

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

**Friday Memo**  
**April 9, 2021**

**Upcoming Events – Matthew Duffy**

- April 12: Citizens Bond Oversight Committee, 2:00 PM
- April 12: Safety Committee Meeting, 4:00 PM
- April 12: CAC Meeting, 5:30 PM
- April 13: DLCAP Meeting, 6:30 PM
- April 14: Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 PM
- April 16: Budget Committee Meeting, 3:00 PM
- April 19: Charter Committee Meeting, 4:00 PM
- April 21: Academic Committee Meeting, 4:00 PM

**Next Board Meeting April 14 – Matthew Duffy**

Closed Session will begin at 5:00 PM.

**Budget Update - Tony Wold (Regina Webber)**

Hidden this week in the news was the release of the percentage unemployment rate that is charged to all payroll. When we build our budget we have to project more than salary costs. In addition to salary (which is \$208,539,318 projected in the General Fund) the District contributes a percentage of salary for benefits to all employees (over 45.6% total this year, which basically means every two positions equal the total cost of 3 salaries). Many of these rates are set by the State and out of the control of the District. The deductions include the following:

Benefit	Rate 2020-2021	Total	Projected Rate 2021-22
STRS - Certificated Retirement	16.15%	\$22,989,466	15.92%
PERS - Classified Retirement	20.70%	\$10,906,095	23.00%
FICA - (Social Security) / Classified	6.20%	\$3,714,630	6.20%
Medicare - All	1.45%	\$2,901,994	1.45%
State Unemployment	0.05%	\$101,529	1.23%
Workers Compensation	CCSIG	\$7,039,358	CCSIG
Health and Welfare	Based on Plan	\$29,200,290	Based on Plan
OPEB (Retiree Costs)		\$18,152,835	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$95,006,197</b>	

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On April 5, 2021, the Employment Development Department (EDD) released the Annual Report to the Fund Participants (Report) regarding the School Employees Fund (SEF) for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2020.

**The Report includes a rate increase from 0.05% to 1.23% in the 2021–22 school year—a historically large increase. For WCCUSD this will increase our cost from just over \$100,000 to over \$2.5 million!**

The SEF is a joint, pooled-risk fund administered by the EDD which allows school employers to deposit funds into the pool, and the pool reimburses the State's Unemployment Insurance Fund for the cost of unemployment insurance benefits paid to former or furloughed employees of SEF participants. As of the 2019–20 school year, the SEF included more than 1,400 local educational agencies (LEAs), and nearly one million employees, inclusive.

The Report highlights that payments into the fund have hovered around **\$40 million annually**, while payments to beneficiaries skyrocketed to more than **\$237 million** in 2019–20. The increase in payments is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is similar to what occurred during the Great Recession (which is cause for concern in regard to our budget planning). For comparison, payments to beneficiaries totaled \$87.8 million in 2018–19, an amount in line with payments since 2015–16. Absent significant credits from the various federal stimulus, the SEF reserves would be nearly depleted. As of June 30, 2020, the SEF reserves were \$211.5 million, down from \$466.5 million in 2015–16.

California Unemployment Insurance Code Section 823(b)(2) establishes the annual contribution rate. The contribution rate is a mechanical calculation comparing the payments from the SEF for the two preceding calendar years, divided by total wages. In no event shall the contribution rate be less than five one-hundredths of one percent (0.05%).

The last time LEAs experienced an unemployment rate increase above the statutory minimum of 0.05% was during the Great Recession. At the time, school districts were reimbursed for payments to the SEF in accordance with Education Code Sections 42241.7 and 43001.8. These sections provided a line-item addition to the revenue limit calculation, thereby negating any adverse impacts from changes in unemployment insurance rates. **Unfortunately, these sections were eliminated with the advent of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which results in school districts bearing the brunt of increases to the contribution rate.**

In the 2019–20 school year school districts made unemployment insurance payments of nearly \$22.5 million based on the 0.05% rate. If the rate in 2019–20 was 1.23%, payments would have increased to more than \$550 million. For contextual purposes, the proposed 3.84% cost-of-living-adjustment applied to the LCFF in 2021–22 is estimated to cost approximately \$2 billion, **which means that an increase in the unemployment insurance rates will erode 25% of new ongoing funding for school districts.**

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It is important for the board, our employees, and the public to understand how these small things can drive major shifts in the budget. Statutory benefits do not add any additional services to our schools but when the costs go up, and the COLA does not keep up the District can be forced to make reductions in services, just to maintain what it already had. That is confusing to most stakeholders who don't fully see the hidden costs that drive the creation of the budget and outlining this here is one way to help view the full context.

**In Conclusion - A Cautionary View**

This budget cycle is a very unique year in that the State has for all purposes completed the budget cycle prior to May, but already for next year (2021-2022) we are seeing increased costs for unemployment, PERS, Health and Welfare, Workers Compensation, Property and Liability Insurance, and Utilities all of which are trending up faster than anticipated. While there is still some one-time funding moving through the system (accounting for over 8% of our total revenue), it is now evidently clear that this funding is masking a very large issue (similar to an iceberg floating in the ocean) that likely will become much more clear in either 2022 or 2023 and news such as this is why it will be essential to maximize reserves and significantly reduce the introduction of new ongoing costs until the State defines an ongoing funding stream for K-12 Public Education

**Classroom Audio Voice Amplification solution for WCCUSD classrooms - Tracey Logan**

After thoughtful research with other districts, WCCUSD teacher surveying and device piloting this winter and spring, WCCUSD is ready to invest in robust classroom audio technology for every WCCUSD classroom. Research indicates that the better children can hear, the better they can learn. For maximum learning to occur, the teacher's voice must be highly intelligible to every student. The [Lightspeed Redcat audio solution](#) containing speaker and mics will meet this need, allowing teachers to teach with or without masks, and without straining, thus allowing all students in the classroom or remote to hear. The Redcat is a self-contained flat panel speaker for even sound distribution throughout the classroom regardless of where a student is sitting. It is simple to set up and use. The teacher wears a lightweight flex mic on a lanyard around his/her neck and speaks with a normal voice. The system works on a bandwidth that does not interfere with any other classroom technology.

District staff will bring a contract with CDW-G for the purchase of 1400 Redcat classroom audio solutions and EKC deployment services to the Board for approval at the April 14, 2021 meeting. If approved, deployment will be completed over the summer before the start of school in August 2021, allowing all WCCUSD teachers to teach with and all students to access their learning from robust classroom audio.

**Contracts Update 4/9/21 – Tony Wold (Mary Kitchen)**

El Cerrito High School is bringing forward 1 contract

- Bay Area Community Resources – James Morehouse Project:

The JMP provides targeted services to English learners, low-income students, and foster youth, including: Individual and Crisis Counseling; Therapeutic and Youth Development Groups;

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Parent/ELAC Support; Teacher & Staff Support, specifically around working with trauma-impacted youth; and Restorative Practices. JMP provides strong youth leadership opportunities (e.g., Culture Keepers, Youth ELAC, TUPE, and Youth Health Workers) to develop youth leaders who both strengthen their own skills and contribute to positive school culture. JMP supports school staff through consultation and facilitation of Race and Equity professional development, coaching and support for dynamic mindfulness that includes in-class facilitation and on-going teacher coaching and support, staff appreciation events (when school is in the building), and 1:1 teacher support, especially for new teachers. JMP programs strengthen family engagement through the facilitation of ELAC for ELD parents, Parent-Ability Chat Group for parents of students with special needs, individual parent support, and robust case-management to support families to access community-based resources, especially over this time of SIP. In addition, JMP plays a leadership role in the CARE team, facilitates restorative conferences and circles, and offers crisis support for young people and school staff. JMP program support for African American (AA) students falls along two axes: youth development groups that center the experience of AA students and build students' confidence and leadership/activist skills and therapeutic supports for young people to heal from trauma, strengthen their sense of agency, and kindle a positive sense of the future.

[Link to Additional Information](#)

Kennedy High School is bringing forward 1 contract:

- Mills College

The work through June 2021 focuses on the Kennedy High teacher leaders' capacity to: Make student thinking visible in order to adapt instruction to create equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students; make their own thinking visible around their awareness of their effectiveness at changing their instruction to equitably meet the needs of all learners; engage in effective adult learning relationships that are safe, honest, and promote deep listening; and share learnings with a broader audience within and beyond the school site.

[Link to Additional Information](#)

Information Technology is bringing forward 1 increase to a blanket purchase order:

- T-Mobile

This is an increase to our existing purchase order to provide mobility to designated WCCUSD staff via mobile phones & devices to ensure seamless communication between sites and central office. Increase to our current purchase order is needed as we have provided cell phones & hotspots for staff for distance learning.

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Coronado Elementary School is bringing forward 1 contract:

- TutorWorks

The original contract is amended as follows: Adding services at Coronado Elementary & In-kind services for 15 students at Stewart Elementary; TUTORWORKS's mission is to create transformational learning experiences that help students succeed in school and thrive in life. TUTORWORKS utilizes a blended learning approach which combines personalized instruction with highly motivated and certified tutors. The objective of CODE WRITE DRAW (CWD) program is to build tangible STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) skills. The program focuses on coding, writing, art and ELA or math in a motivational project-based learning environment. The objective of READ DRAW FUN (RDF) is to improve foundational reading and math skills using a variety of interactive and differentiated pedagogical approaches. The CWD and RDF programs will be at least 36 hours in length. Students attend the programs from 3 – 5 hours weekly. The programs use a combination of large group and small group instruction. CWD maintains a staff/student ratio of 1/8. RDF maintains a staff/student ratio of 1/40 for large group instruction activities and 1/6 for small group instruction activities. Programs are supervised by a certificated staff and experienced administrator. Services will be provided at Chavez, Obama and Peres.

[Link to Additional Information](#)

OAASA Department and Kennedy High are bringing forward 1 contract:

- Zion Learning

Zion Learning provides monthly feedback to schools to gauge student performance and the overall effectiveness of the services rendered. While utilizing curriculum created by credentialed teachers following California learning standard goals, tutors actively engage with students to understand their individual needs and collectively see what areas of misunderstanding are impeding student progress and excellence. The method is to make sure students understand the current curriculum from their school teachers while filling in gaps from their past years. In addition, students will build valuable relationships with tutors adding an important mentorship element that helps their overall student/personal success. 6-10 staff members depending on scheduling Each staff will work 2-5 days per week All staff are part-time employees of Zion Learning

[Link to Additional Information](#)