



October 31, 2025 Friday Memo

Upcoming Events

November 3: WCCUSD Stabilization Planning: A Focus on Budget Goals, 6:30 pm., HHS
November 5: Regular Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 Public Session, DeJean Middle School
November 6: Community Advisory Committee for Special Education (CAC), 6:00 pm., [Virtual](#)
November 10: No School
November 11: Veterans Day Holiday, No School
November 12: Joint Board / CBOC meeting, 6:30 pm, Lake Elementary School

Superintendent Update

The federal government's partial shutdown has strained the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) nationwide. We understand that for many of our families, these benefits are vital, and we want to share important information about the food distribution supports available.

We are updating our [Parent Resources page](#) on the District website to include the latest information on food assistance and emergency resources, along with contact information for support. We encourage you to explore our list of local pantries and distribution sites and consider reaching out to them now to learn about hours, distribution methods, and eligibility. Please check that page regularly for updates.

If you are concerned about immigration status, continue to visit our [Immigration support and resources](#) page for more information on knowing your rights.

Spread the word to WCCUSD families to stay connected in ParentSquare for school and District updates, as this situation is evolving quickly, and we want to ensure students, families, and staff are informed of the latest available information.

We know that these are uncertain times. While we await federal resolution, please be assured that the WCCUSD community remains committed to your children, your well-being, and your peace of mind. We believe every child deserves the nourishment, stability, and support to learn and thrive.

Additional information will be provided on county resources and support, including their potential initiative to assist with CalFresh benefits. We will share updates as we gather more information. Thank you to our community organizations and partners — your generosity and collaboration are making an immediate difference. With your support, we will navigate this moment together.

Labor Update Human Resources - Sylvia J. Greenwood

The District, United Teachers of Richmond (UTR), and Teamsters have each selected their representatives to serve on the respective fact-finding panels. Preliminary meetings with the panel members are scheduled for next week to establish hearing dates and next steps in the fact-finding process. Under the statutory timeline, the fact-finding process must be completed by November 26.

TK-12 Schools - Katherine Acosta-Verprauskus (Jawan Eldridge & Jose De Leon)

Downer Elementary and Richmond High Students Participate in UFLI Foundations Training

Students from Downer Elementary and Richmond High recently took part in a UFLI Foundations training designed to enhance foundational reading skills. UFLI Foundations is an explicit and systematic phonics program that supports the development of key literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency. While the program is primarily intended for core reading instruction in kindergarten through second grade, it is also effectively used as an intervention for students at any grade level who need additional reading support.

See photos below highlighting our students' engagement in the training.



Oakland Museum of California's volunteer Día de los Muertos Committee

Richmond High School and Downer Elementary families participated in Celebrating 30 years of DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS Oakland Museum of CA. RHS Students drew a Catrina and the Downer parents collaborated by using rice, lentils, black beans and other dry food to meticulously fill in the artwork. The students built an Altar honoring the hard road and losses in seeking a better life by immigrants to the USA.. "CRUZANDO EN SILENCIO" - "Crossing in Silence"



Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment TK-12 STEM- Katherine Acosta-Verprauskus & Team

Principals Shout Out their Math Teacher Leads (MTLs)

Successful curriculum implementation needs leaders on site to support the work. [Math Teacher Leads](#) at each elementary school site are helping site admin lead Wednesday Math Collaboration working with teachers on module and lesson planning, while also supporting individual teachers and grade-level teams on an ongoing basis.

Here are some of things that principals are saying about their MTLs:

- Ms. (Brittany) Buster has been doing an awesome job as Chavez's MTL! She communicates regularly with teachers and admin as a thought partner around EM2 implementation. She successfully leads math collaboration and lesson internalization and planning with teachers and makes this precious time focused and meaningful. She supports this rigorous and adaptive work of curriculum implementation and support with care, urgency, and grace. Great job, Ms. Buster!
—Matthew Sloan, Chavez ES Principal
- Ana (Calderon Lopez) presented a math PD to our teachers at Washington that was flush with data from her walkthroughs, had actionable next steps and gave teachers time to plan. Gracias Ana!
—Karen Zapata, Washington ES Principal
- Mrs (Tricia) Rogers has been doing a great job supporting our staff around math concepts and making sure that information is disseminated to everybody regarding how to keep a strong pace that Eureka requires and that our students need. —John Hillyer, Ellerhorst ES Principal
- Mx. Joy (Diaz-Noriega) has done an amazing job as our MTL. They are always constantly posting different resources for our staff to use or consider. Mx. Joy recently led an internalization protocol to help our staff with understanding the connection of the objective with the different parts of the lesson. As an MTL Mx. Joy has gone on math observations and provided valuable insight. Mx. Joy truly embodies the MTL role! We appreciate you Mx. Joy! —Marlon Galdamez, Downer ES Principal
- Ms. C (Nicolette Cotter-Aschoff) has been doing an excellent job leading staff through our

collaboration time once a month and through modeling her own instruction. She has been extremely organized and helpful to the entire staff. –Kate Davis, Mira Vista K-8 Vice Principal

- Janet (Belanoff) has been so patient as we roll out this new adoption. She checks in with the teachers and she makes everyone feel comfortable and has what they need. So grateful to have her on the team. –Denita Robbins, Collins ES Principal

Electrical Upgrade & Permanent Power Restoration at El Cerrito High School - Melissa Payne

El Cerrito High School now has permanent power! PG&E completed the connection to the new equipment and re-energized the campus with permanent power on Oct 27. We are pleased to report significant progress in our repair efforts:

- ✓ Emergency Panel Replacements: All critical electrical panels have been replaced with modern, code-compliant equipment.
- ✓ Restore Permanent Power: All systems have been tested and inspected. PG&E has restored permanent power to the campus. The electrical contractor has verified that all systems are functioning properly and all systems are back on permanent power.
- ✓ Restore Photovoltaic “Solar” Power: Solar systems have been inspected, and all solar systems in use prior to the electrical failure have been re-energized.
- ✓ Demobilize Construction: Generators and temp fencing have been removed from the site, and the site has been restored to its original conditions.

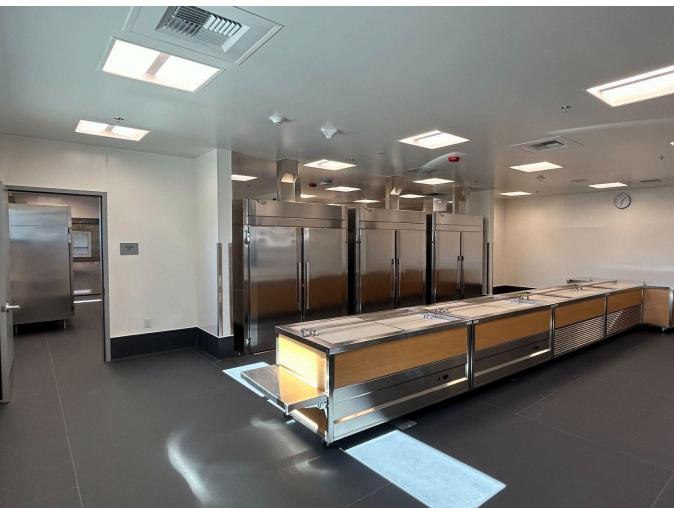
The project is substantially complete. All safety-critical repairs have been addressed, allowing us to maintain regular school operations. Permanent power and solar power have been re-energized. The remaining work involves a secondary enclosure to help protect the main bus duct, close out documentation and warranty from the electrical contractor, installation of surge protection systems

campus-wide, and documentation and training for maintenance staff. Upon completion of this project, we will provide a comprehensive report on the project to the Board.

Lake Elementary, School Grand Opening Multi-Purpose Building, New Kitchen & Play yard, including a Student-Selected Playstructure - Melissa Payne

Lake Elementary School will soon unveil its new Multi-Purpose Room, Kitchen, Play yard, student-selected play structure, and outdoor seating on November 4th!

The blacktop area with new play structures will provide a safe place to play for our 1st through 6th grade students. Staff access will change with a new parking lot accessible from Manchester Ave. The final increment of construction is on the site's far western side, including the turf field, walking pathway, and garden.





College & Career (CTE & College Readiness/DE)- Summer Sigler (Jessica Petrilli & Team)

Richmond High School Education Pathway Partners with Downer Elementary on Early Literacy Initiative

On Friday, October 17th, students from Richmond High School's Education Pathway, led by teacher Victor Zaragoza, participated in a specialized phonics training led by a CORE consultant from Downer Elementary School. Downer Principal Marlon Galdamez shared his vision for a collaborative effort in which Richmond High students receive training in early literacy instruction and then support Downer's young learners in small groups as they build mastery in phonics. This partnership exemplifies the district's commitment to developing future educators while strengthening literacy outcomes for elementary students.



Students practice in small groups being the “teacher” and “student” with saying vowels sounds

FabLab Hosts STEM Night at Riverside Elementary

On Thursday, October 23, the FabLab team and Riverside Elementary staff hosted an unforgettable Family STEM Night! Students and their families jumped into hands-on science, engineering, and

creativity with a night full of making and discovery. They used digital microscopes to explore the hidden details of insects, watched chromatography magic unfold on coffee filters, designed and spun their own penny spinners, built geometric structures from marshmallows and toothpicks, engineered their own towers and marble runs, experimented with boats and buoyancy, launched stomp rockets, and lots more!

Every participant took home a custom laser-cut keychain, crafted especially for the event, and everyone got to meet CeeCee the Robot Dog! Check out more highlights from the night [HERE](#).



100 WCCUSD Students Take the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test

In alignment with **LCAP Goal 3.3, Strategy 8**, West Contra Costa Unified School District hosted the **PSAT/NMSQT** on **Saturday, October 11, 2025**, at **De Anza High School**. The event provided high school **sophomores and juniors** from across the district with the opportunity to participate in a nationally recognized college readiness assessment, with 100 students taking advantage of this opportunity. .

The **PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)** helps students gauge their college and career readiness, familiarize themselves with the SAT format, and access resources through the College Board's suite of tools, including **personalized practice through Khan Academy**. In addition, PSAT participation connects eligible juniors to **National Merit Scholarship** opportunities and other academic recognition programs.

District staff coordinated registration, testing logistics, and communication with site administrators and counselors to ensure **equitable access** for all interested students.

Richmond High's Team 841 Wins Third Consecutive Robotics Championship

Richmond High School's **Team 841, The Biomechs**, continues to shine on the competitive robotics stage. At the **2025 Capital City Classic**, the team earned its **third consecutive championship victory** this season, showcasing not only their technical excellence but also their teamwork, creativity, and perseverance.

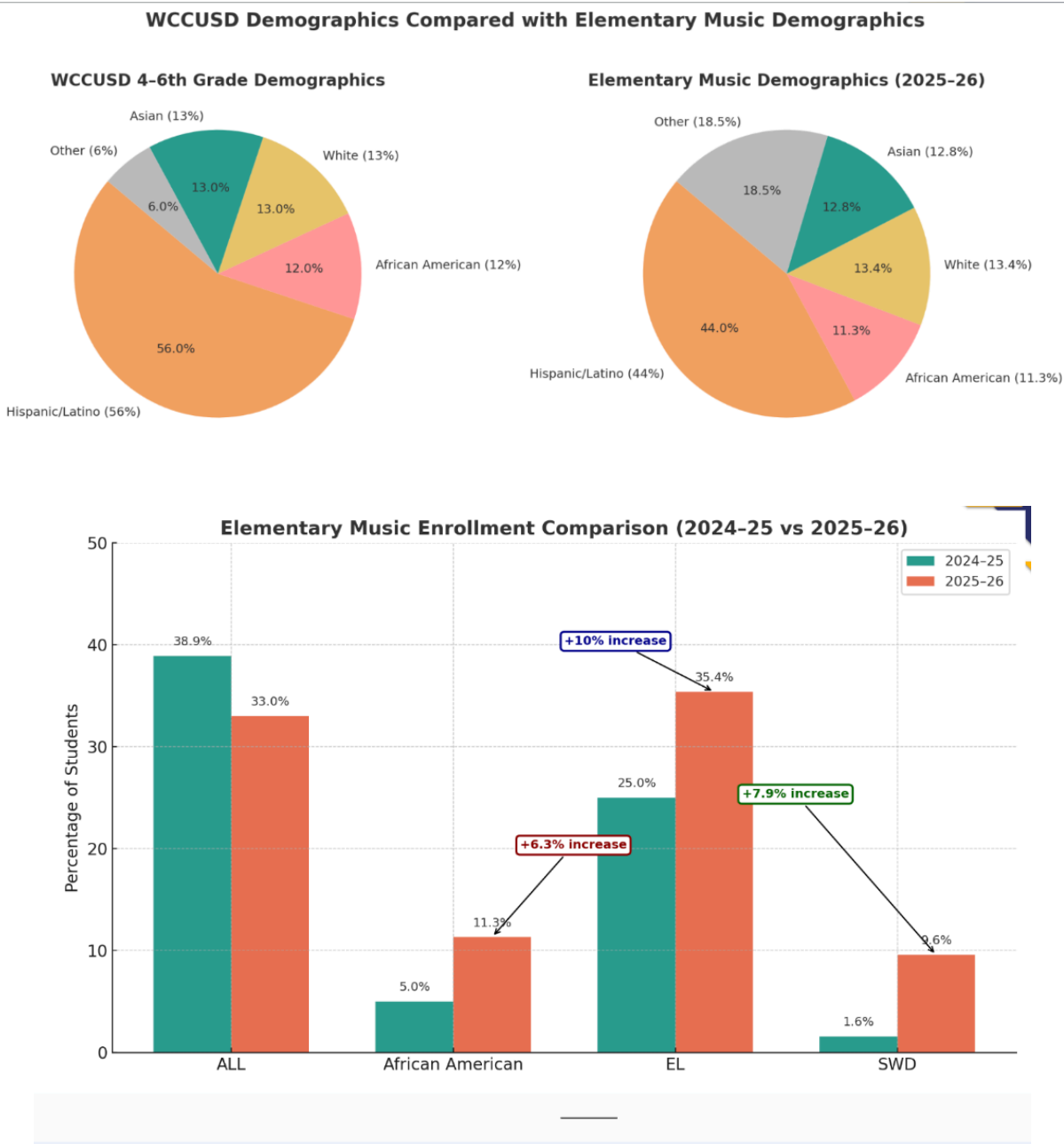
Beyond the trophies and banners, Team 841's success represents the power of hands-on learning. Students demonstrated how curiosity, collaboration, and problem-solving come together to make education exciting and meaningful. Their dedication—spending long nights in the lab and early mornings at competitions—reflects a deep commitment to growth and innovation.

Richmond High and the West Contra Costa Unified School District celebrate Team 841’s remarkable accomplishments and extend heartfelt gratitude to the mentors, sponsors, and families who support these young engineers. The Biomechs continue to rise as **learners and leaders**, proudly representing their program, school, district, and community.

VAPA

Our VAPA Coordinator has worked with our elementary music teachers and principals to do intentional recruiting of our music students! This year we set out to ensure that our elementary musicians were as representative of the district as possible, and we have made significant progress. The recruitment efforts are paired with a curricular shift to ensure that we are teaching more inclusive and culturally relevant music.

We look forward to celebrating our young musicians' achievements this year!



Information Technology Update- Laurie Wong Roberts

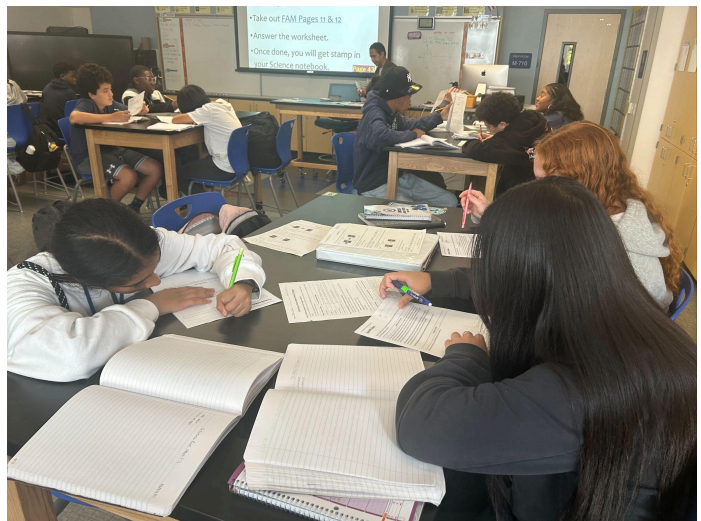
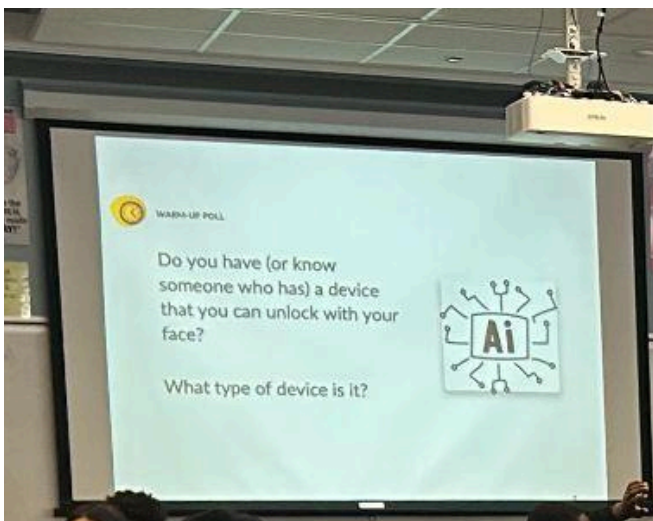
✓ **CRITICAL SYSTEMS UPDATE, COMPLETED!**

Remember the district-wide outage we experienced on October 6? It uncovered an issue in system architecture that necessitated an upgrade. IT's network team and system administrators, under the guidance of Dr. Wayne Lacy, Director of IT Operations, deftly planned and completed the work last Wednesday night. Congratulations, Dr. Lacy, Jim, Cedric, Jose, Vin, Ennis, and Joel, on a job well done!

★ **DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION**

Last week was Digital Citizenship Week. Through lessons from Common Sense Media, teachers engage students in conversations about data privacy, AI, digital balance, and other important issues of growing up today. Amber Barron, Tech Teacher Leader at Hercules Middle School, shared the lesson that science teacher Mr. Domingo engaged in with his students on facial recognition:

The principal has been hearing complaints from students about the lunch line being too long and one of the brainstorming ideas was to consider purchasing a facial recognition program that would eliminate the need for students to stand in a second line after getting their food so they can scan their lunch card. Students were asked to reflect on whether or not they think that would be beneficial or not, then share out to their group, consider new opinions from their group, share whether or not they've received new information that changed their minds, and then share a final decision about the scenario. Afterwards, Mr. Domingo shared the slides that explained the definitions tied to this lesson and how there is no "correct" answer to this situation but that students should consider the intentions behind AI tech, cost, whether or not the company behind it has protections in place to keep their private info secure, and that they should consider their own feelings about their face being another piece of information that internet companies would have access to along with other private information, like name and birthdate. I also mentioned that there are ethical concerns with facial recognition software, especially when it comes to racial profiling.



HAPPY HALLOWEEN! BEWARE OF PHISH!

Last Wednesday, our system was bombarded with phishing emails, both from outside and from the inside (much like the horror trope of “the call is coming from inside the house”). Should you receive an even slightly suspicious email, please forward it immediately to unsure@wccusd.net! A timely reminder: the IT department will never send updates via email.

FORMS UPDATE

Annual Forms Update

Today is the due date for the Education Benefit Form (EBF) and we are hopeful that the district will reach 82-83%! Our PowerSchool team is currently entering paper forms. Look for the final percentage in next week’s Friday Memo.

News of the Week:

- ❖ [While most WCCUSD students don’t meet state standards, a number of schools saw improvements | Richmondside](#)
 - WCCUSD falls behind the state average, but there are some wins represented by the data. There were 15 schools within the district that increased scores by more than 3% in English. Richmond High School, for example, had a 12.7% increase (the highest in the district) and Pinole Middle School saw an 8.1% increase. In math, 20 of the district’s 53 schools saw significant gains in the number of students who met or exceeded state standards in math. Pinole Valley High saw an 18.5% increase, while Kennedy High School saw a 3% increase. Ohlone Elementary School in Hercules had the highest increase out of all elementary schools, with 10.3% of test takers meeting or exceeding state math standards. Ohlone Elementary School principal Delisia Davis said the Eureka curriculum for math has made a world of difference there. She also touted the district’s implementation of the Instructional Practice Guide, a classroom observation and coaching tool that provides lesson plans and helps track content alignment and student engagement.
- ❖ [Caspers to Catfish: Richmond Steelers weigh-in on go-to grub spots | Richmond Standard](#)
 - The *Standard* recently swung by a [Richmond Steelers](#) youth football practice at Lovonya De Jean Middle School during the team’s Thursday “carb night” dinner for the players. During the chow down, we got the team’s 411 on where and what to eat in Richmond. In a first for our Rich Dish series, the *Standard* heard directly from Richmond youth –specifically, the players of the Steelers’ football team. From longtime community staples to hidden gems and pop-up faves, these young athletes and their coaches know what’s what when it comes to the tastiest bites in town.