Charter Task Force, made up of educators and labor representatives—including four members who represent charter schools—was set up by Thurmond in March to examine the financial impact of charter schools at the request of Newsom. The group meets weekly and will report back to Newsom by July 1.

Lara feels hopeful about the future. The bills in the legislature, she noted, cover much of the same territory as her original resolution. The winds of public opinion, Lara said, seems to be shifting. But she doesn't think her push to slow the growth of charter schools is over. "It's going to be a constant struggle. It's not going to happen overnight. It's not going to be easy," Lara said. "And I think I just hope to be a part of that. I want to spread as much knowledge as I can and I want people to not be afraid."



Lara alongside Genoveva Calloway, a former City Councilmember of San Pablo.

Correction: A previous version of this story misidentified the number of West Contra Costa charter schools that were active in 2014.

◀ Richmond business hub opens with co-working spaces, pop-up restaurants

West County leads the state in ▶ pushing for a moratorium on new charter schools

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EDSOURCE SPECIAL REPORT

Saving Stege: What will it take to redesign this

SAVING STEGE

Faced with a dwindling student population and ever-changing teaching staff, district seeks to change course

BY ZAIDEE STAVELY

MAY 13, 2019



By many measures, Stege Elementary School in Richmond demands change.

The K-6 school is one of 481 of the 10,000 California schools cited as [lowest performing in the state](#) in 2017-18, based on [low test scores](#), [high suspensions](#) and [chronic absenteeism](#). Because it is losing so many students, the [West Contra Costa Unified School District](#) in the East Bay has designated the school for a complete redesign over the next 18 months in hopes of attracting more students and experienced teachers.

Editor's note: This is the first in an occasional series on the challenges facing Stege Elementary in the East Bay as it embarks on a plan to transform itself by the fall of 2020. The school, which serves mostly poor students who are struggling to learn reading and mathematics, is staffed increasingly by beginning teachers who just don't stay. The community is being asked to help shape the school's future. The next public meeting about the redesign is set for Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at Stege Elementary. Please [share your story](#) about Stege Elementary with us.

In the last decade, Stege Elementary, which serves mostly low-income African-American and Latino students, has lost about a third of its students, dropping down to 260 as families turned to charter schools and other district schools.

Most students are struggling to learn reading and math, yet they are increasingly taught by first-year teachers. Most teachers elect not to return the next year. On any given day, many students are missing too — the school's rates for [absenteeism](#) and [suspensions](#) last year were more than triple the state's average.

“What we're trying to do here is ring the bell, raise the flag and say we believe it's time to do something different,” Superintendent Matthew Duffy told the community at a recent meeting. “We cannot be back here in three or four years with only 110 kids at Stege, talking about how we need to close the school.”

Stege, pronounced Steej, is named for the founder of the 19th century town now tucked between two freeways in a corner of Richmond, a diverse industrial city on the edge of San Francisco Bay and San Pablo Bay. The school operates out of a one-story building erected in 1943.



PHOTO: ZAIDEE STAVELY/EDSOURCE

Community members called for the district to hire more experienced teachers at a public meeting in February 2019.

Many of the school’s students live in four nearby low-income apartment complexes. More than half are African-American — far more than any other school in the district. Almost all students are considered poor because they qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch.

“We feel that it’s really worth putting our best foot forward and giving the community a great option right in its backyard,” Duffy told EdSource.

The federal Every Students Succeeds Act, a law that went into effect this year to replace the No Child Left Behind law, requires the state to come up with the annual list of lowest-performing schools that serve low-income students. For each of the 11 schools on the list in West Contra Costa, the district is eligible to receive about \$150,000 in federal aid, and in return, must come up with an improvement plan for each one. The funds can be used for analyzing data and planning interventions, but not for hiring permanent staff. Stege Elementary is the only school in the district slated for a complete redesign because it’s losing so many students.



PHOTO: ANDREW REED/EDSOURCE

A family heads into Stege Elementary School in Richmond.

Community asked to help redesign the school

Just what the redesign will look like is still unclear. To start with, the district plans to hire more experienced teachers next year and follow a teachers' union proposal to give all teachers assigned to the school more time to work together and training on topics like how to teach young children to read or how to help children manage their emotions.

The union also proposed longer school days and a longer school year so teachers will have more time to work with students who come to school behind their peers. To attract more experienced teachers, the union proposed to pay each teacher a \$30,000 annual bonus. The district agrees it should improve teacher compensation, but has not yet announced any details.

“We have seen a lot of turnover because teachers have been burned out over time, and then, too, we have a lot of new teachers who come for a year or two and then decide to leave the district,” said Demetrio Gonzalez, president of United Teachers of Richmond. “We want to make it a place where we change that culture.”

Gonzalez said the union has committed to providing \$50,000 next school year to pay for a full-time community coordinator, who would do home visits with families and conduct a study on what programs neighborhood families want the school to provide.

The goal is to unveil a new program in Fall 2020. Options include focusing on curriculum. Examples include art or science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) but that will depend on the community, Duffy said.

“We do know we have some core beliefs,” said Duffy. “One of those is a dedication to hiring experienced teachers, teachers who have experience in urban areas, with communities of color. And when I say experience, I mean experience being successful.”



PHOTO: ANDREW REED/EDSOURCE

Teacher Meredith Hamilton greets transitional kindergarten students at Stege Elementary School in Richmond.

Duffy knows finding teachers committed to Stege Elementary is his primary challenge.

This year, seven of the 17 teachers at the school have what are called “intern credentials,” which means they received only a few weeks of training, typically in the summer before they began teaching. To continue teaching they are required to get a full credential within two years, which means enrolling in a teacher preparation program and taking additional coursework.

The other teachers have full teaching credentials, but many of them are relatively new to the profession, and have what are called preliminary credentials which they must upgrade to a “clear” credential within five years.

Teacher turnover is also high. After the 2016-17 school year, 11 of 18 teachers left; after the next year, 15 of 18 teachers left.

Hiring strong teachers was the most consistent recommendation made at a public meeting the district held in February on the school’s future. Speaker after speaker said many teachers and staff do not believe in the children, are afraid of the children, and have no idea how to work with children who have experienced trauma, poverty, or homelessness.

“Our kids are amazing”

“Our kids are amazing. They are not flawed. They are not broken. They are not dysfunctional. They need a community of adults who are proficient and have the highest belief possible in them,” vice principal Stephanie Sanchez told the school board at the meeting. “I highly urge you not to just come up with a gimmick, not just come up with a branding. If the mindsets of the adults who are in the program do not believe in the children, no amount of iPads are going to change the school.”

Foster mother Thelma Randles also spoke at the meeting, saying teachers need training to understand children who have experienced trauma or loss, like those who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care.

“We expect them to go to school, sit down, behave and do what the teacher asks them to do. And all the while, they are thinking, ‘When am I going to see my mom? When I am going to see my sister? If I tear up this, if I do that, perhaps I can go back home,’” Randles said.

Principal Nicole Ruiz, who began at the school last fall, agreed the top priority is more teacher preparation.

“They’re just not properly trained to deal with trauma-impacted students,” she said.



PHOTO: ANDREW REED/EDSOURCE

A student explains a chart to principal Nicole Ruiz, showing each student and how close they are to grade level in reading.



PHOTO: ANDREW REED / EDSOURCE

Principal Nicole Ruiz talks on a walkie-talkie with another staff member, as a student looks on.



PHOTO: ANDREW REED / EDSOURCE

Principal Nicole Ruiz gets a hug from a transitional kindergarten student at Stege Elementary School in Richmond.

The students are facing multiple challenges. The school has a higher percentage of homeless students, foster students, students with disabilities, poor students and English learners than schools statewide. Ruiz says many have witnessed domestic violence and gun violence in the neighborhood. Some children have multiple family members who have died from gun violence.

Ruiz says the trauma they have experienced often fills the young children — who range in age from 4 to 12 — with rage.

“They destroy things,” she said. “They have a fight or flight mentality sometimes.”

Glimpses of a different future

Despite its troubles, the school has shown glimpses of a different future. In her first year, Ruiz and the special education team won an award from the district.

“They have done extraordinary work with limited resources,” wrote Leslie Hernandez, Program Specialist for Special Education in the district, who nominated the team for the award. “I commended the Stege Team, for all they do and believing that ALL students can learn.”

Some community members have called for the school to become a “full-service community school,” meaning it should offer services like medical check-ups, mental health counseling, and referrals to social services for families and students.

Ruiz agrees with that idea. She says without those services, “we’re just putting Band-Aids on things.” The school currently has a counselor from a non-profit organization, but Ruiz says he can’t see all the students who need therapy. She believes the school needs at least one more full-time counselor.

As Ruiz strolled through the halls one March morning, two young students approached their classroom doors, but ducked back in as soon as they saw her. Ruiz smiled, pleased to see she's making a difference.

"I can tell you when I started, there were students literally running out of the classrooms," said Ruiz.

One of her first goals, she says, has been to help the students stay in their classrooms and at their desks ready to learn.

"They're amazing, they really want to learn, they want consistency," she said. "When they know the expectations you have of them, they work really hard to meet or exceed those expectations."

In the Transitional Kindergarten classroom (for children who turned 5 between Sep 2 and Dec 2), children rushed to give Ruiz hugs, then gathered on the colorful rug.

"Why are we working on our letters?" asked teacher Meredith Hamilton.

"To grow our brains," answered one little boy. "So we can be whatever we want," replied another student. "So we can learn to read," said another.



PHOTO: ANDREW REED/EDSOURCE

Special education teacher Hannah Geitner works on one-syllable words with first- and second-graders at Stege Elementary School in Richmond.

Learning to read is an ongoing struggle for these students. More than 90 percent of students scored below the state standard on math and English Language Arts tests for the 2017-18 school year. Ruiz also stopped in to see a group of 1st and 2nd graders reviewing simple one-syllable words, like flat, cat and shin, with special education teacher Hannah Geitner. She played an online video for them to sing along with. "If you can read a-t, at, then you can read cat!" the children sang.

Ruiz said special education teachers like Geitner started pulling out all 1st through 3rd graders to work on reading in small groups this year. They're doing the same for 4th through 6th graders with math.

“There are teachers who work extremely hard, despite what may be said about them,” said third-grade teacher Sam Cleare. Originally from Georgia, it is Cleare's second year teaching at Stege Elementary, and she says she loves it and hopes to be at the school for a long time.

“That feeling was strengthened when I went to the board meeting and heard alumni of Stege speak and get to see a full community effort,” Cleare said.

As a white teacher who is not from the Bay Area, she says she agrees with community members that it is important for her and other teachers to examine their own biases.

“I don't think it's a coincidence that the school with the highest population of students who are African-American is facing this high turnover,” she said. “I think it's important to have an honest conversation looking into the different biases or racist ideas that play out in different types of actions and different situations throughout the day.”

Lorena Galvez, whose daughter is in third grade, said parents have raised alarms for years about how far behind their children are in school. She said teachers are inexperienced and often miss class, leaving students with frequent substitutes.

“I've had my child there since kindergarten, but I don't see any change,” Galvez said in Spanish.

Parents, staff and other community members expressed distrust of the redesign process and skepticism that it will actually make the school better.

Click right arrow to see more charts about Stege Elementary School

Chart designed by Yuxuan Xie.



Part of the skepticism stems from history — low test scores have been a chronic problem going back at least 20 years. And it’s not the first time someone has tried to turn the school around. In 2000, Principal Ginny Green managed to change school culture and increase test scores so much that the school jumped from the bottom of the list of California elementary schools to the middle.

Ruiz says she’s heard the district also tried extending the school day and the school year in past years, but the changes didn’t stick.

She’s worried the support this time won’t last either. Meanwhile, the teachers’ union is pushing for the school district to require all administrative staff, including Ruiz, to reapply for their positions next year — to make sure they are a good fit for the new vision for the school.

“A lot of the changes they want to make, they’ve already been done, but they just haven’t been sustained,” said Ruiz. “If you give me everything I need today and I make improvements, if you take that away tomorrow, then what?”

Comments

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▶ **Paul**

2 days ago



A factual error and a material omission seem to push the agenda that intern teachers are bad. To qualify for an intern credential, the teacher must already be, and must continuously remain, enrolled in a teacher credentialing program. The credential cannot be issued without the recommendation of the program. Intern teachers don't enroll in credential programs whenever they wish, in the two years following issuance of the credential. You have it backward. Intern teachers don't arrive in ... [Read More](#)

▶ **Dorris Holland**

4 days ago



You can't redesign anything that you have not familiarize yourself with. Most of the designers have "never" spent a whole day at Stege. One or two quick visits won't tell the story. Things get lost in translation; therefore just listening will not give you a real picture. I guarantee you if the players don't listen to the people who are there doing the work right now, very little if anything is going to change. I've ... [Read More](#)

Tony Johansing

4 days ago



Have charter schools in the same district area experienced success in dealing with the same challenges as Stege? If yes, then what can be learned?

CarolineSF

4 days ago



Charter schools are free (not officially, but in reality) to pick and choose their students and kick out any they don't want, or to impose admissions hurdles that ensure the most challenged, high-need kids don't attend their schools. So their situations can't be compared with those of public schools.

Eric

4 days ago



Perhaps the teachers are not problem, but the leadership. Any one thought of that? Why are so many teachers leaving? Poor leadership maybe?

Brenda

4 days ago



Consider having a summer bootcamp to train the kids on common courtesy, appropriate ways to communication, attendance, sharing, caring and other social skills *before* any academics. The European model works well for them and drastically reduces issues driven by a lack of social skills for them. It's a start.

CarolineSF

4 days ago



What if one or more of the billionaires who regularly pour money into education fads decided to adopt this school? Make sure it has the same resources and characteristics as a Mill Valley, Palo Alto or Orinda school or an elite private; add community-school resources such as health and dental clinic, classes and other resources for families, etc.?

Lisa

4 days ago



We had a charter school co-located there. Caliber, and they got out of there as fast as they could. Why do you think that is?

Putting a focus on Bay Area district: superintendent and union president team up

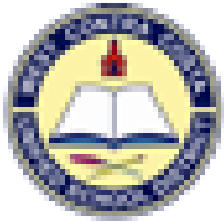
West Contra Costa Unified launches videos highlighting district schools.

MAY 14, 2019 | THERESA HARRINGTON

In many school districts, teachers' union presidents and superintendents don't always see eye to eye.

But in one Bay Area school district, the top representatives of a California Teachers Association-affiliated union and a Contra Costa County school district are teaming up to show their community the good things happening on their campuses in the hopes of attracting more families to public schools. At a time of increasing labor strife, what is happening in [West Contra Costa Unified](#) can be seen as a different way to get things done.

“We want to start this tradition of once a month taking a whole day from our schedules to go and sit in classrooms, speak to students and staff and showcase in a short video some of the amazing things they're doing,” said Demetrio Gonzalez, president of the [United Teachers of Richmond](#) union in the district, which includes Richmond and surrounding communities.



West Contra Costa Unified



“We want to show our parents that there are fabulous local options in our community, despite some negative messages that sometimes get put out,” Superintendent Matthew Duffy said.

Their unusual partnership offers a model for management-labor cooperation and collaboration, at a time of mounting tensions and conflicts in several California school districts. Duffy and Gonzalez both started working in West Contra Costa Unified three years ago, after the previous superintendent retired amid controversies related to the district's construction bond spending program.

Gonzalez said he suggested the idea for the videos to the superintendent about a year ago to help the district “tell our story” in an effort to help change the negative views some people have about the schools, increase staff morale and build on campus pride. In recent years, the district has escaped the threat of a labor strike experienced in other districts, including nearby Oakland, because the board supported a cumulative 17 percent salary increase for teachers from July 2017 to July 2020 aimed at helping recruit and retain educators. The last time the district came close to a strike was in 2009, but it was averted when teachers narrowly approved a tentative agreement that included no pay raises.

Putting a focus on what West Contra Costa has to offer is critical for a district where many students and their families are choosing charter schools, private schools or transferring to neighboring districts. Since 2014-15, enrollment in charter schools in the district has grown from 1,451 to 3,639 while enrollment in district schools has dropped from 29,145 to 28,121 students.

The difference in numbers stems from the fact that students move in and out of schools. Some have graduated, new students enter. This year, charter schools are attracting 11.5 percent of students in the district.

This isn't the first collaboration between Duffy and Gonzalez. Last July, they successfully negotiated a teacher contract with significant raises that increase the entry-level salary from \$44,152 on July 1, 2017 to \$50,922 by July 1, 2020. The two leaders continue to work together as part of a district “Solutions Team” that includes two members from each bargaining unit, two school board members, the superintendent and the assistant superintendent of human resources. Duffy is supportive of the union's suggestions to offer teacher stipends to attract and keep experienced teachers at Stege Elementary, which is undergoing a redesign due to low student academic performance and declining enrollment.

The videos, which are about 2 to 4 minutes in length, will “also show how sometimes the unions and the district are not in agreement,” but they are all working to support students, families and staff, Gonzalez said.

The pair visited [Helms Middle School](#) in San Pablo in February, [Lincoln Elementary](#) in Richmond in March and [DeAnza High](#) in Richmond in April. In the debut video, available on the district's YouTube website, Duffy introduces viewers to the Helms campus, saying: "Helms is a fantastic school. It's safe. It's happy. Great things are happening. We want everyone to know about this amazing place right here in our community."

Learning at Helms



The school serves about 864 [students](#) in grades 7-8, including 95 percent who are low-income, 37 percent who are English learners, 11.2 percent who have disabilities and 6 percent who are homeless. Next year, it plans to open the first "newcomer" middle school for immigrant students on the West Coast. Its Physical Education teacher Doug Silva was named a district [teacher of the year](#) last month.



TERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

Helms Middle School PE teacher Doug Silva was named a West Contra Costa Unified Teacher of the Year in April, 2019.

But Helms is still working on improving student achievement. Last year, 20.3 percent of students met or exceeded standards on the state's English language arts tests which is below the state average of 49.9 percent. In math, 7.2 percent met the standards, below the state average of 38.7 percent.

However, the school has seen a drop in its suspension rates, from 8.9 percent in 2016-17 to 8.3 percent in 2017-18, which Gonzalez attributed in part to the school's social justice program that teaches students alternative ways to resolve conflicts.

As the video portrayed, the school is a lot more than its test scores or any other statistics.



THERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

Helms Middle School music teacher Deven Holcomb directs a band class on April 20, 2019.

Accompanied by a jazzy instrumental soundtrack, the video — viewed 407 times so far — shows Principal Jessica Petrilli and her staff in the front office saying, “Welcome to Helms,” then cuts to Petrilli showing her guests around campus. They visit [Deven Halcomb’s](#) band class and Lisa Jackson’s advanced art class, then chat with a few students and staff members in the halls before heading into Dilan Pedraza’s English class.



TERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

Helms Middle School students (l-r) Iyana Buggs and Shanylei Hamilton display paintings they created in their advanced art class on April 20, 2019.

It concludes with Duffy recapping what they saw and Gonzalez adding his impressions.

“It was also so cool to see how happy teachers were and how excited the kids were to be in with them,” Gonzalez said.

Duffy said Helms has “a great many needs,” but the district is “honored and privileged to serve” its student population that includes a high percentage of “newcomer” immigrants and students with “severe special needs” who are not likely to attend local charter schools.

During an EdSource visit to the Helms campus, students Cassandra Alvarado and Edna Villasenor in Pedraza’s English class said the teachers make learning enjoyable and the staff helps them feel cared for.

“I like the way teachers try to have fun while teaching us,” said Cassandra, 14, who lives in San Pablo.



TERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

Helms Middle School student Cassandra Alvarado, 14, works on an 8th grade English assignment on April 20, 2019.

Edna agreed.

“I feel loved here,” she said. “It’s a good school.”

Petrilli said electives such as art and music help keep students interested in school.

Several music students said they appreciate the helpful feedback they get from Halcomb and think the classes they are taking will help prepare them for high school. They hope the video will help turn around some people’s negative views of the school.

“Other people think less of the school,” said Yumiko Leon, 14, who lives in San Pablo and plays flute.

But Steven Ayala, a 14-year-old percussion player, said the video could help “prove them wrong.”

The Lincoln Elementary video was just completed. It focuses on the school’s ability to turn around its staff retention, going from very high turnover to 100 percent retention of all staff members over the past two years.

A Day at Lincoln



The third video, which was shot on April 27, will emphasize academic improvement at DeAnza High, where graduation rates have risen from 70 percent in 2011 to 89 percent last year.



Theresa Harrington / EDSOURCE

A West Contra Costa Unified video camera records a De Anza High student presenting a mock union organizing pitch to students in a law academy class on April 27, 2019.

The percentage of students taking classes that meet UC and CSU requirements has grown from about 32.6 percent to 54 percent through the help of a robust college and career center and partnerships with organizations including UC Berkeley, which provide college advising.



THERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

Demetrio Gonzalez, president of the United Teachers of Richmond union in West Contra Costa Unified, listens to the pulse of De Anza High student Jaronje Clark during a medical academy class on April 27, 2019.

Gonzalez and Duffy sat among students during mock hospital and union presentations in the school's [law academy](#) class, where students represented both sides and tried to convince their classmates — who took on the roles of hospital workers — to join the union or reject the union's organizing offer. Afterward, Duffy and Gonzalez offered to visit a future class to demonstrate how they work out labor-related differences. They also joined students in a [health academy](#) class, learning how to take a pulse.

Superintendent Matthew Duffy



With 56 schools in the district, Principal Summer Sigler said the visits give the superintendent and teachers' union president an opportunity "to understand what's happening on the ground."



TERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

De Anza High Principal Summer Sigler, right, chats with the school's Community Outreach Workers during a West Contra Costa Unified video shoot highlighting the school on April 27, 2019.

“I can’t think of anything more important for making the district more supportive for students,” she said.

Editor’s Note: As a special project, EdSource is tracking developments in the Oakland Unified and West Contra Costa Unified School Districts as a way to illustrate some of the challenges facing other urban districts in California. West Contra Costa Unified includes Richmond, El Cerrito and several other East Bay communities.

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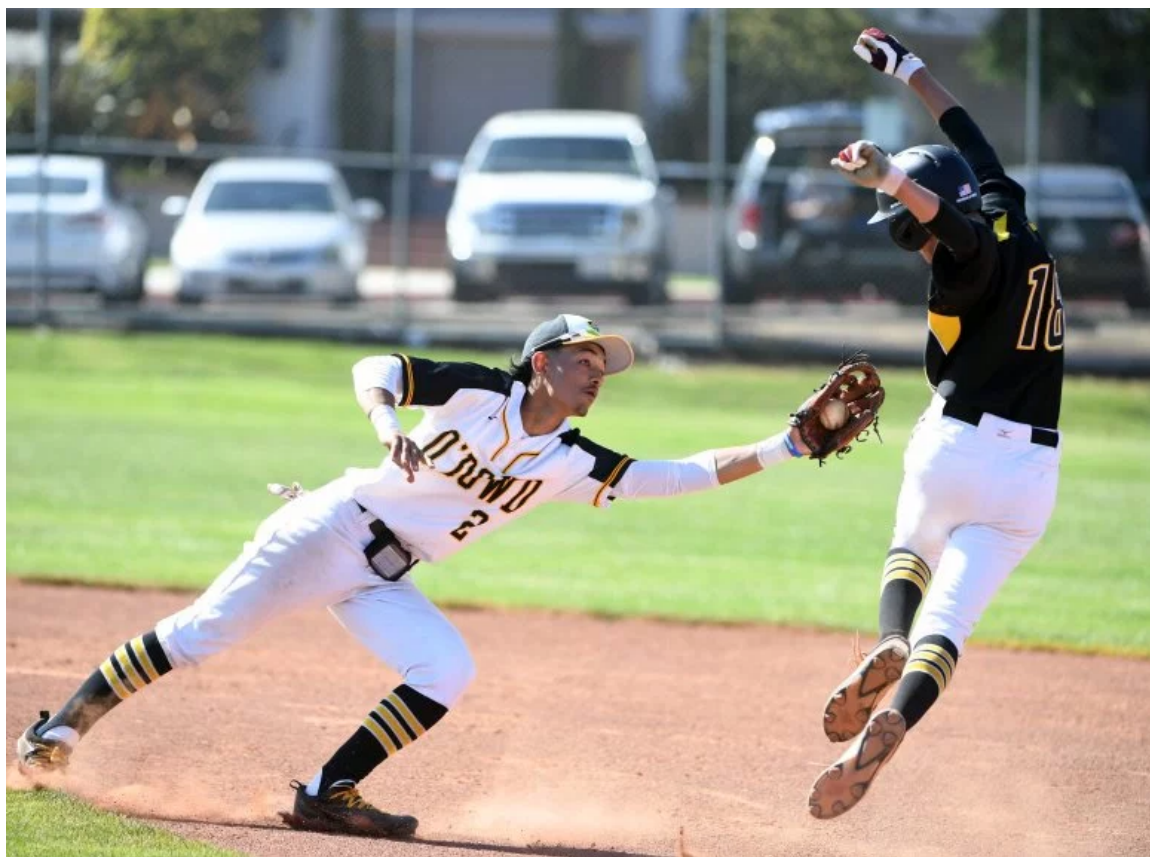
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Community News • News

High School Sports Roundup: El Cerrito tennis player wins NCS title

Bishop O'Dowd softball pitcher has outstanding performances



Doug Duran/Bay Area News Group)

Bishop O'Dowd's Jaylen Anteneh (2) tries to tag Alameda High baserunner Philip Woodworth (18) before making the throw to first base for an out in the second inning of their baseball game in Oakland on May 3. Alameda won, 11-6.

For the second straight year, El Cerrito High School's Karl Collins is the North Coast Section Division I boys tennis singles champion.

Collins, the No. 1 seed, was dominant in the final, No. 2 Luke Neal of Redwood. 6-1, 6-3. Collins, a junior, becomes only the 10th boys singles player since the section started in 1915 to win two section titles, and just the sixth since 1948.

ADVERTISING



Last season, Collins also defeated Neal in the finals in straight sets. But Collins only had one of his four matches in the tournament go to three sets.

This year, Collins was pushed in the quarterfinals and semifinals. First, he was pushed by Vintage's Lucas Bollinger 6-7 (7-9), 6-1, 6-1. Then No. 4 seed Rithik Sardana provided a tough matchup for Collins, who won 4-6, 7-6 (5), 7-5. Collins won his opening match 6-0, 6-0 over St. Mary's Jeremy Samuel.

Berkeley's Alex Chang and Michael Wright reached the Division I doubles finals before falling to Redwood's Devon Whepley and Giacomo Volpicelli 6-4, 2-6, 6-2. The Berkeley duo, the No. 3 seed, won three matches in straight sets before the finals, losing only a total of eight games in those three matches.

Bishop O'Dowd's Brandon Khuu and Coleman Forth won the Division II doubles final, defeating Piedmont's Sajan Srivastava and Charlie Lambert 6-1, 6-3. Both teams had won their previous two tournament matches in straight sets.

Baseball

The Hornets finished the WACC regular season with a 10-5 WACC-Foothill League record, only a game behind second-place Bishop O'Dowd and two games behind first-place Berkeley. Alameda led 3-1 in the second inning on its way to a 6-2 victory on May 1, then came back from a 5-1 deficit to defeat the Dragons 11-6 two days later.

But Bishop O'Dowd edged Alameda 7-6 in a WACC-Foothill playoff semifinal on May 7. The Dragons took a 5-0 lead in the top of the third inning and scored the winning run in the top of the seventh on their way to a 7-6 victory. The result of the final were not available at press time.

Berkeley was upset 3-2 by Arroyo in nine innings in the other semifinal. The Yellowjackets received a good pitching performance in that game, as it did in a sweep of San Leandro on May 1 and May 3. In the May 1 game, the Yellowjackets offense was also in gear in a 10-1 win. Both Theo Hardy and Joshua Fairchild had two hits, including doubles, for Berkeley in the game. Then the Yellowjackets edged San Leandro 1-0 on May 3 with a run in the third inning.

After clinching the WACC Shoreline Division title with an 11-3 victory over Hayward on April 30, Piedmont shut out Hayward 8-0 in a WACC playoff semifinal on May 7. Ben Levinson pitched a complete-game three-hitter with seven strikeouts and no walks for the win. Kyle Spanier was 3 for 4, including a double, with two RBI. Owen Levinson added two hits and two RBI in the victory.

Piedmont faced Encinal in the Shoreline Division championship game on May 9. The result was not available at press time.

Encinal, which finished the regular season one game in back of Piedmont, also produced a shutout in its semifinal win. The Jets beat Mt. Eden 9-0 on May 7. Encinal swept Hayward on May 1 and 3, winning 16-2 and 5-4.

El Cerrito edged Albany 8-7 in a Tri-County Athletic League-Rock Division game on 8-7 and advanced to the division championship game on May 9 against regular-season champion Pinole Valley. Both DeAngelo Fleetwood and Niko Parawan drove in two runs in the victory. Barry Rodriguez drove in two runs for Albany.

Skyline and Oakland Tech will play in the Oakland Section championship game on May 15 at 4 p.m.

Skyline won its semifinal 17-3 over Castlemont on May 3. Myles Davis had two hits, including a home run, in the victory.

Softball

Bishop O'Dowd's Elizabeth Avery has been simply dominant on the mound.

The senior threw four straight shutouts at press time, including a no-hitter with 14 strikeouts and one walk in an 8-0 win over Arroyo on May 7. Avery struck out 22 batters in a 10-inning 1-0 win over Castro Valley on May 3, allowing only one hit. She also fired two-hitters in a 1-0 win over Alameda on May 1 (18 strikeouts) and a 4-0 victory over the Hornets on May 2 (17 strikeouts).

Girls swimming

Three local athletes placed in the top six at the North Coast Section Swimming and Diving Championships last week.

College Prep freshman Sydney Griscavage placed fifth in the girls 50-yard freestyle (23.93 seconds). Berkeley's Sumi Cameron was sixth in the girls diving competition (402.25 points). Teammate Haley Kirtland was also sixth in the girls 100 freestyle (51.77).

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