



## January 23, 2026 Friday Memo

### Upcoming Events

January 24: WCC Education Fair & Parents as Partners and Leaders Conference, 10:00am, DeJean Middle School

January 28: WCCUSD Regular Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 pm, DeJean Middle School

January 31: WCCUSD Board of Education Retreat, 9:00am, TBD

February 5: Community Advisory Committee for Special Education (CAC), 6:00pm, [Virtual](#)

### Superintendent Update

This week, we celebrated a major milestone with the groundbreaking of the new Stege Elementary School. The event was a success, with approximately 75 community members, staff, dignitaries, and students joining us to break ground. Stege students shared inspiring student voice through the Pledge of Allegiance and the Land, Labor, and Body Acknowledgement, and many former Stege students—some dating back to the 1950s—had the opportunity to see the future of Stege through the eyes of today's students as they led the Stege chant, reminding us why we do this work. Channel 5 News and the Richmond Standard were among the media present, and we look forward to sharing their stories once available.

We want to thank Mayor Martinez and the City of Richmond, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, and community members LaKisha Mitchell-Keith and Michelle Jackson for their greetings and participation during the ceremony. Thank you, Board Trustees, for your attendance and continued support in making this milestone possible for the Stege community. Finally, thank you to Principal Claudia Velez and the students and staff of Stege Elementary School. We are excited for what lies ahead and look forward to celebrating again at the ribbon-cutting when the new campus is completed in fall 2027. Photos are included below to capture this special moment.





## **Facilities Project Updates - Ellen Mejia Hooper**

### **Shannon Elementary School Spelling Bee**

Shannon Elementary School's new cafeteria is open! The dining and stage areas opened for student use on January 20th.

The first event held in the new cafeteria was the spelling bee. Well done to our spelling bee participants who showed hard work and determination! Keep up the great work! 🐝



## **Information Technology Update- Laurie Wong Roberts**



### **PROACTIVE SECURITY: CLOSING THE "DIGITAL LOCKSMITH" LOOPHOLE**

**Context: Learning from the "Payroll" Incident**

Following the sophisticated "Payroll" phishing attack on January 7, we successfully contained the threat and re-imaged the 114 compromised devices. However, our post-incident assessment revealed an important truth: attacks are becoming increasingly personal and sophisticated, often originating from the compromised accounts of people we know.

To stay ahead of these bad actors, we are shifting our posture from *reactive* cleanup to *proactive* prevention.

### **The Shift: Stopping Social Engineering Before It Starts**

While our technical defenses (like CrowdStrike and our System Administrators) are strong, the industry is seeing a rise in "Social Engineering." This is where attackers bypass technical firewalls entirely by calling Help Desks and pretending to be employees in distress to get a password reset.

### **New Protocol: Identity Verification for Password Resets**

Effective immediately, we are implementing a "Digital Locksmith" protocol. Just as a locksmith requires ID before opening a house door, we must verify identity before unlocking a digital account.

#### **The New Process:**

- **No Direct Resets:** IT will no longer issue temporary passwords directly to users via phone or email.
- **The "Gatekeeper" Role:** Office Managers, Secretaries, Administrators, and Department Managers will act as trusted verifiers.
- **In-Person Handoff:**
  1. The employee requests a reset in person from their Office Manager, Secretary, Administrator, or Department Manager.
  2. The Office Manager, Secretary, Administrator, or Department Manager submits a ticket on their behalf.
  3. IT sends the temporary password to the office personnel who submitted the ticket.
  4. The office personnel person physically hands the password to the employee.

### **The "Why": Protecting Our Collective House**

We have not yet been hit by a "Help Desk Imposter" attack, and we intend to keep it that way. By closing this loophole now, we are protecting:

- **Student Data:** Ensuring no unauthorized users gain access to the sensitive information we protect in PowerSchool and other systems.
- **You, and all District Staff:** Preventing attackers from using *your* identity to launch further attacks on colleagues, similar to how the "Payroll" phish tried to spread.
-  **Collective Defense:** While this process adds a small step to the workflow, it adds a massive layer of safety to our network. We are ALL part of fortifying our castle.