



West Contra Costa Unified School District

Management Reductions	\$4 million	This included non-represented (Management) and represented (WCCAA) reductions in positions. This will be discussed in Closed Session on January 29th with actions likely taken by the Board at the February 26th meeting for Certificated and March 11th meeting for Classified.
Site Allocation Reductions	\$2 million	The budget development for next year will include a reduction of \$2 million from site budgets. These budgets will be provided to sites along with staffing allocations in March once other reductions have been identified.
One-time utilization of Trust to Directly Pay OPEB Liability	\$15.8 million	The District will pass a resolution to utilize the trust for a second year to shift the cuts from the 2020 - 2021 school year to the 2021 - 2022 school year to allow for possible budget solutions that may be adopted at the June State budget, or through the November 2020 election to potentially materialize. Should those solutions not occur, the District will begin negotiations with all bargaining units in November 2020 to identify reductions to be in place for the 2021 - 2022 school year.
Consultation / Negotiations with Associations	\$20 million	The District is required to make \$20 million in ongoing reductions. The District has begun the process of working with each of the associations regarding these reductions that will impact staff. The timelines for action regarding Reduction in Force are February 26th for Certificated employees and March 11th for Classified employees.

There will not be a presentation at the next board meeting. The Board will be asked to approve two resolutions to finalize budget mitigations for the current year so that these solutions can be presented as part of the Second Interim report. Those resolutions include making a transfer of \$19.8 million from Fund 17 - Special Reserve to the General Fund and to utilize the Fund 71 Trust to directly pay the OPEB liability of \$15.8 million for the current year rather than the pay as you go method that is currently budgeted. Both of these are one-time solutions that effectively push the current year

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public comment and feedback at the February 12th Board meeting where the material will be presented. The full information will also be published with that Board packet for review.

While the negotiations process is confidential, there are very few options to reduce \$20 million in expenses that do not impact employees. Each association or union utilizes different communication methods to gain input from their members. The District respects those processes and is working diligently not to negotiate in public. Each association will determine the level of detail that they share with members. That sharing may bring forward questions that end up being directed to Board members. We encourage you to not respond to items that may be negotiated and allow the process to continue to move forward. With that said, some of the areas that may be considered to make these reductions include the possibility of laying off positions, increasing class size, potentially suspending stipends and other extra duty pay or compensation, altering work hours, along with consolidating responsibilities. As solutions are identified through the appropriate process they will be presented by the District to the Board. With the potential management reductions we will be bringing forward a series of job description changes later in the Spring to accommodate the work responsibilities that M

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reductions, but ultimately stay committed to adopting the measures necessary to meet our budget responsibilities.

### **Wilson Elementary School Renaming - Marcus Walton**

The ad hoc committee voted on Thursday evening to recommend renaming Wilson Elementary School after Michelle Obama. We anticipate bringing the full recommendation to the full board at the February 12 meeting.

### **Media Stories of Interest - Marcus Walton**

The following news articles may be of interest. Copies are attached.

<https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/55195/california-considers-permitting-students-excused-mental-health-days> - California Considers Permitting Students Excused Mental Health Days

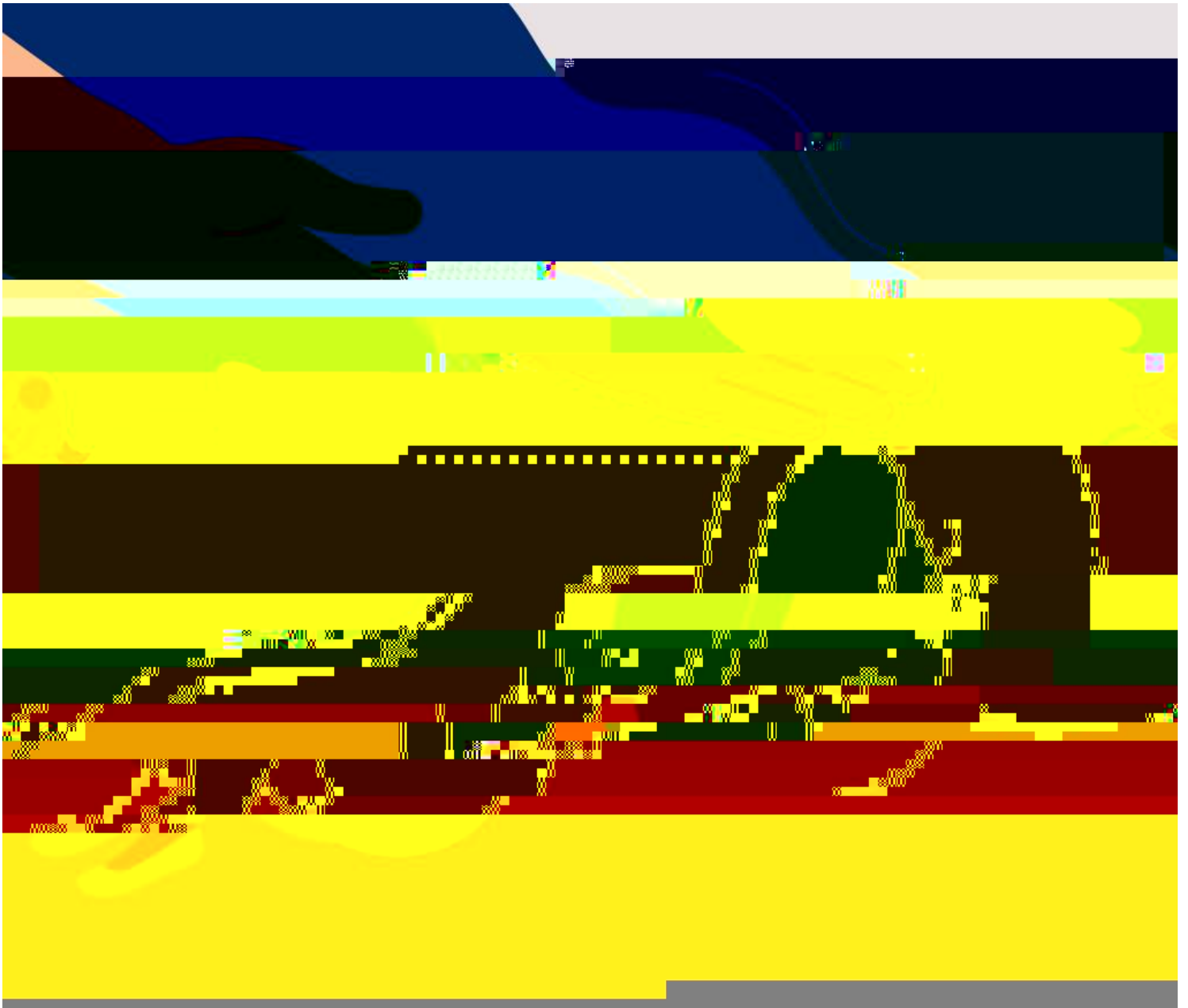
<https://richmondstandard.com/richmond/2020/01/21/de-anza-high-teacher-wins-eukel-award/> - De Anza High teacher wins Eukel Award

<https://patch.com/california/pinole-hercules/discussion-set-over-naming-richmond-school-after-michelle-obama> - Discussion Set Over Naming Richmond School After Michelle Obama

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# California Considers Permitting Students Excused Mental Health Days

By [Katrina Schwartz](#) Jan 23



(Ponomariova\_Maria/iStock)

Parents, educators and clinicians are seeing an alarming increase in mental health problems among young people. Various national surveys show the rates of **depression**, **anxiety**, and **suicide** on the rise, but what to do about it is less clear.

In July of 2019, Oregon passed a bill that allows students to take excused absences for mental health related issues. **Students advocated for the bill**, saying it would reduce stigma about mental health issues, and encourage young people to seek the treatment they need.

Now, the California legislature is considering something similar. State Senator **Anthony Portantino** has introduced a bill that would change the education code to allow for mental health related excused absences. For him, mental health is a personal issue.

"I had a brother who took his own life," Portantino said. "And one of the reasons I talk about it is so people understand that mental health issues affect all of us."

He says anything that reduces stigma could go a long way to prevent tragedies like the one his family suffered.

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"It's not the time to be shy. It's the time to bring these conversations out of the shadows so we can help those who need it."

Portantino isn't concerned that students will abuse the excused absences. If anything, he thinks it will take a lot of convincing to help families drop the barriers they hold around mental health.

But what would this really mean to schools?

"Young people are already missing school because of mental health challenges," said Jenn Rader, director of the **James Morehouse Project** at El Cerrito High School just outside of San Francisco. "So if this would make that reality more visible for all of us, and bring into sharper focus for all of us what it is we're all up against, that would be a positive step."

Rader hadn't heard of the legislation, but was intrigued. She'd like to see what results Oregon sees a year into implementation, but agrees with Portantino that reducing stigma around mental health would be valuable.

El Cerrito High operates on a block schedule, which means each student only has four classes a semester with a year's worth of material condensed into each class. That makes it extra difficult to catch up when students miss a lot of instructional time. Rader says there's a clear correlation between students with mental health challenges and absences, especially for those with anxiety.

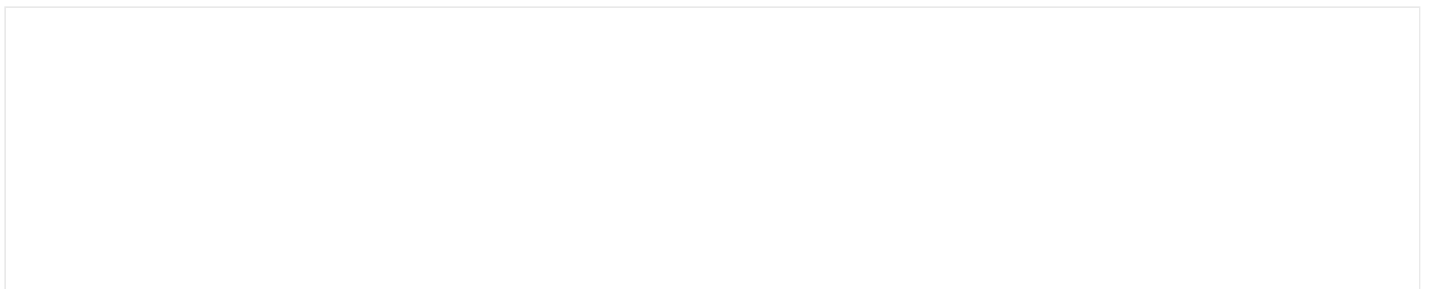
**Dr. Mark Reinecke** of the Child Mind Institute says the state needs to tread carefully with legislation like this. He understands the need for parity between mental health and physical health, but says it all depends on the specific situation.

"There are some situations where this entirely sensible and others where it doesn't make sense," Reinecke said.

Take anxiety, for example. Allowing kids with **school avoidance problems** or social anxiety to stay home from "is absolutely the wrong thing to be offering them. For those youngsters, what we want is exposure, we want the youngster to approach the things they fear."

Reinecke says letting anxious students avoid school only reinforces the behavior. But kids aren't doomed to suffer with anxiety forever. Research has show **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** to be an effective treatment. For a student with debilitating depression, on the other hand, an excused absence to see a therapist may be very helpful.

The problem, says Reinecke, is that parents make these decisions in different ways. Some parents take a lot of convincing to call the school if a child is sick. Others, let them stay home at the slightest sign of fever. Excused absences for mental health issues would be similarly murky, he said.



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# De Anza High teacher wins Eukel Award

January 21, 2020



De Anza High special education teacher Myrna Hadjirul was honored by the West Contra Costa Unified School District Board of Education last week for earning the Eukel Award.

The award by the Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust has honored exceptional Contra Costa County K-12 classroom teachers since 1992 who exhibit extraordinary commitment to their students.

Hadjirul is a 22-year veteran teacher who, since joining De Anza High in 2011, has twice won the You Make Difference Award by the Community Advisory Committee for Special Education.

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WCCUSD Special Education Director Nick Berger described Hadjirul as a "champion for inclusion" and "a pillar in our movement toward the special Olympics."

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"If you ever were to walk into Ms. Myrna's classroom you would be amazed at what she does with her special education students," Berger said.

Hadjirul called the honor humbling. At the Board of Ed meeting, she credited De Anza High Assistant Principal Liz Sanders and Principal Summer Sigler for making her success possible. She also urged others to nominate the district's many resourceful and creative teachers.

"As a teacher I have always made it my mission to always grab teachable moments not only to teach my students the curriculum but more importantly life lessons that inevitably shape my students' decisions, behaviors, and most importantly their character," Hadjirul said in a district statement. "Our goal is always to change the mindset of our students and everyone around them about our student's capabilities and abilities."

The Eukel Award is given annually to three Contra Costa County K-12 classroom teachers and comes with a \$10,000 prize that can be used in the manner in which the recipient wishes, the district states. Hadjirul is the 19th WCCUSD teacher to win the award, followed by Pinole Valley High School's Erik Radkiewicz last year.

For a complete list of the winners visit [here](#).

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# Discussion Set Over Naming Richmond School After Michelle Obama

A community meeting will discuss a proposal to rename a Richmond elementary school in honor of former first lady Michelle Obama.

By [Bay City News, News Partner](#)

Jan 19, 2020 1:32 pm PT

Reply (1)

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Former first lady Michelle Obama speaks to guests at the Obama Foundation Summit at Illinois Institute of Technology on October 29, 2019 in Chicago, Illinois. The Summit is an annual event hosted by the Obama Foundation. (Scott Olson/Getty Images)



