



The **Hidden Intentions** of Ed Matters

An open letter to Ed Matters from WCCUSD Educators

Dear Education Matters,

In the last several months we have seen a growth of articles and reports directed to the community and staff about West Contra Costa Unified academic progress. As educators, we appreciate data-driven conversations to support our students. However, we must be clear:

We know what your plan is for our community's schools and for our students. It is inequitable, it is unjust, and it is unacceptable.

The data points that you cite in your articles are deeply concerning. The existing failures of our schools are what drive us to improve them every day. For the many members of our teaching ranks who are WCCUSD alumni, the struggles and shortcomings of our alma maters are why we returned home to teach. We believe passionately that West County students and families deserve the highest quality education, and we work tirelessly each day to ensure that this becomes a reality. So yes, as you state: This is a time for urgency. We feel the urgency when one of our students doesn't succeed in something because we see them as our own children. Their success is our success, and their failures are our failures. But the work you are doing is not only demoralizing and hurtful to all of us, including our students, it is also driven by a larger hidden agenda.

It is time for honesty.

While your "research" uses publically available data to pinpoint failures in WCCUSD schools, your publications do not honestly represent solutions for these critical problems. Your "analysis" is definitely not conducted in collaboration with educators, staff, students, and families. We agree that our district has a long way to go in order to provide the quality education all students

deserve in West County. This is why we must all own areas of need and areas of improvement. But rather than engage in the meaningful and rigorous conversations that need to occur in order to move our schools forward, *Education Matters* has chosen to target our public schools as a means to drive the growth of charter schools in our district. This is work that *Education Matters* conducts alongside others who are also paid to advocate for charter schools in West Contra Costa. In doing so, charter advocates hypocritically have chosen to single out problems that exist within WCCUSD without recognizing its own failures to equitably address the needs of *all* students in our community.

Recent *Education Matters* articles have relied on isolated data points to support a pro-charter agenda, drastically oversimplifying the work being done in our public schools and misrepresenting the work being done by charter schools. For example, a recent article cited the terribly low math proficiency rate of Black students at six District schools and placed that data point in a pro-charter narrative without addressing the fact that most charter schools in WCCUSD are less than 10% Black. In fact, the proliferation of charter schools in WCCUSD, particularly those run by Charter Management Organizations, has directly increased the resegregation of Richmond's schools. It saddens us that an organization positioning itself as a community "partner" would use our students' struggles to fulfil its agenda without demonstrating a genuine commitment to their success.

If *Education Matters* is truly serious about the achievement of Black students, we would expect to see vocal commitment to solutions-oriented efforts that support Black students. Some examples of this are

- Our joint task force with the District to redesign school discipline policies so that Black students are not systematically pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline under the guise of "willful defiance,".
- Our schools' African American Site Advisory Teams that work to make sure all school sites are responsive to and supportive of Black parents and families.
- Support for specific instructional shifts designed to better support the academic growth and identity safety of our Black students at the site levels.

When it has been time to partner and problem-solve, you have been silent.

So why this letter, and why now? In its opening annual review of student data, the District has made it clear that there is work to be done and has also made clear its plan to accelerate the learning of all students through a focus on early literacy and teacher growth and development. While efforts to address our problems have been made as publicly available as the data that demonstrates them, *Education Matters* strategically ignores the many initiatives underway to support students, teachers, leaders and families. Why in the middle of our year and in the middle of this work would this article be written? Is it to demoralize our educators in one of the most difficult months to teach? Is it to pave the way for the next charter school, which will likely replicate the discriminatory disciplinary policies of other charter schools already in our District?

We are writing this letter to make it clear that we are aware of your hidden intentions. We will not let Big Charter take advantage of our community's struggles so as to undermine all students' access to a free and appropriate public education. We know that a proliferation of charter schools will ultimately gut the public schools of our lowest-income communities, allowing

