

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Friday Memo
October 18, 2019

Upcoming Events – Matthew Duffy

October 19: Special Education Parent Conference, Contra Costa College, 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM
October 22: End of First Quarter
October 22: AASAT Committee, DeJean Library, 6:00 PM
October 22: Governance Committee, Alvarado, 6:00 PM
October 23: Minimum Day - Report Card Marking, MS & HS
October 23: Board of Education Meeting, DeJean, 6:30 PM
October 25: Homecoming and Grand Opening Ceremony, PVHS
October 29: Agenda Setting, Superintendent's Office, 4:30 PM
October 31: Minimum Day K-8 Schools
November 1: Elementary Conference Day, No Elementary School
November 1 & 2: PromiseNet Conference, UC Berkeley Campus
November 4: Special Education CAC, Pupil Services, 7:00 PM
November 6: End of 1st Trimester
November 6: Board of Education, DeJean, 6:30 PM
November 7: CBOC Meeting, FOC, 6:15 PM

Upcoming Agenda Items October 23 - Matthew Duffy

Budget Update
LCAP Local Indicators

Next Week's Meeting - Matthew Duffy

Next week's Closed Session will begin at 5:30 PM.

School Funding Initiatives - Tony Wold

The State of California has not been adequately funding public school education. AB 39 the Fair and Full Funding bill to set a new aspirational target for the Local Control Funding Formula, which was endorsed by CSBA, did not move forward in the past two years of legislative sessions and is currently a two year bill that may be revisited in January. Currently, all that public education, K-12, can expect is the annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) which are not sufficient to move forward as they are often less than the annual increases in costs to the District budget as we have presented to the board.

On November 6th at the Board meeting we will be having Kevin Gordon from Capital Advisors present information regarding the current state of political support for Education in Sacramento and we will have a discussion about advocacy options moving forward. In addition, we will be bringing forward a resolution in support of the Schools and Communities First ballot initiative that would look to make changes to property tax rates for corporations with the goal of increasing school funding.

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Information about this movement is attached. This measure has support from the California Teachers Association (CTA) and our Teacher's Association (UTR).

In addition, it was announced today that a new initiative, the Full and Fair Funding: the Public School Progress, Prosperity, and Accountability Act of 2020 is being sponsored by CSBA and ACSA to begin the signature gathering process to be placed on the same ballot. This measure would create a tax on high income earners and corporation income tax to provide additional funds to school districts that are earmarked for specific purposes. Initial information regarding this measure is also attached.

Parcel Tax/Bond Measure Survey Hits the Street - Marcus Walton

The survey created by Godbe Research is currently being conducted. The split sample survey will question 800 likely voters and last about 22 minutes. We anticipate the results being brought to the November 6 Board of Education meeting. If you have any questions, please contact Marcus Walton.

Media Stories of Note - Marcus Walton

The following news stories may be of interest. Copies are attached.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-10-14/california-later-school-start-times-student-react>
- Will later school start times mean more sleep or more hassles for California?

<https://richmondstandard.com/richmond/2019/10/14/wccusd-students-pitch-solutions-to-societal-problems/>
- WCCUSD students pitch solutions to societal problems

<https://edsource.org/2019/california-teachers-association-names-new-executive-director/618674> -
California Teachers Association names new executive director

<https://edsource.org/2019/frustration-surfaces-over-stege-elementary-redesign/618479> - Frustration
surfaces over redesign at East Bay school

<https://richmondstandard.com/richmond/2019/10/16/fundraiser-launched-to-meet-demand-for-coding-program-in-local-schools/>
- Fundraiser launched to meet demand for coding program in local schools

<https://edsource.org/2019/california-mandates-later-start-times-for-middle-and-high-school-students/618546> - California mandates later start times for middle and high school students

The FISCAL REPORT 32 informational update

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Volume 39

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No. 21

New School Funding Initiative Submitted for Title and Summary

A new initiative, titled the **Full and Fair Funding: the Public School Progress, Prosperity and Accountability Act of 2020**, was submitted for title and summary by the Attorney General on Monday, October 14, 2019. This is the first step before the proposal can be decided by voters at the November 2020 general election.

Proposed by the California School Boards Association (CSBA), the Association of California School Administrators, and the Community College League, the initiative would place a new tax on corporations and millionaires with the new revenues earmarked for K–14 education, estimated to be roughly \$15 billion annually.

In announcing their proposal, CSBA Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Vernon Billy stated, “This education-only initiative will reverse the disinvestment from public education we’ve seen since the 1970s.”

Beginning in 2021, the proposal would add a two-percent tax on taxable income of more than \$1 million and a 3% tax on taxable incomes greater than \$2 million. Corporate taxes would also be increased by up to 5% for corporate income greater than \$1 million.

Revenues generated from this proposal would be deposited into the Investment in California’s Public Schools and Community Colleges fund with 89% percent of the revenues earmarked for K–12 local education agencies (LEAs) and 11% for community colleges.

Funds would be allocated to LEAs in proportion to each LEA’s share of the Local Control Funding Formula targets after accounting for local revenues, with no LEA receiving less than \$500 per unit of average daily attendance (ADA). Funding, which would be subject to annual audit procedures, would be used for:

- Workforce preparation
- School safety
- Recruitment and retention of teachers and school leaders
- Reducing achievement gaps
- Pre-kindergarten early learning services
- Computer science education

No more than 5% could be used for administration.

In addition, \$500 million of these funds generated from the initiative would be allocated on a per-ADA basis in grades 7 through 12 to LEAs for the purpose of implementing state computer science standards and purchasing computers and technology for the classroom.

In order to qualify for the November ballot, proponents will need to collect a minimum of nearly one million signatures from registered voters.

—*Dave Heckler*

SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES FIRST

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES FIRST WILL RECLAIM OVER \$11 BILLION EVERY YEAR FOR CALIFORNIA'S SCHOOLS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

We have been giving billions of dollars in tax breaks to ultra-rich landowners and investors over the last 40 years, thanks to a loophole in corporate property taxes. Schools and Communities First will close the loophole and restore \$11 billion every year to fund world class schools and strengthen local economies to lift up all Californians. It's time to invest in California's future.

WHAT DOES SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES FIRST DO?



RESTORES over \$11 billion per year for K-12 schools, community colleges, counties, cities, and special districts to support education and vital community services.



PROTECTS homeowners and renters by maintaining protections for residential property.



CLOSES California's loophole in corporate property taxes by assessing commercial and industrial properties at fair market value, leveling the playing field for all businesses in the state.



ENSURES full transparency and accountability for all revenue restored to California.



INVESTS in local economies by creating more good-paying local jobs, improving infrastructure, and supporting thriving neighborhoods and schools.



PROTECTS small businesses by exempting owner-operated companies from reassessment until they are sold and eliminating the business personal property tax.



CREATES a level playing field for the nearly 50% of businesses that already pay their fair share by closing the loophole in corporate property taxes.

Join a powerful and growing coalition of labor unions, small business owners, elected officials, teachers, students, housing advocates, social justice groups, and faith-based organizations in supporting the first structural and equitable tax reform in four decades.

LET'S PUT SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES FIRST!

Paid for by Schools and Communities First - Sponsored by a Coalition of Social Justice Organizations Representing Families and Students. Committee major funding from:

The San Francisco Foundation

Chan Zuckerberg Advocacy (Nonprofit (501(c)(4))

Million Voter Project Action Fund, Sponsored by Social Justice Organizations

Funding details at <http://fppc.ca.gov> • 777 S. Figueroa St., Ste. 4050, Los Angeles, CA 90017

SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES FIRST

Our tax dollars should pay for world-class schools and thriving neighborhoods. Instead, a corporate tax loophole has drained billions of dollars from our local schools and communities for over 40 years. Schools and Communities First will reclaim \$11 billion every year for our schools and local communities by closing the loophole in corporate property taxes that benefits a fraction of wealthy corporations and investors.

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES FIRST WILL



RESTORE over \$11 billion every year in revenue for our schools and local communities by assessing commercial and industrial property at fair market value.



NOT raise taxes on homeowners or renters, while leveling the playing field for businesses.



HELP small business by eliminating the burdensome business personal property tax.



ENSURE transparency and accountability for all revenue restored to California's schools and local communities.

Despite being the 5th largest economy in the world, California's schools rank in the bottom 10 nationally. All Californians deserve world class schools and neighborhood services, not concentrated wealth in the hands of a few.

California's loophole in corporate property taxes is a massive tax giveaway to a fraction of ultra-rich corporate landowners and investors at the expense of homeowners, renters and small businesses.

Schools and local communities have suffered from 40 years of disinvestment, starving our schools, first responders, healthcare, and vital community services of funding.

It's time to close the loophole and invest in our future.

LET'S RESTORE FUNDING FOR

 Schools and Community Colleges

 Parks

 Roads and Bridges

 Firefighters and First Responders

 Affordable Housing and Homeless Services

 Libraries

 Public Transportation

 Health Clinics and Trauma Centers

Join a powerful and growing coalition of labor unions, small business owners, elected officials, teachers, students, housing advocates, social justice groups, and faith-based organizations in supporting the first structural and equitable tax reform in four decades.

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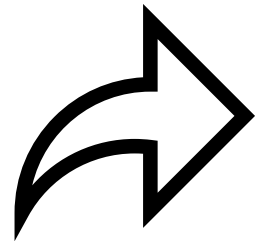
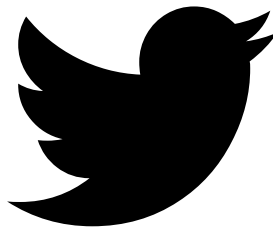
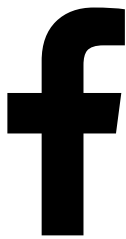
Will later school start times mean more sleep or more hassles for California?



Students exit Hamilton High School in Los Angeles on Monday. California is the first state in the nation to mandate later start times at most middle and high schools. (Kent Nishimura/Los Angeles Times)

By HOWARD BLUME, NINA AGRAWAL, SONALI KOHLI


OCT. 14, 2019
7:15 PM




Atussa Kian, 17, a senior at Arcadia High School, says she and many classmates are short on sleep because of schoolwork — an extra half-hour of shut-eye would be welcome.

“It is quite common to hear others complain about their lack of sleep or the all-nighter they had to pull the night before,” Atussa said. “Students are encouraged to take up time-consuming extracurriculars and challenging schedules, which is decent advice. However, the physical and mental health of students is rarely factored into the discussion.”

Claire Judson, a 17-year-old junior at Claremont High School, said starting school later wouldn’t make much of a difference for her. She *chooses* to get to school at 6:50 a.m. to take advantage of extra coursework.

 **zach vargas**  @zachgreantee · Oct 13, 2019
Replying to @BillShaikin
im literally graduating this year, i-


nat

 @NATALIEXMN
zero period kids screaming
3 11:14 PM - Oct 13, 2019
[See nat's other Tweets](#)

California students, their parents and educators woke up Monday to a new law that will dramatically impact their morning routines. The state has become the first in the nation to mandate that public middle schools can start no earlier than 8 a.m. and high schools no earlier than 8:30 a.m. The law, signed Sunday night by Gov. Gavin Newsom, has touched off mixed reactions — cheers from the sleep-deprived as well as official worries about impending logistical hassles. It will be phased in over the next three years.

Groups in support include the American Academy of Pediatrics, the California Medical Assn. and the California State Parent Teacher Assn. They say that research supports the idea that adolescents will be healthier and learn better with a later start to the school day. Opponents, including the California School Boards Assn. and the California Teachers Assn., argued that schools and districts should retain the authority to set school times based on local needs.

“Start times are local decisions, which should be made by locally elected boards, based upon input from parents, students, staff and members of individual communities,” said Chris Eftychiou, public information director for the Long Beach Unified School District.

 **Bill Shaikin** @BillShaikin · Oct 13, 2019
High school classes can't start before 8:30 a.m., according to this new California law. latimes.com/california/sto...

California becomes first state in the country to push bac...
A new California law requires middle and high schools in urban areas to delay start times to allow students to get more
latimes.com

Anne Casanave



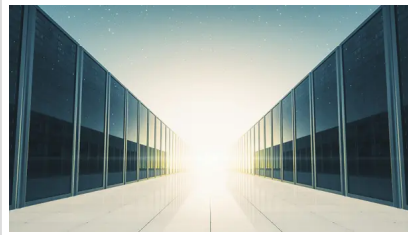
@annecasa

Students aren't going to get more sleep. They will get out later, activities will last later, and they still have homework. And unless Gavin Newsom and state senators are going to come to teens homes and tuck them in, they will still stay up late.

13 5:46 PM - Oct 13, 2019

[See Anne Casanave's other Tweets](#)

He added that Long Beach parents opposed later starts in every school when the idea was considered seven years ago. In Long Beach, most middle schools begin at 9 a.m. Most high schools, however, start at 7:50 a.m.



SPONSORED CONTENT

How exascale computing is profoundly changing the way we live and work

By Enterprise.next

One consideration is managing the transportation of students with disabilities. "We only have so many buses," he said.

Los Angeles Unified, the state's largest school system, has run a pilot project on later start times at four middle schools, which start at 8:30 a.m. or 8:45 a.m. Most district secondary schools start at about 8 a.m.

One of them is Johnson STEM Academy in Westchester, where 12-year-old Morgan Scivoletto, a sixth-grader, likes the change.

Just months ago, as a fifth-grader at another school, Morgan was in bed by 8 p.m. and up at 6:50 a.m. He was often moody in the morning and tired at school, where concentrating was hard, according to both Morgan and his mother, Claire Scivoletto.

Now he gets the same amount of sleep but wakes up later — in bed by 9 p.m and up at 7:50 a.m. That shift has made a huge difference, they said.

"When I used to wake up, I was always tired for some reason, and now I feel really great in the morning," Morgan said after school Monday.

Still, two years of data show no conclusive benefits on student achievement, attendance, enrollment or suspensions, said Alison Yoshimoto-Towery, the district's interim chief instructional officer.

At Hamilton High School in Palms, where many students rise especially early and arrive by bus, reaction was mixed to later start times.

One 13-year-old said it was exhausting to wake up at 5 a.m. every day to catch the bus from the Crenshaw area. With a later start, "I'd probably get better grades because I wouldn't be so drowsy," he said.

Another freshman said she'd need an extra hour to get enough sleep to make a difference.

Jesus Navarrete, 17, lives in Koreatown and his mom drops him off. Most days, he said, "I barely get here on time." Three tardies equal an absence, and as a senior, he's allowed only seven absences: "You can see how it adds up."

Navarrete usually goes to bed around midnight and wakes up at 6, when he just has time to brush his teeth, get dressed and finish schoolwork.

Some students said a later start wouldn't change much because their parents would still drop them off early to get to their work.

Stephanie Ayala, 16, said she wouldn't want to start later because of afternoon activities, such as her community service at a local hospital.

L.A. school board President Richard Vladovic said the change would pose "logistical concerns in terms of after-school athletics, but it may have merit."

School board member Monica Garcia said she was concerned about new costs that would not be picked up by the state.

Veteran administrator Sharon Robinson, chief of staff for board member George McKenna, challenged whether the research fully took into account the role that technology played in sleep deprivation, "students being on their devices all night, playing games, texting, etc."

District schools already have had flexibility over schedules as long as students receive the legally required instructional time.

At Social Justice Humanitas Academy in the San Fernando Valley, school starts at 8:30 a.m. Not only that, but the first period of the day also has an extra 15 minutes built in for students to eat breakfast or talk about the lesson of the day.

"If you get a kid rested and with food in them, the rest of that time can be more effective," Principal Jeff Austin said.

"Getting a kid to school or dealing with how late the day goes, those are all technical fixes," he said, adding that the school opens at 7:15 for parents who need early drop-off. "But you can't change the adolescent brain. ... I can't make a kid be awake at 7:45 a.m."



AugustaWeaverJohnson

@AugustaHollywd

Replying to @LATimescitybeat

As a former teacher, I promise you that test scores and grades will indeed rise. This is great!

(Btw, not every child plays Fortnite! 😊)

5 12:33 AM - Oct 14, 2019

[See AugustaWeaverJohnson's other Tweets](#)

Atussa Kian and Claire Judson are members of the Los Angeles Times High School Insider team of students who are interested in journalism.

WCCUSD students pitch solutions to societal problems

October 14, 2019

WCCUSD students took part in an annual Junior Achievement Social Innovation Camp where they developed solutions to problems in their community alongside Chevron employee mentors on Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2019.

They proposed modernized lockers equipped with touchscreens that can serve to keep students on schedule and prepared for class. They pitched an educational app that can connect students and guardians to their teachers and school administrators, along with educational resources and opportunities.

One group of innovators aimed for an outreach program connecting the homeless with skills training through city beautification projects. Another suggested the possibility of a blue-collar training program for underserved residents.

No, they were not the CEOs of technology startups or the directors of local non-profit organizations – at least not yet.

They were the latest cohort of West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) high school students who recently participated in the innovative Junior Achievement Social Innovation Camp at Richmond Memorial Auditorium.

The event, sponsored annually by Chevron Richmond, brings together information technology and engineering academy students from Richmond High, Kennedy High, De Anza High and Pinole Valley

High for an exercise on coming up with viable solutions to problems in their community. They also needed to show how their solution could become a sustainable company or organization.

“They get to pick an issue that bothers them the most, and they present their solutions in front of a panel of professional judges,” said Stacey Martin, regional director of JA Northern California.

Over the last several years, Chevron has partnered with Junior Achievement on the program that promotes STEM curricula (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), and prepares local youth to become the leaders of the future.

Student presentations are met with tough questions from professional judges, which this year included Anita Gardyne, CEO of Onēva; Bret Alexander Sweet, director of the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center; and Don Daves-Rougeaux, vice president, Higher Education and Workforce Engagement for Linked Learning Alliance.

Constructively, they asked tough questions about the technologies students proposed, from functionality to marketability.

“They needed to figure out, how are they going to fund it, who is their target audience, and is it something that will be viable in Contra Costa?,” Martin said.

Students also learn team-building and presentation skills alongside their Chevron mentors, Martin said.

“It’s an opportunity to go out of the classroom, work with mentors from a large company in the city of Richmond, and spend several hours working with someone from an industry they might possibly work in one day,” Martin said.

Junior Achievement is a springboard for innovators of the future, said Lily Rahnema, community engagement manager for Chevron Richmond.

“We believe youth are the problem-solvers of our future, which is partly why Chevron invests heavily in STEM-related education at our local schools,” Rahnema said. “The Junior Achievement Social Innovation Camp is an example of a partnership that is planting the seed of innovation in our young people, and we never ceased to be impressed by the solutions presented by WCCUSD students.”

The U.S. Department of Education is also strong supporter of Junior Achievement, which will undoubtedly return again to WCCUSD next year.

“All young people should be prepared to think deeply and to think well so that they have the chance to become the innovators, educators, researchers, and leaders who can solve the most pressing

California Teachers Association names new executive director

Joe Boyd will spearhead effort to pass initiative boosting school funds through increased commercial property taxes.

OCTOBER 17, 2019 | DIANA LAMBERT

This story was updated on Oct. 17, 2019.

The California Teachers Association has named Joe Boyd as its new executive director. He replaces Joe Nuñez, who was abruptly terminated by the board of directors in July.

When Boyd begins his new job on Nov. 1, he will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization, which represents 310,000 teachers in California and exerts enormous influence over state education policies and the working conditions of teachers. He will manage 400 employees.

Nuñez served as executive director of the CTA for six years. His termination followed the election of E. Toby Boyd as president of the union in May, the same month the California Faculty Association severed its ties with the CTA. His termination came as a surprise to education observers around the state and many within the CTA itself. Gail Gregorio has served as interim executive director since July.

E. Toby Boyd is not related to Joe Boyd. Neither were available for an interview Wednesday.

Joe Boyd returns to the CTA after a three-year stint as executive director of the California Federation of Teachers, which represents 120,000 school employees.



Joe Boyd

Prior to that role, Boyd spent 23 years with the CTA as a regional organizer, charter school organizer and executive director of the Teachers Association of Long Beach, according to a press release from the association. He was considered one of the CTA's top troubleshooters, playing a key role in over 25 contract negotiations and 30 state and local campaigns.

"I'm honored to return to CTA at such a pivotal time," Boyd said in a statement. "I look forward to working with the diverse members as we lead efforts for the quality public schools and colleges that all students deserve. California educators are engaged and ready to lead the way in closing corporate loopholes and funding public schools with our Schools and Communities First Initiative. I'm excited to lead that charge."

The [initiative](#), which has qualified for the Nov. 2, 2020 ballot, would increase some commercial property taxes, [generating](#) \$6.5 billion to \$11.5 billion for cities, counties, schools and special districts, according to the Legislative Analyst's Office.

The son of two teachers, Boyd began his career as a government teacher at Kennedy High School in Richmond.

"I'm excited to welcome Joe Boyd back home to CTA to lead us during such a crucial time in our profession and our union," said E. Toby Boyd in a statement. "He possesses the skill and vision, deep experience and dedication that is needed for the executive director position."

The story was corrected to change the amount generated by the tax initiative to \$6.5 billion to \$11.5 billion.

Comments

Comments Policy

We welcome your comments. All comments are moderated for civility, relevance and other considerations. [Click here for EdSource's Comments Policy.](#)

SAVING STEGE

EDSOURCE SPECIAL REPORT

Principal

Frustration surfaces over redesign at East Bay school

BY ASHLEY A. SMITH

OCTOBER 17, 2019

Above: Stege Principal Nicole Ruiz (in pink, left) greets staff and students.



Earlier this year, the West Contra Costa Unified School District attempted to answer a tough question: What would it take to [turn around](#) a struggling school like Stege Elementary in Richmond?

Now nearly two months into the new school year, the principal, while still hopeful, says she's frustrated that the school lacks a clear plan and change hasn't come fast enough.

"We haven't gotten all the resources we were promised," said Stege Principal Nicole Ruiz who is in her second year of leading the school.

The school, located north of the San Francisco Bay, has existed since 1943. But in recent years, [the school has struggled](#) with low academic performance, poor attendance, high suspension rates, too many inexperienced teachers and high instructor turnover rates.

Editor's note: This story is part of 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. Go [here](#) for other stories in this series. Please [share your story](#) about Stege Elementary with us.

Recent results on the [2019 Smarter Balanced exam](#) show some improvement for the 2018-19 school year. But students remain well below [state averages](#) for grades 3 through 6. The percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard on the English language arts test increased by 3.1 percentage points to 10.85 percent. In math, the number of students who met or exceeded the standard on the math exam increased by 4.64 percentage points to 7.69 percent.

School district officials described this year as one focused on planning the redesign that will fundamentally improve the K-6 school.

The district and the community want this school year to be the start of something different. Over the summer, the district put a focus on hiring more experienced teachers and giving the school more resources.

And while some of these reforms have taken place, many of the people who work in the school or have familiarity with the daily operations say not enough is being done to turn the school around.

West Contra Costa Schools Superintendent Matthew Duffy said this school year is more about planning and seeing what is starting to work, or not, for the school.

“It is a very ambitious plan with a pretty tight turnaround,” Duffy said. “We aim to put a lot of resources in place at Stege and really thought of this year as strengthening and stabilizing the school.”



CREDIT: ANDREW REED/EDSOURCE

Principal Nicole Ruiz works with Caitlin Gallager, the school psychologist, during a staff training in August.

One example of what Ruiz calls the school’s missing resources is an academic coach. The school had that position to help teachers with the curriculum mostly because so many teachers before this year were inexperienced, said Ruiz.

“This year, I don’t have a coach,” Ruiz said. “However, our school has a newly adopted curriculum.”

Ruiz concedes that one reason the school doesn’t have an academic coach is that a couple of teachers hired this year are experts in the new reading and writing curriculum known as the Readers-Writers Workshop, in addition to their regular duties. Now, Ruiz would like to give them some relief.

Another element missing this year — a vice principal.

West Contra Costa assigns vice principals to schools based on enrollment size and some special populations, such as low-income or foster students. Stege Elementary, which has perennially suffered from low enrollment, currently has about 270 students — not enough to employ a vice-principal. The district could fund a part-time vice-principal if 96 percent of the school's students classified as one of those special populations. Only 95.3 percent of Stege's population satisfies that requirement, Ruiz said.

She said there is some movement to bring in another administrator to assist her and work with teachers but it will take time to get the position filled.

Duffy said the decision was made to put money into hiring teachers instead of a vice principal. He acknowledges that the launch of the redesign hasn't been perfect.

"If there was any struggle, it was getting everyone staffed from day one," he said. "A number of those support positions took longer than we expected."

Demetrio Gonzalez, president of United Teachers of Richmond, which represents the teachers, said schools across the region have had trouble replacing teachers when needed.

"With any large change there are going to be hiccups and we knew there was going to be hiccups," Gonzalez said. "It became a challenge to fill positions a month, two months in."

From the first week of school, the school was down one of the experienced teachers it was promised. That meant a technology specialist teacher shifted to cover a fifth-grade classroom. And the in-house substitute spent the first months of the school year covering the technology class. The school also contended with a teacher retiring early. That position was filled last week.



The school has historically suffered, in part, because of teacher absences and high teacher turnover. It also faced days where there weren't enough teachers, requiring that students be dispersed to other classes.

Some of these challenges, like filling teacher positions, are typical for any public school, Gonzalez said, referring to the state's continuing teacher shortage. But the school has special needs, he added. "I do think they need more support," he said.

Nevertheless, it creates a difficult workload for teachers who are already working with a high population of students who are experiencing trauma such as poverty or homelessness. And there was a commitment made this year that every student would receive daily technology or art classes.

Those traumas students experience sometimes lead to "extreme behaviors," such as violence against other students and teachers and that compounds some of the problems the school experiences, Ruiz said.

As the principal, she describes being pulled in many directions. Too often, Ruiz is defusing conflicts with students. That means she's not assisting teachers in their classrooms and the well-behaved students rarely see her, which she doesn't like.

"I have a lot of restorative conversations with students, and they're not quick, cut and dry," Ruiz said. "Something else could happen in the 15 to 20 minutes I'm with one student mediating conflict and that sometimes takes me away."

The school also lacks a counselor that families in the community have asked for.

The school has undergone other redesigns in the past.

"I'd be interested to know what type of planning went into other redesigns because I don't feel like the planning that went into this reinvention was sufficient enough," Ruiz said. "It wasn't as thought through. A lot of things we're finding out about after the fact that if we had taken a step back and thought through, we wouldn't have questions."

Ruiz, for example, points to the effort that went into making sure teachers received more pay for their additional professional development days.

"No one took into consideration our office staff and how changes to our schedule would affect office staff," she said. "It wasn't thought through with our families and how additional days would affect them and the odd days their student is not in school."

Part of the redesign includes giving teachers 10 additional professional development days, of which five are embedded into the academic year and cost the district about \$55,300. Those extra days mean extending the school's calendar by about a week. Every teacher is receiving a \$10,000 incentive because the school is considered "hard-to-staff."

"With this whole redesign the main thing we wanted to create for teachers was not just more time to prepare the day

"I am concerned that we do not have the resources and ability to pull this thing off"

—Mister Phillips, School Board Trustee

and classes, but collaboration and more professional development,” Gonzalez said. “But with a lack of staff, that collaboration hasn’t happened as much as we were hoping.”

West Contra Costa School Board Trustee Mister Phillips agrees that the design process for improving Stege hasn’t been clearly laid out.

“There are some changes going on at the school, but there has not been a vision or a plan for what Stege is going to look like and how we’ll get there,” Phillips said. “And that’s what is causing the confusion.”

In a general sense, everyone wants the school to improve and be better for the students and the community, Phillips said. Still, he’s less sure that even changes like increasing teacher salaries and offering a financial incentive will persist beyond this year.

“I am concerned that we do not have the resources and ability to pull this thing off, whatever this thing is because it has not been clear,” Phillips said.

Not to mention the district has a \$48 million budget deficit it needs to solve over the next two years, he said.

Duffy said the district’s most significant successes this year was hiring more experienced teachers who had “successful urban experience.” More enrichment teachers, an in-house substitute teacher and more support for community outreach also were added, he said.

Gonzalez said the primary difference with staff is “these people truly want to be there and they purposely applied to be at Stege.”

In the “second phase” of redesigning the school, all of the staff will go through an interview process to determine if they match the vision produced by the redesign team, Duffy said.

The district will “look at whether these teachers were that successful and what do we need to bring in even better or stronger teachers next year, and that would go with leadership as well,” Duffy said, adding that by leadership he is including the principal.



Sam Cleare, a third-grade teacher, talks to a parent and student on the first day of school Aug. 19.

But there is also some confusion over what the district is evaluating as it figures out what works or doesn't work for a new and improved school, Ruiz said.

"Right now, we're evaluating apples to oranges," Ruiz said. "We're making improvements to the school, but we're taking away sources of support, and some support hasn't been given, so when should we start evaluating?"

Duffy said there are goals that the school is expected to meet.

"We're looking for successes in academics in terms of how students are achieving and also looking at the success in socio-emotional growth," he said. "The key for us is learning from this year and learning which of those resources were not the right resources and what is right."

School Board President Tom Panas agreed and said the community can expect a final redesign plan and all staff hired by the end of the school year.

Comments Policy

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scottie smith

2 hours ago



My advocacy in the process has been about having the stakeholders in the Advisory meetings – those are principal, teachers and most importantly parents. We cannot restructure the school without their participation. The school did make a small gain before this process occurred, we need to know how we can help them develop an even more ambitious plan for the students.

Fundraiser launched to meet demand for coding program in local schools

October 16, 2019

Calculus Roundtable has launched an online fundraiser aiming to expand its coding program at local schools. (Photo credit: Calculus Roundtable)

Ubisoft's visit to Kennedy High's Fab Lab [last month](#) to introduce and donate its educational video game *Discovery Tour: Ancient Greece*, a dedicated mode of *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, has energized efforts to develop future coders and programmers in West Contra Costa County.

Organized by Calculus Roundtable, a nonprofit that promotes alternative pathways to math and science for underserved students, the Sept. 11 event launched a program at local schools that teaches students in Richmond to code and build their very own computer game.

And already, program officials are receiving requests to offer coding instruction at more schools.

Jim Hollis, executive director for Calculus Roundtable, has launched a fundraiser aiming to more than double student access to the coding program. Visit the online fundraiser [here](#).

California mandates later start times for middle and high school students

Key groups oppose Gov. Newsom's signing of the bill delaying start times for adolescents and teens

OCTOBER 13, 2019 | JOHN FENSTERWALD



CREDIT: CHEZ_SUGI, CREATIVE COMMONS

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation Sunday that will mandate a later morning start for most middle and high schools, choosing to side with pediatricians and the PTA rather than the state's leading teachers union and groups representing school boards and superintendents.

The bill's author said California will now become the first state to require later start times in response to medical research that shows most teens are sleep deprived as a result of changes to their biological clocks that prevent them from going to sleep early.

Senator Anthony Portantino, D-San Fernando, was effusive in praising Newsom for signing a bill that former Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed a year ago. Brown said start times should remain a local decision.

“Today, Governor Newsom displayed a heartwarming and discerning understanding of the importance of objective research and exercised strong leadership as he put our children’s health and welfare ahead of institutional bureaucracy resistant to change,” Portantino said in a statement. “Generations of children will come to appreciate this historic day and our Governor for taking bold action.”

Expressing disappointment, the California School Boards Association said the mandate “fails to respect parental decisions or consider the needs of local communities.” The research on later start times is inconclusive but the impact on families can be predicted, said spokesman Troy Flint. The bill “will disproportionately affect low-income families and prevent many students from working after school or from caring for their siblings,” he said, adding it could increase the need for childcare for “already cash-strapped families.”

When it goes into effect in 2022-23, the law will require middle schools to begin no earlier than 8 am and high schools to start regular classes after 8:30 am. The bill exempts rural districts because of bus scheduling challenges and also excludes “zero periods,” which are optional courses offered by some schools before the regular school day begins.

Newsom announced approval of [Senate Bill 328](#) without comment in the last batch among hundreds of bills he signed and vetoed on the final day for signing for legislation passed last month.

Among the more than 100 vetoes that he issued on Sunday, the governor rejected education bills that would have:

- Mandated full-day kindergarten for all children, citing the cost to the state (see [veto message](#) for [AB 197](#)).
- Required all K-12 districts and community colleges to provide 6 weeks of full pay for maternity leave, stating districts should deal with these costs in their budgets and labor bargaining (see [veto message](#) for [AB 500](#)).

- Created a STEM seal of approval as part of a graduation diploma, citing a shortage of math and science teachers to teach the courses and other existing recognitions (see [veto message](#) for [AB 28](#))

The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) supported Portantino's [Senate Bill 328](#). They cited research that shows sleep deprivation leads to teen absenteeism, lower grades, higher dropout rates and depression.

“We took a really close look at this and asked the most important question: ‘What is best for our kids?’” said Carol Kocivar, legislative advocate for the California PTA. “The answer is absolutely clear. This affects every teenager in California, regardless of what zip code they live in.”

Among the opponents, the California Teachers Association, the Association of California School Administrators and the school boards association said that SB 328 would negatively affect before- and after-school programs and sports, union contracts and bus schedules. Many working parents tied to daily commute schedules would end up dropping their children off before school just the same, they argued.

“While well-intentioned, proposals to mandate school start times fail to take into account the complexity of the issue and perpetuate the illusion that adolescent sleep deprivation has a simple fix,” two San Jose superintendents, Chris Funk of East Side Union High School District and Nancy Albarrán of San Jose Unified, wrote in a [commentary for EdSource](#). “Those of us working in school systems will tell you that setting school start and end times requires balancing many factors, including the needs of students, parents and staff as well as the financial impact on school districts.”

Portantino argued that it was appropriate for the Legislature to set minimum public health standards based on medical and biological research.

Based on a 2011-12 district survey by the federal government, an analysis by the Assembly Education Committee projected that one-fifth of California's schools already comply with the bill; about one-half would need to delay their start times by 30 minutes or less, and about a quarter would need to increase their start time between a half-hour and an hour.

Comments

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Alex Wright

2 days ago



Will this bill apply to K-8 schools? Will the 7th and 8th graders' start times move to 8:00 while the elementary kids can still start as early as the school wants? Or are K-8 schools completely exempt, allowing these schools to require 7th and 8th graders to go to school at 7:45 or earlier?

▶ PG

3 days ago



We may have a problem. In many cases, students have burdensome workloads when it comes to homework. 6 classes, 30 minutes per class per night. Three hours of homework a night is just too much. Second, parents don't monitor their kids and structure when they get off social media or away from video games and go to bed. These two mentioned problems are principal reasons that kids stay up too late and are sleep deprived. ... [Read More](#)

Heather Leonard

3 days ago



Parents complained that it will prevent their teens from working. That is complete and total BS. The bill states high schools can start no earlier than 8:30. I'm a high school teacher and my school runs 9-4:15. A large portion of my kids have after-school jobs and school hours do not interfere with them. I guess these parents also forgot about weekends, school breaks, and summer as well!

Tammy hopkins

4 days ago



This plan does not magically add an additional hour into the day. It takes away from time in the afternoon to complete homework or participate in activities so they will now need to stay up later.

This is a terrible idea! Thanks Governor. I hope our district finds some loopholes to offer classes for kids who need every bit of their time in the afternoon to get things done.

Frances O'Neill Zimmerman

4 days ago



So much time and energy has been expended on this issue — and other tinkering-around-the-edge causes too — but they are small-beer compared to California’s now-chronic failure to fully educate our public school kids.

At present, most of our kids are getting a permanent late-start: it was recently announced that *half* of California public school students remain below proficient in math and English language skills. When will this continuing academic deficit be treated as the emergency it is?

▶ **Michelle**

4 days ago



I have daughters in middle school and the regular start time is 8:30 am. They have participated in zero period music courses since they were in 5th grade though and those classes start at 7:35 am. This seemed reasonable and allowed me to drop them off and get to work early every day. They go to bed at 8:30 pm and get up at 6 am. I get up between 5 and 5:30 am. ... [Read More](#)

Ranger

4 days ago



So what is “rural?”

John Fensterwald

4 days ago



The term is not defined in the bill, according to the California School Boards Association, which says it plans to seek clarity to identify exempt districts.

▶ **tony**

4 days ago



I fully support this effort as the health of children should be always be a top priority over other concerns. Different children have different circadian rhythms resulting in different natural sleep wake cycles times. As someone from a technology background, I remember most of my peers who ended up in science and tech fields would prefer to study in late evenings and wake up later versus very few that would sleep early and wake up early. ... [Read More](#)