

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Friday Memo
January 5, 2024

Upcoming Events – Kenneth Chris Hurst Sr., Ed.D
January 8: CBOC Meeting - 6:00pm, FOC Building

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

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

On Thursday, December 14th, both Hercules Middle and High School kicked off the break with Holiday activities for the students. The middle school held a Door Decorating Contest and the high school held a Winter Festival. Pictured here are the Principal and Vice Principal of Hercules Middle, Mr. Shaw and Ms. Tamosunas and Principal and Vice Principal of Hercules High, Ms. Colbert and Mr. Newson.



West Contra Costa Unified School District
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Positive School Climate/Student Recruitment & Retention - Guthrie Fleischman (LaShante Smith & Team)

Student Recruitment & Retention

Priority enrollment is nearly upon us! Prior to the Winter Break, the Transfer Office Team visited 33 school sites to distribute enrollment banners to promote the upcoming priority enrollment period, opening January 16th - February 29th 2024.



Communications Update - Raechelle Forrest

News of the Week:

[Hercules High honors ‘Coach G’ with gym dedication](#) | The Richmond Standard

The Hercules High School community recently gathered to honor the life and contributions of Gerald “Coach G” Montgomery, in part by renaming the school’s gymnasium after him.

It is the third facility within the sports complex to be named after him, as the football and baseball fields were previously dedicated in his honor earlier this year, according to the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD).

At the recent gym dedication on Nov. 17, family and friends shared stories about Coach G’s accomplishments and impact. A new No. 23 flag was unveiled as a tribute to his legacy, according to the WCCUSD.

[President, Clerk Trade Places as School Board Urged to Take Action on Budget](#) | Richmond Pulse

Two members of the West Contra Costa Board of Education are trading positions.

After acting as clerk for the past year, Jamela Smith-Folds was unanimously appointed to serve as president for the next year. She will succeed Demetrio Gonzalez-Hoy in the position, who was named clerk of the board.

Smith-Folds and Gonzalez-Hoy were thanked by other members of the board and Superintendent Kenneth Hurst for their leadership on the board this past school year.

Hurst said the pair’s ability to listen, respond and react to community voices is something that stands out to him as the leaders they are.

[Snow Ball crowns king and queen, awards scholarships](#) | The Richmond Standard

West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) students Ashton Dinh and Malaya Munar were crowned the king and queen of the 71st Snow Ball Scholarship event Saturday, Dec. 9 at the Richmond Memorial Auditorium.

Dinh, a senior from De Anza High School, and Munar, a senior at Pinole Valley High School, competed against six fellow district students to earn the titles, as well as \$2,500 scholarships and the chance to serve as “Student Co-Mayors for a Day” in Richmond in 2024, according to the City Manager’s Report. The winning students also will receive professional headshots.

[Education Beat in 2023: Our favorite podcast episodes](#) | EdSource

At El Cerrito High School, in West Contra Costa Unified, students produce and host their own radio shows. Some DJ their own music shows, while others host talk radio programs, with topics

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

ranging from political affairs to chess to dating advice. There's even an old-time radio drama, based on original scripts from the 1950s.

[El Cerrito baseball stars earn college scholarships](#) | The Richmond Standard

The West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) recently recognized two El Cerrito High baseball players who earned college scholarships: Matthew Barnes II and Demetris 'DJ' Lewis.

Matthew committed to the University of California, Davis while DJ committed to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, according to the school district's [latest newsletter](#).

Legislative Updates:

Peer to Peer Mental Health Support Act

The goal of this legislation is to establish a grant program to facilitate peer-to-peer mental health support programs for secondary school students, and for other purposes. **STATUS: Introduced to US Senate. [Legislation Language Here.](#)**

Supporting All Students Act

The Supporting All Students Act would establish a youth peer-to-peer support line that is integrated with 988, the national mental health crisis and suicide prevention number. Specifically aimed at youth ages 10-25, this line would provide youth with support from a trained peer responder, supervised by licensed mental health professionals, on a variety of issues such as relationship or family problems, academic or athletics-related stress, feelings of depression or anxiety, and bullying. This bill would also establish a new grant program run through the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for schools to hire mental health coordinators, with priority given to schools in high-poverty areas. **STATUS: Introduced to US Senate. [One Pager Here.](#)**

Youth Mental Health Data Act

The Youth Mental Health Data Act would create a federal task force on youth mental health data integration to develop a national strategy to improve youth mental health data systems. The task force would be comprised of representatives from federal agencies, medical societies and nonprofits, youth with lived experience, and media and technology companies. Additionally, the task force would submit a report to the governors of all states describing opportunities for local and state level partnerships. With the help of streamlined data processes, policymakers can maximize the effect of current and future investments by targeting resources based on where they will have the greatest impact. **STATUS: Introduced to Senate. [Legislation Language Here.](#)**

Achieving Choice in Education Act (ACE)

This legislation builds upon a provision of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and enhances federal tax incentives for the enactment of state-level school choice legislation while addressing growing concerns among parents about the ideological influences in public education and the economic barriers to alternative schooling options. Key provisions of the ACE Act include:

- Doubling the allowable level of tax-exempt 529 account distributions for qualified educational expenses to \$20,000 per taxable year;
- Gift tax exclusions up to \$20,000 per year for contributions to 529 accounts; and
- Adjusted federal tax exemption on municipal bonds based on state school choice laws, incentivizing states to adopt such measures.

Under the ACE Act, states with no qualifying school choice laws will see the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds for local projects, such as new school construction, revoked. States that adopt school choice laws will benefit from a 50% tax exemption on bond interest income, while states fully embracing school choice will enjoy a complete tax exemption. **STATUS: Introduced to Senate. [Legislation Language Here.](#)**

Books Save Lives Act

The Books Save Lives Act would ensure public and school libraries maintain a diverse collection of authors, and would direct government officials to report on the effects of book bans on underrepresented communities. **STATUS: Introduced to House. [One Pager Here \(includes legislation language\).](#)**