

West Contra Costa Unified School District  
***Office of the Superintendent***

**Friday Memo**  
**October 27, 2023**

**Upcoming Events – Kenneth Chris Hurst Sr., Ed.D**

October 30: LCAP Town Hall Meeting, 6-8pm, Virtual

October 31: Minimum Day, Elementary and K-8 Schools

November 2: LCAP Town Hall Meeting, 6-8pm, Richmond High School

**Next Board of Education Meeting November 1, 2023 – Kenneth Chris Hurst Sr., Ed.D.**

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

**Supporting Teen Mental Health shared by WCCUSD School Counselors**

WCCUSD School Counselors are sharing a recently released resource from the CA Department of Health toolkit to support parents/guardians to address teen mental health. The resources include tips for identifying a crisis as well as what to do to help a teen in crisis in addition to information on maintaining wellness, healthy relationships, social media safety, etc. To access the mental health toolkit for parents and guardians of teens, please visit [the website](#).

**Manufacturing Day 2023**

Students from Richmond High School and Pinole Valley High School, representing their respective engineering pathways, engaged in a highly successful Manufacturing Day event in collaboration with the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE). The students embarked on a visit to Bishop-Wisecarver in Pittsburg, CA, immersing themselves in the realms of engineering, manufacturing, and industrial processes. Following this, they extended their exploration at Contra Costa College, where they delved into early college credits, trade pathways, took campus tours, and received a presentation on the CCC Metas program.

**Positive School Climate/Student Recruitment & Retention - Sonja Neely-Johnson (LaShante Smith & Team)**

**Attendance Awareness Campaign: School-wide events**

The district Attendance Improvement and Awareness Campaign continues through the end of October.

Sites have reported just under 2 dozen attendance awareness initiatives have been conducted on campuses district-wide. Initiatives range from the distribution of incentive coupons, redeemable on campus, to students with improved or positive attendance, Friday lunch events on campus, school assemblies and more.

**School Attendance Review Teams**

As our focus on tiered systems of intervention continues, school site teams have been formed to address chronic absenteeism.

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As of 10/26, 95% of sites have completed their School Attendance Review Team Roster.

In response to the ongoing need for professional development, capacity building, practical tools, and resources designed to strengthen School Attendance Review Teams, a little more than two dozen trainings have occurred district-wide. These offerings include individual site based training facilitated by Truancy Technicians, representatives from A2A and by the Coordinator of Student Recruitment and Retention. Teams will continue to look at trends of chronic absenteeism and build out solutions.

Training will continue to be available throughout the year.



**Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment STEM- Sonja Neely-Johnson (Dr. Gabriel Chilcott & Team)**

**Desmos Math Grades 6 through Algebra 1**—Several updates as we move along in Year 3 of our Gates Effective Implementation Grant using the high quality [Amplify/Desmos 6-8 Math curriculum](#).

- As we enter SY 23-24 we are excited to see additional opt-in sites using Desmos this year include Peres, Mira Vista, and Korematsu, as well as grade 6 teachers at Highland, Collins, Riverside, Tara Hills and West County Mandarin. This makes ~95% of 8th grade, ~95% of 7th grade, and ~50% of 6th grade students across WCCUSD school sites now using this high quality curriculum.
- In addition to grades 6-8, about a dozen Algebra 1 teachers are now using Desmos, including all Algebra 1 teachers at Richmond and Kennedy and several teachers at Pinole Valley and De Anza.
- Professional learning opportunities continue to be offered to all Desmos teachers, both publisher-led and district-led, online and in-person. This included our all-day Desmos Kick Off Event prior to schools opening that had a presentation by Dan Meyer, Director of Research for Amplify..

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- Coaching support includes district coaches Shauna Foster and Lilian Austria, site coaches Andre Shie (Helms) and Tina Breakfield (Peres), and two soon-to-be added part-time ConnectEd coaches. Coaching frequency is dependent on a teacher's stage of implementation.
- The District Implementation Team, composed of site and district leaders, support providers, teachers, and coaches that meet at least quarterly to analyze data and provide guidance in problem-solving and next steps.
- Here is the [grant project's overview](#) that includes teacher testimonials.

With this implementation process, supported by the Gates Foundation and ConnectEd, we are steadily working towards our vision of *"All learners know, use, and enjoy mathematics!"*

**Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment - Early Learning/TK-12 Literacy/Humanities- Sonja Neely-Johnson (Sonja Bell & Team)**

**Early Literacy Support Block (ELSB) Grant Visit**

On October 3-6, Kou Vang joined district staff for site walkthroughs at each of the 7 WCCUSD sites who received the Early Literacy Support Block (ELSB) Grant (Bayview, Coronado, Downer, King, Lincoln, Nystrom, and Stege). Ms. Vang has provided all sites with technical assistance over the course of the grant, and serves as WCCUSD's [ELSB grant lead from the Sacramento County Office of Education \(SCOE\)](#).

**Site Visit Highlights and Trends:**




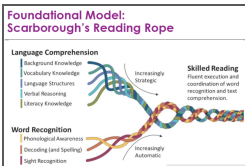



- Sites remained focused on the goals outlined in their ELSB Literacy Action Plans, even with staffing changes and changes in leadership
- Intentional focus on foundational skills instruction (Word Recognition strand of Scarborough's Reading Rope)
- Literacy coaches provide strong site support for professional development, data analysis, and teacher collaboration
- Data shows positive student achievement growth
- Lots of joy and student engagement in classes we visited!

**At the end of the week, Ms. Vang provided actionable and practical feedback:**

- Keep focus on both parts of the reading rope - Word Recognition and Language Comprehension
- Pay attention to who is doing the "heavy lifting" in instruction. (This recommendation correlates with IPG Core Action 3A: Students do the majority of the work of the lesson to uncover deeper meaning and understanding from the text and to build knowledge of the world through speaking/listening, reading and/or writing.)
- Align curriculum districtwide
- Apply foundational skills routines when supporting students to read complex connected

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text.

 <p>Taylor Parham, Lincoln Principal and Kou Vang, SCOE</p>	 <p>WCCUSD Staff, Administrators, Coaches at ELSB Site Visit Debrief</p>	 <p>Lincoln Elementary</p>
 <p><a href="#">Scarborough's Reading Rope</a></p>	 <p>Nystrom Elementary</p>	 <p>Coronado Elementary</p>
		 <p>King Elementary</p>

**Human Resources - Camille Johnson, Ed.D.**

WCCUSD participated in RichmondWorks 2023 Career Fair at the Richmond Convention Center on Wednesday, October 25, 2023. We look forward to hosting our own Community Job Fair on Saturday, November 4, 2023, 9am -12pm at DeJean Middle School.

**Communications Update - Liz Sanders**

**News of the Week:**

**[Founding visitor spurs future innovations at Kennedy Fab Lab](#)**

Sherry Lassiter, president & CEO of [The Fab Foundation](#) in Boston—which provided the funding via a generous grant from [Chevron Richmond](#) to create the [Fab Lab Richmond](#)—visited the innovation studio at Kennedy High School Tuesday. During Lassiter’s visit, she met with West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) stakeholders and discussed hot topics at fellow Fab Labs, planting the seeds for innovation and exploration among local students and community members.

The group included Director WCCUSD College & Career Dept. Dr. Allison Huie; Coordinator WCCUSD Science & Engineering John Iwawaki; Fab Lab Manager Alex Fleming; and Fab Lab Instructional Coach Darcy Long.

**Regional Parent Center opens in Contra Costa middle school as part of community schools initiative**

The Parent Center, which officially opened on Sept. 21, serves as a regional hub where students and their families can receive assistance in obtaining resources like health insurance, food stamps and cash assistance.

On Oct. 24, the center also started technology assistance sessions — offered in English and Spanish — where parents can learn computer skills. They will receive a free laptop after attending four of these two-hour sessions. Additional [sessions](#) are scheduled on Nov. 2, 7 and 14, from 5 to 7 p.m.

District spokesperson Liz Sanders said such collaboration is vital to provide resources to school communities. “We know that in order to meet the needs of the whole child and the whole community, we need resources in partnership beyond our own resources as a school district,” Sanders said.

**Richmond students walk out to demand ceasefire in Gaza**

Over 100 students at Richmond’s Kennedy High School, many carrying “Free Palestine” banners, joined a nationwide walkout Wednesday to protest the bombings in Gaza, where thousands of people have been killed.

West Contra Costa Unified School District Superintendent Kenneth “Chris” Hurst Sr. was among the city and school leaders present. “Anytime there’s a walkout, I try to go to the school site just to listen to the students and the messages they’re sharing,” he said.

Special education teacher Miesha Gash said she allowed students to make posters for the walkout in her classroom. She said she wants to “give the young people space to let them know their voices are important.”

Gash said students notified administrators and school security about the walkout in advance.

**Legislative Updates:**

**"Melanie's Law" enacted to prevent fentanyl overdoses in California schools**

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SB 10 aka Melanie's Law mandates that every public school in California provide training to school employees on opioid prevention and life-saving response under a formal plan known as a Comprehensive School Safety Plan, or CSSP. The bill establishes a state framework to ensure that all students and adults understand the growing risk of youth fentanyl exposure, and have access to the resources needed to prevent and respond to fentanyl poisoning and overdoses. SB 10 would also give school staff, students and families information about the growing risk of opioids, informational material and safety advice, in partnership with the California Department of Education. [Full Bill Language.](#)

**Cursive Requirement in Grades 1-6 (AB 446)**

This bill would require handwriting instruction for grades 1 to 6, inclusive, to include instruction in cursive or joint joined italics in the appropriate grade levels. To the extent that this bill would impose new duties on local educational agencies, it would constitute a state-mandated local program. [Full Bill Language.](#)

**21st Century Dyslexia Act**

This legislation would amend Title II of the Higher Education Act by requiring school leadership programs receiving federal Teacher Quality Partnership grants to include training on early childhood development and effective instructional leadership for children from birth through age eight. This change would ensure school leaders are able to effectively support pre-kindergarten teachers in developing appropriate instruction and assist pre-kindergarten students through the transition from early to elementary education.

**Creating Childhood Leaders Act**

This legislation would amend Title II of the Higher Education Act by requiring school leadership programs receiving federal Teacher Quality Partnership grants to include training on early childhood development and effective instructional leadership for children from birth through age eight. This change would ensure school leaders are able to effectively support pre-kindergarten teachers in developing appropriate instruction and assist pre-kindergarten students through the transition from early to elementary education.