

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Friday Memo
December 15, 2023

Upcoming Events – Kenneth Chris Hurst Sr., Ed.D
December 18 - January 1: Winter Recess (No School)

Next Board of Education Meeting January 10, 2024 – Kenneth Chris Hurst Sr., Ed.D.

College & Career – Sonja Neely-Johnson (Dr. Allison Huie & Team)

Counselors attend PD with CCCOE About CTE/ROP

WCCUSD Counselors were invited to attend an all-day event at the County Office in Pleasant Hill. This Professional Learning opportunity included information in the following areas:

- *CTE/ROP Pathways
- *15 Industry Sectors
- *Work Based Learning connections
- *College credits and CTE
- *4 year plans and classroom presentations
- *collaboration and shared learning

Counselors participate in QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Suicide Prevention Training

WCCUSD School Psychologists lead a training for School Counselors to give them the tools and training they need to be able to support students who are in or may be at risk of being in crisis. QPR is a suicide prevention training for participants to be able to recognize the warning signs of suicide and question, persuade, and refer people at risk for suicide for help.

TK-12 Schools – Sonja Neely-Johnson (Keisha Prier, Koy Hill, Summer Sigler & Jose DeLeon)

On Thursday, December 7th, Korematsu Middle School held a “2023 Wrapped” assembly that highlighted the accomplishments and celebrations of the school year so far. The assembly recognized students of Honor roll, Multilingual students mastering English, ELD levels up, overall school attendance and other special events throughout the year. View slides [here](#).

Professional Learning – Sonja Neely-Johnson (Alison Makela)

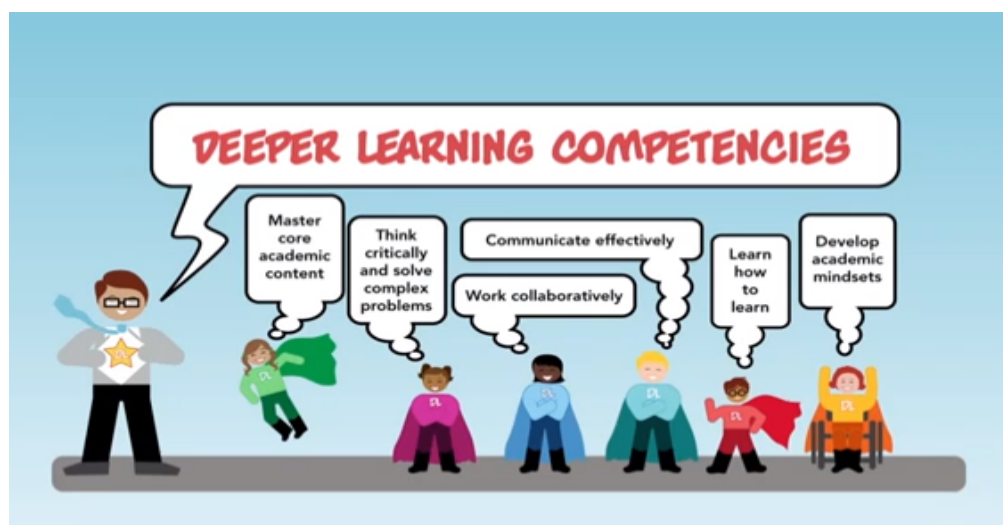
Professional development is happening all across the district. Departments host regular learning opportunities around a variety of topics for a variety of audiences. School sites learn and collaborate around their practice or a particular initiative. Job-alike gatherings, like monthly Principal Professional Learning and Collaboration (PPLC) meetings, provide space to think and grow, to develop shared understanding and cohesion. We know that our capacity as educators will make all the difference for our students.

To that end, we are looking to expand and improve our professional learning to include more ongoing and inquiry-based learning opportunities. One of the deeper learning tenants that we espouse is that there is symmetry between the adult and student learning experience. If we want

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

students to engage in deep and meaningful work through authentic experiences, then our professional learning must be that too.

Moreover, we want to truly bridge research and practice, learning deeply from a broad and inclusive body of knowledge. Education is more than merely developing discrete skills; it's nuanced and complex and to do it well requires us to be continuously learning and growing as professionals with understanding of the Sciences of Learning and Development which include disciplines such as neuroscience, linguistics, child and adolescent development, etc. Watch for coming information about and plan revisions to grant funding that is available to us as we seek to design plans that support foundational and deep understanding, building our professional capacity and efficacy. And, watch for book clubs and other learning opportunities for the whole community beginning in January.



Special Education - Guthrie Fleischman

Special Olympics Schools Partnership Soccer Event December 8, 2023

The 2nd Special Olympics Schools Partnership Soccer Event took place at Richmond High School on Friday, December 8th, 2023. Approximately 200 students, from 4,5, & 6th grade with moderate to severe disabilities and 25 General Education peers attended this amazing event. Athletes from fourteen schools (Bayview, Collins, Downer, Ellerhorst, Fairmont, Highland, King, Lupine Hills, Mira Vista, Murphy, Riverside, Shannon, Tara Hills, and Valley View) participated in the day's events.

The opening ceremony started with Richmond's band playing music for the Parade of Schools walking around the track. The Special Olympic torch was carried by Antonio Rodriguez, a student from Collins Elementary and Abiman Singh from Valley View Elementary. They were escorted by Richmond Councilman District 1, Melvin Lee Willis.

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Diogo Cruz, from King Elementary, led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance. The Athlete's Oath was led by Evelyn Singh, a student from Ohlone Elementary School. "Let me win. But, if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt!" To end the opening ceremonies, we thanked all the coaches, students, and volunteers.

The games were officially declared open with Richmond High student leadership leading traditional games and supporting soccer skills stations, such as passing, dribbling, shooting, and obstacle course. Some schools were a unified team made up of 3-4 students with special needs and 1-2 students without. Valley View, Collins, King Riverside, and Shannon all brought unified teams to the event. The athletes had an amazing time showing off their skills while experiencing the thrill of competition, as parents, family, friends, and volunteers (Richmond High's leadership).

At the closing ceremony, all athletes were congratulated on their efforts and were awarded ribbons. The excitement of the event was evident on the athletes' smiling faces and many students and adults voiced they were looking forward to this event next year!



Communications Update - Raechelle Forrest

News of the Week:

[Early literacy grants work, but 3 years is not enough](#) | Record Bee

Improving reading instruction requires a literacy plan backed by strong leadership. It means coordinating resources, monitoring progress, and changing course when needed. It demands making decisions based on evidence, not adult preferences, and prioritizing early literacy so that every child gets off to a good start reading.

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

I was on a team that helped eligible schools draft literacy action plans for the grant funding. I'd hoped this work would inform statewide planning, but despite the program's success, California is no closer to a literacy plan.

When the program launched, I joined Nystrom Elementary, in West Contra Costa Unified, as a literacy coach. At the time, 91% of our second-graders needed to learn kindergarten phonics, as did 65% of upper graders. Working fast, we created a "walk-to-read" block in which grade level bands (e.g., first and second grades) pooled their students and sorted them into groups according to assessment data. Each teacher taught two of the groups. Our plan required collaboration and created peer accountability for teaching a new curriculum.

Legislative Updates:

Full Service Community School Expansion Act of 2023

This bill would allocate \$3.6 billion over five years to expand access to community schools serving low-income families. Beyond that, it would provide federal grants to existing community schools and build a community school infrastructure by establishing state-level teams and channeling more resources to meet the healthcare and early childhood needs faced by school districts nationwide. **STATUS: Introduced to US Senate.** [Legislation Reference.](#)

Never Again Education Act (H.R. 6516)

The reauthorization establishes a federal fund through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to provide teachers with resources and training to teach students the important lessons of the Holocaust. This bill would reauthorize the program through 2030, as it is currently set to expire in 2025. **STATUS: Introduced to US House.** [Legislation Reference.](#)

Preparing Leaders to Assess Needs (PLAN) for School Safety Act (H.R.6613)

The PLAN Act will provide schools with localized essential safety planning resources by strengthening state-based expert centers, contributing to the nationwide effort to protect children from school shootings and violence. **STATUS: Introduced to House.** [Legislation Reference.](#)

Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act (H.R. 1147)

This bill revises requirements for milk provided by the National School Lunch Program of the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Currently, schools participating in the program must provide milk that is consistent with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans; USDA regulations require milk to be fat-free or low-fat and allow milk to be flavored or unflavored. The bill modifies these restrictions and instead permits schools to offer students whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, and fat-free flavored and unflavored milk. In addition, schools currently participating in

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

the program must provide meals that meet certain nutrition requirements; USDA regulations require that the average saturated fat content of the meals offered must be less than 10% of the total calories. Under the bill, fluid milk is excluded from the saturated fat content calculation; milk fat included in any fluid milk provided by the program must not be considered saturated fat for the purposes of measuring compliance with USDA regulations. **STATUS: Introduced to US House.** [Legislation Language Here.](#)