

West Contra Costa Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

Friday Memo
January 29, 2021

Upcoming Events – Matthew Duffy

- February 1: Intradistrict Transfers Window Opens
- February 1: Safety Committee Meeting, 4:00 PM
- February 1: CAC Committee Meeting, 5:30 PM
- February 3: Board of Education Study Session No. 2, 5:30 PM
- February 8: Citizens Bond Oversight Committee Meeting, 2:00 PM
- February 8: Academic Committee Meeting, 4:00 PM
- February 9: DLCAP Meeting, 6:30 PM
- February 10: Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 PM
- February 11: Middle College Virtual Preview, 6:00 PM
- February 12: Facilities Committee Meeting, 3:00 PM
- February 15 - 19: Presidents' Week Recess, Schools and District Offices Closed

Next Week's Board Study Session February 3 - Matthew Duffy

The details for next week's Study Session will be located in the Friday Community Newsletter

Teach for America Update - Matthew Duffy

We are planning to update our current MOU with Teach For America heading into the next 3 years. That MOU will be brought to the February 10, 2020 Board meeting including numbers of Corps members and cost. Teach For America has played an important role in our work of providing excellent instruction, outstanding leadership and staff diversity. Some key highlights are below:

Corps Members in WCCUSD:

- Nearly half are teachers of color
- Nearly one-quarter come from low-income backgrounds
- Nearly one-third are the first in their family to graduate from college

6 TFA WCCUSD principals

- o Eric Acosta-Verprauskus, Verde Elementary
- o Katherine Acosta-Verprauskus, Montalvin Elementary
- o Taylor Parham, Lincoln Elementary
- o Jessica Petrilli, Walter T Helms Middle
- o Rebecca Ridenour, Ford Elementary
- o Summerlynn Sigler, De Anza High

12 in other school and instructional leadership roles

- o *School based roles*
- o Melissa Filbin, Math Coach, Cesar Chavez Elementary
- o Jacob Gran, Vice Principal, El Cerrito High
- o Nam Kyu Kang, Department Chair, De Anza High
- o Tim Kelly, Science Department Chair, Walter T Helms Middle

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- o Katharyn Linneman, Fairmount Elementary
- o Mirl Rivera, Assistant Principal, Hercules Middle
- o Nichole Shelly, Instructional Coach, Stege Elementary
- o Kira Walsh, Vice Principal
- o Jessie Welcomer, Assistant Principal, Montalvin Elementary
- o *Other roles*
- o Allyson Bogie, Librarian
- o Ariel Kirshenbaum, Director & Creator: Career Training Fellowship
- o Kathleen Gliksman, Program Assistant-Central Literacy Coach

7 alumni who have been named Teacher of the Year

- o 2020: Jesus Galindo, 2013 TFA alum, 3rd grade teacher at Lincoln Elementary
- o 2018: Jessie Welcomer, 2015 TFA alum, 5th grade teacher at Montalvin Manor
- o 2017: Sarah La Due, 2014 TFA alum, 7th grade teacher at Fred T Korematsu Middle School
- o 2016: Taylor Rainier, 2012 TFA alum, Special Educator at DeJean Middle School
- o 2016: Marissa Glidden, 2013 TFA alum, 6th grade teacher at Dover Elementary
- o 2015: Brent Knapp, 2006 TFA alum, Special Educator at Lupine Hills Elementary
- o 2015: Maribel Lopez, 2011 TFA alum, 2nd grade bilingual teacher at Dover Elementary

Career Awareness in the Health Pathways: Pre-Med Student Panel - Rubén Aurelio (Allison Huie & team)

The path to medical school is long and arduous, and it's often difficult to explain that to our high school students. It's especially crucial that we emphasize with students that there is no "one right way" to go to medical school (or to pursue any healthcare career for that matter.)

For this reason, we are inviting current college students to speak with current high school seniors about what lies ahead, and what it's like being "pre-med" in college & beyond. So far, we have had one mentor panel with the 12th-grade Health Students at PVHS. This mentor panel included students from community college as well as a baccalaureate pre-med program.

In this virtual session on Wednesday, January 20th, three current college students from the area spoke to students about their personal journeys, in and outside of school. They shared recommendations, hardships, and highs and lows of their post-secondary careers, and in response to their honesty and vulnerability, our students have opened up to them, asking questions like: *"Is it hard being a woman in STEM? Would you recommend going to a community college first, why / why not? How did you find mentors? Out of everything, why did you choose to pursue the medical field? How do you manage your time? How is it applying to transfer from community college? Is organic chem as hard as they say? How do you apply to scholarships?"*

It was particularly meaningful for our high schoolers to get to talk to role models who are close to them in age, who look like, sound like, and just, in general, can relate to them as young people.

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Afterward, students expressed their feedback in the chat:
Here are some comments from students:

- *"I needed this !! I was in a downward spiral. Thank you so much!"*
- *"Thank you guys for the info! It really helped <3"*
- *"You guys are divine."*

Steps to College Virtual College Fair - Rubén Aurelio (Allison Huie & team)

WCCUSD Seniors are invited to register today for this virtual college fair event taking place on February 6, 2021. The 2021 Steps to College/Pasos A La Universidad is a joint project of the Consulate General of Mexico in Sacramento, the California Student Aid Commission, Cien Amigos advocacy group, and the Mexican Cultural Center of Northern California, as well as public and private institutions.

Recognizing that education is the most important tool for personal development and success, as well as an engine for the continued progress of California, the fair is designed to help all families and students navigate a successful path to college.

Representatives from distinguished colleges and universities from California and Mexico, as well as State of California higher education experts, and nonprofit higher education organizations and advocates work together each year to help students navigate the college experience and learn about their finance options for higher education.

State Coalitions Advocating for Changes in Governor's Safe Schools For All Proposal - Tony Wold

In a letter to Governor Newsome a coalition of State Educational Groups has joined together to identify very specific elements of the proposal that must be addressed prior to schools reopening. One of the most significant issues revolve around the requirements for testing of staff and students and the costs associated with this. As currently presented, the plan would mandate very specific testing protocols for Districts that have high rates of positivity in the community. This directly impacts WCCUSD as we are aware that the rates in San Pablo and other areas of the District are significantly higher than in other regions. The costs of this level of testing would amount to a significant portion of any one-time money that would be received by the District.

The letter is signed and endorsed by the California School Boards Association (CSBA), Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO), The Small Schools Districts' Association (SSDA), and the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) which represent a very unified front within the education community. In particular, the link to the letter is included at the end of this item, outlines some very specific recommendations to move the State forward in the goal to safely reopen schools and not create an excessive financial burden on school districts. For West Contra Costa Unified the most important element of the recommendation is the one around the requirements for testing and the funding of this element. It is very likely, and important, in any reopening plan that there is appropriate preventative testing, and until the vaccine is widely available to the entire general public, the need for testing will remain. The cost of this should not take away from the educational program and hamper districts budgetarily. We expect that this issue will continue to be at the forefront of all discussions as both the State and Federal agencies are hopefully going to come together to create a focused and supportive

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solution to this which will allow school districts to focus on teaching and learning rather than testing and compliance with our time, and precious financial resources.

The previous day the same Educational Coalition sent another letter to Governor Newsome urging the prioritization of school personnel for vaccinations (the link to the letter is included at the end of this item). This letter aligns with the Resolution that the board passed that we have sent to each of our elected officials. As recent news stories have illustrated there is significant anxiety and flux about when, and how vaccinations will be distributed. The public narrative has vilified school districts in Santa Clara and Marin County as they tried to arrange access to vaccinations. It has become quickly apparent that the State needed to provide clear direction on which groups, exactly, are going to be prioritized.

We are optimistic that the announcement yesterday that Blue Shield of California will now be charged with coordination of these efforts will result in a more efficient and effective rollout of a program. **We strongly believe that our focus in WCCUSD should be on finding partnerships to quickly gain access for all district staff to receive the vaccination. This single initiative will move us closer to a safe reopening than anything else should be our highest priority.** The coordination of vaccinating District staff is something that we can unite around and build upon the strength of our solidarity to put the pressure on our legislators to take the appropriate action to accelerate a pathway to reopening schools in a safe manner.

With all of the fear and uncertainty that we have all faced and the anxiety that arises every time the discussion of criteria and MOUs comes up, the underlying issue comes back to the singular fact that COVID-19 is responsible for the deaths of over 38,800 California residents over 429,000 Americans. **Every single employee and resident of our school district can talk about someone they personally know who lost a loved one as a result of the pandemic.** The emotional impact of these losses has made this issue very personal and filled with emotion for all of us. As we continue to bring in experts to present to our board and community to help understand the need to follow appropriate safety measures, from the simple wearing of a mask, appropriate social distancing, and emphasis on personal hygiene, we must also remember that there is an emotional impact to this that can mobilize groups and create factions which can lead to conflicts. As we have seen too recently in the nation the polarization of political parties has created conflicts that have escalated to levels of violence and disorder none of us have seen in our lifetimes. Now, more than ever, it is clear that access to education is the great equalizer and that having open communication and partnership is the pathway forward and we need to continue to work to bring all groups together during this time.

Every day there are new articles about why we can, or cannot reopen, but one thing is true for all groups, and that is we all want to return to school safely to serve our students who are being impacted by the pandemic. The education coalition outlines several critical pathways to this mutual goal in their letter to Governor Newsom and is something that we believe is important to share with the board and our entire community as we continue to have healthy discussions about the facts related to COVID and the important logistical avenues that must be resolved to move us forward. As the District's Chief Business Official and Lead Labor Negotiator I believe that we need to focus our efforts on access to the vaccine for all employees and funding for testing and personal protective equipment (PPE) that does not take funds away from educational programs. If Governor Newsom, the State Legislature, and the Federal

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Government can work together toward those two goals then all of the focus on our MOU will no longer be necessary and we can together work toward a rapid and safe reopening of schools.

[21.01.18 Vaccine Letter Mgmt Groups](#)

[21.01.19 Gov Reopening Plan Mgmt Groups Letter](#)

Food Services Curbside Meal Program Update - Tony Wold (Barbara Jellison)

With a new calendar year beginning, a new change is being implemented to the Curbside Meal Program as we listened to our families who expressed their interest in only picking up meals one day of the week. Food boxes are now available every Thursday between the hours of 8 am to 1 pm at fifteen designated school distribution sites.

The boxes contain a variety of food items such as milk, eggs, bread, organic fruits, organic vegetables, meat, chicken, cheese, butter, tortillas, rice, yogurt and sauces for seasoning so families are able to cook fresh healthy meals in their own homes. We take great pride in offering our families organic locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables and meats. The food items in the box will feed a child breakfast, lunch, snack and supper for a whole week.

For the safety and protection of our employees and the families who pick up meals, new protocols have been implemented to maintain social distancing during distribution. Masks need to be worn by all. Meal boxes are placed on a table and the recipient will be responsible to place the box or boxes in their vehicle. Food Service Workers are available if assistance is required.

It should be no surprise that food insecurity for families is a widespread problem in our communities. With the meal counts steadily increasing, the need for additional workers is vital. This need has enabled us to rehire substitutes who have been without employment since the pandemic began and also alleviates the stress for employees who are off work due to personal needs.

The WCCUSD community is truly fortunate to be able to benefit from the school lunch waivers issued by the USDA. Not only do students not need to be present to receive their meals, but other siblings in their household are also eligible to receive meals too. All children 18 years and under are entitled to receive free meals.

The gratefulness from the community is truly staggering. Families who are struggling during this unprecedented time cannot express their appreciation enough for the food that enables them to feed their families. Workers often express how touched they are when strangers have tears in their eyes because of the overwhelming gratitude they have for the meal program. Making a difference in someone's life is truly rewarding and humbling. We want to continue to recognize the work of our Food Service employees who have been at the front of the pandemic since the beginning in March and their dedication and passion for our community is inspiring and we wanted to express our gratitude.

In collaboration with Veronica Diaz from Teamster Local 856 and Kim Chamberlain from SSA, Dr. Tony Wold organized a Food Service Employee Community Event held on Friday, January 22nd, 2021. The invitees included the Food Service community along with a panel of WCCUSD employees. The panel

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discussed the issues that Food Service workers are experiencing with the meal distribution program. The meeting began with the district nurse outlining WCCUSD's Covid-19 protocol for all employees. Important information was given to employees on what to do if they have been exposed or have been diagnosed with Covid-19. Information included what steps the district will take to deal with the disease and how they are working to protect the employees of WCCUSD. Food Services also unveiled their new procedure for food pick up at all school sites.

Union representatives from both SSA and Teamsters were part of the panel. Both expressed concerns from employees regarding the Food Service program during the pandemic. Topics of the concerns included the purchase of pallet jacks for safe movement of supplies, back braces including a class given by CCSIG on the correct procedure for using them, rain gear for all employees, the use of subs to guarantee coverage for employees who are absent and the use of pods in the Central Kitchen and at school sites. All concerns were addressed with all parties in agreement to work together to solve issues and to make the food distribution program run as smoothly as possible because we are all aware that the need in our community is of greatness. The meeting ended on a positive note with employees expressing their appreciation for being able to come together to discuss their issues and being able to have their voices heard. We plan to continue to bring our teams together to engage in open, healthy, and productive discussions to build our support models together. We appreciate the Teamsters and Veronica Diaz for advocating for our workers to bring us together last Friday.

Significant Disproportionality Status 2019-20 - Kristen Hardy

On January 12, 2021, districts across California received their Annual Notifications related to their status as Significantly Disproportionate based on data from 2019-20. West Contra Costa was found significantly disproportionate in the area of African American students and Emotional Disturbance. This means that African American students in our district are statistically more likely to be identified for Special Education and related services under the category of Emotional Disturbance than other racial / ethnic groups in our district. This is the second year that the district has been identified as Significantly Disproportionate.

Brief History: We were initially found Significantly Disproportionate for special education students in two areas based on data from 2018-19: African American students found eligible under Emotional Disturbance and suspended 10 or more days in a single year. The district went through an extensive process to develop a plan to address these areas through the summer and fall of 2020, and submitted our board approved plan, titled Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services Plan (CCEIS) to the California Department of Education in December 2020. The district is awaiting notification of approval so that we can begin to implement the action steps in that plan.

Current Status: The district's status for this year is not unanticipated as WCCUSD received its initial notification on January 31, 2020 and due to COVID, the district went into closure six weeks later, providing little time to respond to the information. In addition, the formal plan to address these areas was submitted in December 2020 and has yet to be approved by the state for implementation. Despite this, the district has been aware of and has been working to address these areas even without the formal monitoring plan. The successes of these efforts can be seen in the current data that reflects that we are no longer significantly disproportionate in the area of Special Education African American students and 10

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or more days of suspension. In addition, our Risk Ratio (the degree to which African American students are statistically more likely to be identified as Emotionally Disturbed than their peers) has consistently trended down over the past three years.

Moving Forward: The district still has a distance to go to ensure equity for all students, and particularly our African American students in special education. Our status as Significantly Disproportionate will require us again to engage in a four step process over a 27 month period, similar to the process that we engaged in through summer and fall 2020. District leaders of this work will participate with districts around the state in a series of professional development opportunities in key elements of program design and implementation. We will reserve 15% of our federal special education grant funds (IDEA) or approximately \$900,000 to be spent on a state approved corrective action plan (CCEIS). The special education department, in collaboration with general education, parents, students, and key community partners, will engage in a series of Stakeholder meetings through the spring and summer of 2021 to conduct a Root Cause Analysis to understand the structures and systems leading to the over-identification. These meetings will lead to the creation and implementation of the CCIES Corrective Action Plan targeted at interrupting the root causes leading to the identification of African American students as Emotionally Disturbed. The plan will be submitted to the CDE in September 2021 and after approval, will be implemented through September 2023. This second cycle will occur concurrently with implementing the current CCEIS Plan, once approved by the California Department of Education.

I am including two references for your consideration.

California State Website on [State Performance Plan Technical Assistance Project - Significant Disproportionality](#)

Article: Distinguishing Difference from Disability: [The Common Causes of Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education](#) by Edward Fergus