

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Friday Memo
July 12, 2019

Upcoming Events – Matthew Duffy

July 17: Board of Education, DeJean, 6:30 PM

July 30: Agenda Setting, Superintendent’s Office, 4:00 PM

August 6: Middle College High School begins

August 7: Board of Education, DeJean, 6:30 PM

Next Week’s Board Meeting - Matt Duffy

Closed Session for the July 17 meeting will begin at 5:30 PM.

Upcoming Agenda Items July 17 - Matt Duffy

Arts Equity Resolution

Air Quality Commitment

Increase in Elementary Lunch Prices

Background on Recommended Administrative Appointments

ECES Earns Six-Year Accreditation Status - Marcus Walton

The Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) granted El Cerrito High School a Six-Year Accreditation Status with a mid-cycle two-day Visit, through June 30, 2025. Congratulations to Principal Patty Crespo, the teachers, staff, students, and parents for a successful accreditation process. A copy of the award letter is attached.

El Sobrante Stroll - Marcus Walton

The El Sobrante Stroll takes place on Sunday, September 15. Arrival time is at 10:30 a.m. and the parade starts at 11 a.m. If you plan to attend, please inform Debbie Haynie and Marcus Walton by Friday, August 30. Also indicate whether you will walk or wish to ride in a convertible.

Air Quality Item - Ken Whittemore

Wednesday’s Board agenda includes an item providing guidelines regarding air quality. This guideline was assembled and discussed at the Solutions Team. This worksheet will help provide guidance for the District when facing air quality issues. The hope is that we will not need to implement, but based on the last two years’ experience, this guideline is good preparedness.

If you have any questions on this please contact me.

Stege Community Advisory Board - Gracie Guerrero

Applications to participate on the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) Stege Community Advisory Board were due on Wednesday, July 10. This Advisory Board will collaborate with WCCUSD to Strengthen and Stabilize and Reimagine Stege Elementary School. Members were selected by the Stege Steering Committee and constitute a cross-section of the community, Stege alumni, Stege/Stege feeder school staff, and Stege/Stege community parents. The following members were selected to participate on the Stege Community Advisory Board:

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Tanise Smith (Stege Community Member Stege student alumni parent, El Cerrito High parent, and WCCUSD School Community Outreach Worker)

Rev. Dr. Dale Witherspoon (Easter Hill United Methodist Church)

Sheila Marrow (Crescent Park Executive Board, El Cerrito High ESL volunteer)

Scottie Smith (NAACP DLCAP Representative, NAACP - Richmond member)

Michele Jackson (Stege alumni)

Hanah Guitar (Stege Special Education teacher)

Ahmad Hameed (Korematsu Middle School Math teacher)

Helene Burks (former El Cerrito High Science teacher and current John F. Kennedy Assistant Principal)

Natalie Tovani Walchuk (Executive Director, GO Public Schools West Contra Costa County)

Pierre Thompson (Stege Community Member and Healthy Richmond Project Manager)

Leslie Reckler (Bayside Council of PTAs President and El Cerrito High parent)

We will continue recruiting applicants for student alumni and parents. There are also opportunities for support by joining the [Stege Community Support Group](#).

Questions about the process can be directed to Executive Director Ruben Aurelio.

Media Articles of Note - Marcus Walton

The following media articles may be of interest:

<https://edsources.org/2019/bay-area-school-redesigns-its-program-to-help-students-graduate/613851> - Bay Area school redesigns its program to help students graduate

<https://edsources.org/2019/gov-newsoms-state-budget-resolves-3-california-school-boards-lawsuits/614990> - Gov. Newsom's state budget resolves 3 California school boards' lawsuits

<https://edsources.org/2019/governors-team-jumps-into-fray-over-contested-charter-school-bill/615053> - Governor's team jumps into fray over contested charter school bill



Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges

COMMISSION MEMBERS

- STEPHEN CATHERS
Chairperson
East Asia Regional Council of Schools
- GREGORY FRANKLIN, Ed.D.
Vice Chairperson
Association of California School Administrators
- THOMAS ADAMS, Ph.D.
California Department of Education
- MICHAEL ALVAREZ
Western Catholic Educational Association
- SAMANTHA BENISH
California Federation of Teachers
- GRANT BENNETT
Association of California School Administrators
- DANNY BLAS
California Teachers Association
- RON CARRUTH, Ed.D.
Association of California School Administrators
- NANCY COONIS
Western Catholic Educational Association
- MITCHELL D'OLIER
Public Member, Hawaii
- ODIE DOUGLAS, Ed.D.
Association of California School Administrators
- LEE DUNCAN, Ed.D.
Association of Christian Schools International
- JON FERNANDEZ
Pacific Islands
- JUAN A. FLECHA
Association of California School Administrators
- KRISTIE FLOHRA
National Lutheran School Accreditation
- ANDREA FUKUMOTO
Hawaii State Department of Education
- DAVID GAUDI, Ed.D.
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools
- MELISSA HANDY
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools
- LAURA HERMAN, Ed.D.
Charter Schools
- RODNEY LUKE
Hawaii State Department of Education
- DEREK MINAKAMI
Hawaii Government Employees' Association
- JOE MITCHNER
Public Member, California
- LINDA NORMAN, Ed.D.
Western Catholic Educational Association
- DOREEN OLESON, Ed.D.
California Association of Independent Schools
- MATTHEW RUSSO, Ed.D.
Postsecondary Education
- MARSHA SERAFIN, Ed.D.
California Association of Private School Organizations
- KIMBERLY SHIELDS
Western Catholic Educational Association
- KATHERINE THOROSSIAN, Ed.D.
Association of California School Administrators
- EMMA TURNER, Ph.D.
California School Boards Association
- BERIT VON POHLE, Ed.D.
Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
- DIANA WALSH-REUSS, Ed.D.
Association of California School Administrators

June 28, 2019

BARRY R. GROVES, Ed.D.
President

MARILYN S. GEORGE, Ed.D.
Executive Vice President

Ms. Patricia Crespo
Principal
El Cerrito High School
540 Ashbury Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Dear Ms. Crespo:

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC) announces the action taken at the Summer 2019 Commission Meeting. The ACS WASC Commissioners have determined El Cerrito High School (9 - 12) meets the ACS WASC criteria for accreditation. This accreditation status is based on all of the information provided by the school, including the self-study report, and the satisfactory completion of the on-site accreditation visit. The Commission granted a Six-Year Accreditation Status with a Mid-cycle Two-day Visit, through June 30, 2025.

El Cerrito High School is required to prepare a progress report for the Mid-cycle Visit. The progress report should demonstrate that the school has: 1) addressed the critical areas for follow-up through the schoolwide action plan; 2) made appropriate progress on the implementation of the schoolwide action plan; and 3) improved student achievement relative to the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

Accreditation status is conditioned upon El Cerrito High School's continued adherence with the ACS WASC policies, procedures, and criteria for accreditation. This includes a requirement that an accredited school annually contribute members from the school staff or district to participate on visiting committees. Failure to maintain compliance with said policies, procedures, and standards is grounds for modification and/or withdrawal of the accreditation.

The Commission looks forward to El Cerrito High School's anticipated success and continuing improvement in keeping with ACS WASC's pursuit of excellence in elementary, secondary, and adult education.

Sincerely,

Stephen Cathers
Commission Chairperson

cc: Visiting Committee Chairperson
Superintendent



STEGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP SIGN UP FORM

We believe that our young people can do great things if they are provided with the right conditions, supports and an unwavering belief in their ability to succeed. We recognize and respect the concern for and commitment to this school from the wider community, and we know that we will not be able to accomplish our goals to strengthen, stabilize, and position Stege for future success without the active and ongoing support of the community.

The **Stege Elementary School Community Support Group (CSG)** is made up of members who are interested in providing ongoing or one-time support to Stege. CSG members can support Stege with a wide range of different activities. If you are interested in joining CSG, please share your contact information and check off the ways you are willing to support below. We will be in touch with you soon and are profoundly grateful for your support!

NAME: _____ **BIRTHDAY:** _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Cell: _____
Email: _____

BUSINESS

Company Name: _____
Title: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
Email: _____

I would like to:

- Volunteer to read with students in the library and in classrooms
- Be a Greeter for families during the first few weeks of school
- Provide extra help at lunch time and recess
- Be a member of the send off team at end of day during first few weeks of school
- Provide and distribute back packs and school supplies
- Sponsor first weeks of school welcome events to new and returning families
- Help teachers to prepare their classrooms in early to mid-August
- Help school leadership with making hallways and shared space rich and visually appealing
- Participate in or sponsor campus beautification projects
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Bay Area school redesigns its program to help students graduate

Six-year effort pays off; Program includes tutoring, small academies, college counseling

JULY 9, 2019 | THERESA HARRINGTON



THERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

When Jazhun Brown first transferred to [De Anza High](#) as a junior, poor grades made him an unlikely candidate to graduate on time. His GPA was low and he had failed biology. That changed after school counselors, college advisers and teachers helped him see he could reach his goal of becoming a police officer by retaking courses and working hard to successfully complete others.

He graduated last month and will enroll this fall at Sacramento State University

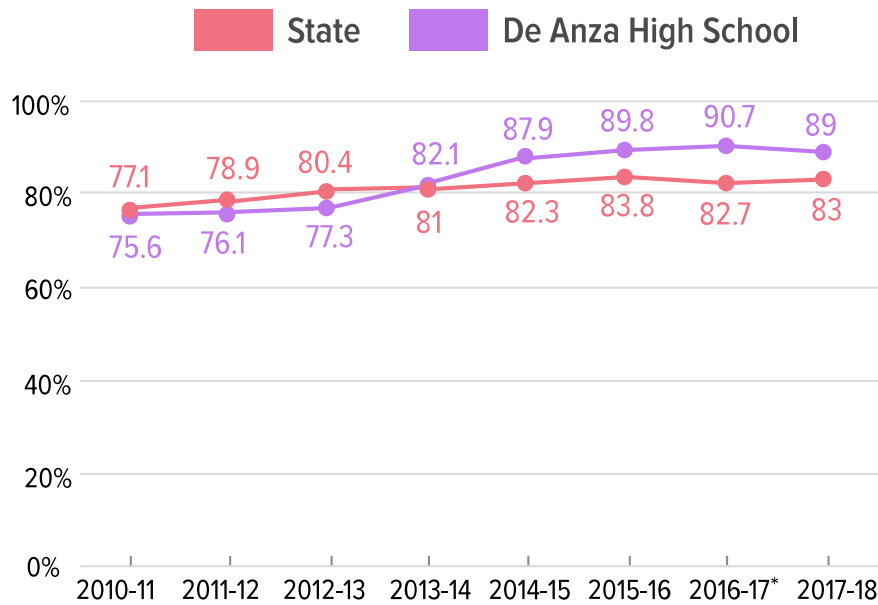
“My grades were not always good and I was getting off track,” said Brown, 18, looking back on his rocky start at De Anza, in the West Contra Costa Unified School District, with a sophomore year GPA of 2.0. “Last year (first semester of senior year) was the first time I ever got a 4.0 GPA. That really came

from this school pushing me — having counselors on my side — pushing me and helping me do better. This year, I was like, ‘I’m going to do it!’”

De Anza’s efforts to keep students on track to graduate and go to college, some of which started six years ago, reflect a push across California for schools to increase the number of students graduating from high school. And, like many of the schools statewide seeing higher graduation rates, De Anza is using a variety of tools, such as tutoring, career-themed courses, online credit recovery options and academic counseling.

The result has been a steady improvement in graduation rates to 89 percent in 2017-18, higher than the state average of 83 percent. That’s a reversal of 2012-13, when the school’s graduation rate of 77 percent lagged the 80 percent state average.

De Anza High School graduation rate



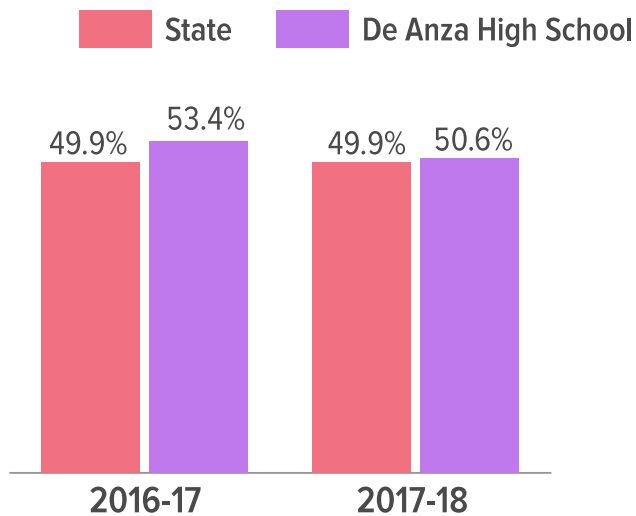
Note: Following a federal audit, the state, starting in 2016-17, changed how it calculates graduation rates to exclude students not in regular high school programs. The change lowered the statewide rate from 2015-16 to 2016-17 and was expected to slightly lower graduation rates in some districts.

Source: California Department of Education

EdSource

In another measure of a school’s success, De Anza’s percentage of students meeting requirements to attend the 10-campus University of California or the 23-campus California State University was 51 percent in 2017-18, slightly higher than the state average of 50 percent. That means that in addition to what the [district requires](#) for graduation students completed additional courses in foreign language and a recommended additional year of math and science.

De Anza High School students meeting UC/CSU admission requirements

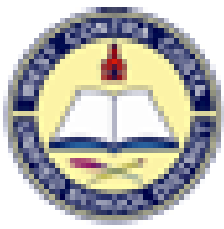


Source: California Department of Education
Charts designed by Yuxuan Xie.

EdSource

When students first come to high school, they don't always have a clear vision of their future, said Principal Summer Sigler. But after being exposed to career-themed classes that interest them and talking to teachers and counselors who care about them, they start to develop long-term goals.

"That's why it's important that we have so many programs and people," she said, so students realize that "nobody's giving up on where you're going."



West Contra Costa Unified



The De Anza campus is nestled amid green hills and suburban neighborhoods on the eastern side of Richmond in the East Bay. The school draws students from Richmond, Pinole and unincorporated El Sobrante in Contra Costa County.

Three quarters of the approximately 1,370 students who attend the school are low-income, one in five are English learners and 14 percent are students with disabilities. About 4 percent are homeless and nearly 1 percent are foster youth.

Recently, the state and federal governments have begun placing a greater emphasis on high school graduation rates and college readiness as additional indicators of school success. For 2017-18, the school received a green rating for College and Career readiness on the California School Dashboard, showing significant improvement from the previous year for low-income, African-American and Asian students.

Sigler attributes the school's improvements to a robust college and career center and strong collaboration between teachers and students in small career-themed academies — in law, information technology and health — that allowed them to work together over four years.

Sigler also credited partnerships with outside organizations that provide mental health services, college and career counseling support for struggling students. Students also benefit from after-school tutoring and are able to make up credits or improve their grades through summer school and credit recovery programs.

Last year, more than 900 district high school students enrolled in summer programs to obtain needed credits or improve their course grades.

Some of these strategies are part of districtwide or statewide initiatives, including the district's strong commitment to academies that help students focus on careers, along with summer school and online credit recovery programs. The college and career center has grown through partnerships with some organizations that assist students in other district schools, as well as some federally funded programs (*see box*).

But other strategies are more home-grown.

School outreach workers meet with parents of struggling students and share resources to improve their efforts to intervene individually with students. And teachers provide after-school tutoring for anyone who needs it.

OUTSIDE COLLEGE AND CAREER PARTNERSHIPS AT DE ANZA HIGH

The [UC Berkeley](#) Early Academic Outreach Program: Places a full-time adviser to help students apply for summer internships, college and financial aid.

College is Real: Provides mentoring and support to help students in Richmond high schools become the first in their families to graduate from college.

Pre-College **TRiO** and **Upward Bound:** Provide academic advising, tutoring, workshops, college visits and college and financial aid application assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds through UC Berkeley and Mills College.

Rising Scholars: Provides to young men of color in four district high schools life skills training, mentoring and leadership development, assistance with scholarship applications and internships, and college tours.

One Goal: Trains high school teachers and provides test prep, assistance with college and financial aid applications and one-on-one coaching to students from 11th grade through their freshman year of college.

Teachers, administrators and advisers from community organizations look at data during students' freshman and sophomore years to identify those who are struggling to complete college prep courses. The school's team of three Community Outreach Workers and a Dropout Prevention Specialist also work with students and families.

The close-knit academies help to strengthen relationships between teachers and students, said Luz Nunez, who teaches history and social science in the law academy. Teachers discuss academic plans for all students and share ideas for reaching struggling students, then take on the responsibility of working with selected students by offering one-on-one help.



TERESA HARRINGTON / EDSOURCE

De Anza High student Jazhun Brown works on assignment in teacher Luz Nunez's social studies class on May 21, 2019.

Brown said Nunez is his favorite teacher because she cares about him and she helped him develop academic skills.

“She was giving me that push, saying, ‘I’m going to help you, but you’ve got to do it,’” Brown said.

Brown took classes more seriously after Nunez insisted that he complete unfinished classwork during lunch. He said Nunez helped him refine his note-taking and research skills, including underlining important passages and reviewing them to be sure he understood them in the context of the topic he was studying.

After Nunez read his essay on housing segregation, Brown recalls her saying, “Yep, you’ve got it!”

Most students get off-track for graduation when they fail algebra, Sigler said.

“Math teachers allow kids to retake tests if they come to tutoring,” Sigler said.

Fatham Ng, lead teacher in the health academy, said she helped a student figure out her Algebra II problems in an [online](#) credit-recovery course.

“I struggled right along beside her,” Riordan-Ng said. “Those relationships are the most important facet of education. If our students don’t believe we’re there for them and we truly believe in them, anything we try to accomplish is going to be blemished.”

Because the school has only three district-paid counselors for 1,400 students, the additional services provided by outside organizations are key to the school’s ability to keep students on track, Sigler said.

Heaven Jordan, 17, said she might not have graduated if she hadn’t sought tutoring and participated in the College is Real program, which she said helped her improve her grades and apply to colleges.

The school switched to a seven-period class day six years ago to give students more course options and brought in a full-time UC Berkeley Early Academic Outreach Program adviser, who helps students apply for summer internships, college and financial aid.

Myrtha Ortiz, the Berkeley program adviser, said about 200 students participate in one-on-one workshops every semester to help them prepare for college and apply for summer internships and financial aid. In addition, the program hosts large school events with guest speakers. The program also offers college credit summer classes in African-American studies, ethnic studies or Earth and planetary science at UC Berkeley.

The outside programs, which tend to be targeted toward low-income students who may be the first in their families to go to college, are also open to students who do well in school, but need help applying to colleges or seeking financial aid.



COURTESY OF WEST CONTRA COSTA UNIFIED/ROBERT JORDAN

De Anza High students Kenia Rojo, left and Seydi Miranda celebrate their graduation on June 4, 2019.

The UC Berkeley program gave students Kenia Rojo and Seydi Miranda the assistance they needed to be accepted at four-year universities, which they may not have otherwise applied to.

“When I first got here, I was kind of lost,” said Rojo, a 17-year-old from El Sobrante, who came to the school from Mexico in the middle of her freshman year. Although she was fluent in English, Rojo said she didn’t initially seek advice from the school’s college and career center because she was shy.

But after meeting with Ortiz, Rojo completed her college applications and was admitted to UC Merced. An internship through [Richmond Public Health Solutions](#) that she obtained because she was in the school’s health academy sparked her interest in majoring in sociology and becoming a social worker, said Rojo, who graduated June 4. She has also already earned college credits, which Sigler said helps motivate students to complete college.

Miranda, a 19-year-old who came to the school from Guatemala in her freshman year, said she had difficulty understanding English and what high school was all about when she arrived.

“I never thought I was even going to make it to high school,” said Miranda, who graduated and plans to become a radiology technician. She credits “Ms. Myrtha” for giving her the courage to apply to a University of California school. “I was kind of scared. She made me apply and I got accepted to UC Merced.”



COURTESY OF WEST CONTRA COSTA UNIFIED/ROBERT JORDAN

De Anza High students Jazhun Brown, left and Heaven Jordan celebrate their graduation on June 4, 2019.

Brown said the supportive atmosphere at De Anza helped him achieve his goals.

“They showed me that teachers really do care here and they do want to see you succeed,” he said. “It’s tough love. But it’s OK. It’s totally working.”

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.

Gov. Newsom's state budget resolves 3 California school boards' lawsuits

Gov. Newsom eliminates law permitting cut to Prop. 98 funding.

JULY 9, 2019 | JOHN FENSTERWALD

The state budget that Gov. Gavin Newsom signed last week, bringing about \$3 billion more to community colleges and K-12 schools, includes money that resolves one of three lawsuits over how the state calculates its funding obligations to education.

In a post-budget signing press release, the California School Boards Association, which filed the three lawsuits, noted the inclusion in the budget of \$686 million that it had argued the state should have repaid school districts years ago. That amount equals about \$110 per student.

“At a time when public education is dramatically underfunded, it’s critical that schools — and the students they serve — receive the funding to which they are legally entitled,” school boards association President Emma Turner said.

The lawsuits, filed starting in 2015, were over the state’s funding levels for schools under Proposition 98, the complex three-decades-old formula that determines the portion of the General Fund that must go to schools and community colleges.

One issue challenged governors’ and the Legislature’s practice of reclassifying education programs and responsibilities that are covered by Proposition 98 as a way of rejiggering funding levels. During the recession, the Legislature shifted some child care responsibilities funded through Prop. 98 to the General Fund. This lowered Prop. 98 funding at a time when then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Legislature wanted to cut money for schools to balance the budget.

However, when revenue for schools surged during the economic recovery, starting in 2014-15, Gov. Jerry Brown resumed funding some child care services through Prop. 98 without adjusting the Prop. 98 funding level to account for additional programs. The school board association sued the Department of Finance in 2015, arguing that money for child care had squeezed K-12 funding, and won the case in Alameda County Superior Court. Last year, the Brown administration agreed to raise the Prop. 98

funding level to include child-care programs and has formally dropped its appeal of the lawsuit, according to the school boards association.

Dennis Meyers, the association's assistant executive director of government relations, credits Newsom for clearly delineating in the 2019-20 budget which programs in early education and other areas are paid for through Prop. 98 and which are funded through the General Fund.

Another lawsuit involved the schedule for underpayments to school districts that the state had acknowledged but not repaid. Some of the obligations dated back to 2009-10. The association sued to have the money paid back soon after the final Prop. 98 funding level has been officially certified – not to stretch it out over years. In a settlement agreement, Newsom included the \$686 million in repayments, the bulk of which dates back to 2008-09. The net effect will not increase total Prop. 98 funding – but will ensure that past debts to schools are paid quicker, said Meyers said.

The third lawsuit, with potentially significant impact on future budgets, was over last year's budget bill. Assembly Bill 1825, written by the Brown administration, gave the governor the ability to cut Prop. 98 funding for schools up to 1 percent in the future if the certified level for Prop. 98 in a prior year turns out to be more than the Legislature appropriated. That can happen, since state budgets are funded based on revenue assumptions. School districts, however, base their annual spending on the governor's revenue estimates in the May preceding the state's July fiscal year. A cut of 1 percent this year would be \$756 million for K-12 schools, an amount that would grow as future budgets increase.

The school boards association sued in August 2018 and Newsom agreed to delete the language of AB 1825 in this year's budget bill, [Senate Bill 76](#), which revises the recertification process.

The signing of the 2019-20 budget clears the association's desk of outstanding lawsuits, Meyers said.

Comments

Comments Policy

We welcome your comments. All comments are moderated for civility, relevance and other considerations.

[Click here for EdSource's Comments Policy.](#)

Governor's team jumps into fray over contested charter school bill

Amendments to AB 1505 moderate restrictions on charter school growth

JULY 9, 2019 | JOHN FENSTERWALD



PHOTO BY ALLISON SHELLEY/THE VERBATIM AGENCY FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION: IMAGES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN ACTION

After weeks of negotiation, Gov. Gavin Newsom has stepped in to scale back proposed legislation that charter school advocates feared would radically slow charter growth.

Newsom's office submitted amendments to [Assembly Bill 1505](#) after numerous discussions between his advisers and representatives of charters schools, organized labor and the bill's author, Assemblyman Patrick O'Donnell, D-Long Beach, according to sources familiar with the discussions.

O'Donnell received the changes on Friday and inserted them into the bill to keep it alive. It will go before the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday in what could be a contentious hearing over the administration's suggested compromises. Intense discussions are expected to continue, with the intention

of passing a bill this fall that all involved say has many moving parts. No one contacted for this story would comment on the record, citing the sensitivity of the negotiations.

The changes reflect Newsom's determination to de-escalate tensions around charter school growth and find common ground on reforms. Newsom chose to intervene in a bitter fight between the California Charter Schools Association and the California Teachers Association over a bill that has gained national notice as a bellwether of the charter school movement. Earlier this year, at his urging, the Legislature expedited passage of a bill to require more transparency in charter school operations.

As originally proposed, AB 1505 would have given school districts broad authority to reject a charter school's application and renewal after considering the financial impact on neighborhood schools and the district. It also would have curbed a county office of education's power to overturn a school district's rejection of a charter school and eliminated another level of appeal to the State Board of Education. The California Teachers Association, a co-sponsor of the bill, had broadcast TV ads over the last month urging its passage. The California Charter Schools Association ran TV ads opposing the bill.

The amended version narrows the grounds for considering a proposed charter school's fiscal impact. It preserves the ability of charter schools to appeal to county offices of education if their petition has been denied by a local school board, with some new conditions. It allows the State Board of Education to overturn charter denials only in cases that allege county offices and school districts ignored requirements of the state charter law.

The new version also sides with charter schools in a major tussle over a single word change — from “shall” to “may” — in the charter school law. The current law says that a school board “shall” pass a charter petition that satisfies the state's criteria for approval. O'Donnell had replaced it with “may,” giving school boards more discretion. The new bill deleted his change.

So far, neither the California Charter Schools Association nor O'Donnell and the CTA, which co-sponsored AB 1505, have publicly embraced Newsom's compromise.

The charter schools association had characterized the original bill as an effort to “fundamentally gut the charter schools act” and had mobilized charter school supporters against the bill. In a brief statement on Monday, the association said it is opposed to the revised bill “as it is currently written” without detailing why.

While no longer the doomsday bill that charter groups had feared, the amended bill would broaden, as well as clarify, school districts' authority to approve and renew charter schools. Some of the amendments incorporate the consensus recommendations of the 11-member Charter School Task Force that Newsom

had asked State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond to convene. The task force [sent its recommendations to Newsom last month](#).

One of the recommendations would extend the timeline for a school district to review a new charter school petition by 30 days. The task force also recommended broadening a school district's ability to consider a charter school's impact on a district when considering approval and renewal, including whether charter schools had reached a "saturation" point in a district.

Newsom asked Thurmond to create the task force in an effort to encourage charter school proponents and opponents to search for areas of agreement. Four charter school representatives served on the group.

The new amendments to AB 1505 would give districts more discretion to deny a charter petition than is allowed under current law.

If the bill is approved as amended, for the first time a school board would be able to consider whether a proposed charter school would be "demonstrably unlikely to serve the interests of the school district" in which it would be located based on two factors:

- Whether the proposed charter school would duplicate a program already offered by neighborhood schools;
- To what extent a proposed charter school "would substantially undermine" a district's services, programs or academic offerings. A district could consider a charter school's potential financial impact when weighing this factor.

The bill would create one other opportunity to consider fiscal impact — though only for districts already under severe financial stress, like Oakland Unified and Inglewood Unified. A district could reject a charter application if the county office of education verifies that approval would lead to a district's negative financial certification, meaning it probably would become insolvent in the current year.

Another amendment would impose a 2-year moratorium on online charter schools while the Legislature considers further regulations.

Changes to appeals process

O'Donnell's original bill would have limited the ability of charter schools to appeal to county offices only to cases in which there had been "procedural violations" of the charter law. Otherwise, school districts would have the final say over whether to approve a charter petition.

The amended version would retain the current county appeals process with one substantive change. A charter school would not be able to make material changes to its petition when submitting an appeal. Some districts have charged that charter schools, anticipating denial by a school district, go through the motions, knowing they could change the application and seek approval by a more sympathetic county office.

The State Board of Education, which has had broad power to hear appeals of charter denials, has approved 32 charter schools on appeal since 2011, according to board records. The first version of O'Donnell's bill would have eliminated the right to all appeals to the board. The new amendment would limit it to cases in which a county or district "abused its discretion," meaning it violated the review process in making the decision.

Fleshing out renewals

The amended version is the first stab at rewriting the charter law's outdated and imprecise rules for renewing a charter school's application to continue operating. The current law, for example, still calls for using student performance on standardized tests and a school rating system that the state abandoned six years ago as the main criteria for renewal or revocation.

The amendments incorporate the state's new school accountability system, using multiple indicators, such as suspension rates and students' readiness for college and careers, as well as multi-colored performance ratings under the California School Dashboard.

The amendments create the framework for differentiating between well- and poorly performing charter schools. Those schools that have received state dashboard ratings of blue and green — the top two colors — for two years would go through an expedited process and could receive a renewal for as long as seven years. Currently the maximum is five years.

Charter schools that have consistently performed poorly, receiving red and orange ratings — the bottom two colors on the state dashboard — on a range of measures would face a heavier burden for renewal.

Such a school could get permission to operate for two years if it could make the case that it meets an "extraordinary need" in the community and that it is meaningfully addressing the causes of its low performance. Alternative charter schools, serving primarily dropouts, expelled students and students substantially behind academically, would be exempt from the process.

Most charter schools up for renewal would likely fall in between these two extremes and be eligible for a 5-year renewal. Additional language would give an authorizer the ability to examine enrollment data in

the year before renewal to make sure a charter school was not pushing out students to improve its standardized test scores and rankings on the California School Dashboard.

Comments

Comments Policy

We welcome your comments. All comments are moderated for civility, relevance and other considerations.

[Click here for EdSource's Comments Policy.](#)