

This is an AI transcript of WCCUSD Superintendent Cheryl Cotton's Mon., Dec. 1 [video statement](#) about the district's negotiations with its teachers union and how schools will operate if there is a strike. It has been minimally edited for grammar, style and clarity.

Greetings West Contra Costa school community. I hope everyone was able to spend some precious time together over the Thanksgiving break with family and friends and enjoy the special traditions in your home. Now that we're back, I have some important news that developed during Thanksgiving week that I want to share regarding our ongoing discussions with our two largest labor unions, UTR and Teamsters. I also want to share important information with you our parents, about the very real possibility of a strike by UTR members in our district, and the steps we have taken to ensure schools remain open on school days, that students meals will be provided and that students remain safe and engaged in learning activities during any strike, even if the learning activities look different from a normal school day. At the end of this video message, there is important information about school operations in the event of a strike.

All of this information will be posted to our website. First, some good news. Many of you have heard that through the efforts of the fact finding panel members and the Teamsters leadership, a tentative agreement was reached with the Teamsters last Tuesday. We understand teamsters members are voting on that over the next day or two, I believe the Teamsters local 856, has more information about the TA. I want to express my personal thanks to the Teamsters leadership for working tirelessly with us to find common ground that improves Teamsters, members compensation while supporting students, even as we face a very difficult fiscal situation. Second, we also continued our discussions with the teachers union UTR after the hearing. These included discussions with the fact finding chair and the panel members.

Unfortunately, as of late Friday night, we were unable to reach an agreement, and the fact finding panel issued its report containing its recommendations. The recommendations of the chair of the fact finding panel have been widely reported and commented upon by UTR leadership. We respect the chair's recommendations in many areas. However, we cannot comment on them until the report is officially made public. That will occur after we have completed the last statutory step in the impasse process. That step requires that both parties discuss whether the recommendations in the report could serve as a framework for settlement.

Yesterday, we contacted UTR about a meeting, and hope to arrange this discussion as soon as possible. As superintendent, I heard the real frustrations of our educators regarding pay increases, health benefits, special education, fully staffed schools, and several other key issues during the fact finding hearing. We hear them. I also heard from statewide financial experts about the district's severe budget situation and the need for significant budget reductions, even without compensation increases. Compensation increases only increase the size of the financial reductions our board must make this year, I will continue to push our team to pursue a negotiated agreement with the teachers union that provides a fair compensation increase and avoids a strike, I ask that their union leadership return to the negotiations now so we can avoid a strike, improve compensation and better serve our children and support our staff in the long

run. While we are doing everything we can to avoid a strike, we have also been preparing our schools to remain open if one occurs. We know our children and families count on our schools to be open. Count on the breakfast and lunch our schools serve every day, and count on a safe learning environment. Schools will be open and meals will be served. More details on what to expect will be posted on our district web page beginning today at www.wccusd.net. We will also send a message to all of our parents via parent square each day to keep them informed.

Right now, however, I want to emphasize a few key points that will also be on our website. All schools will be open. Please look for regular messages from the district and from the principal at each school where you have a child attending. Breakfast and lunch, meals will be provided to students attending school. If your student is absent a family member or caregiver can still pick up a meal for your child, but they must have your child's first and last name and the name of their teacher or your child's student ID number to do so. If you choose to keep your child home during a strike, you have the choice to sign up for independent study. This information will be sent to all parents. Only you can decide to sign your child up for independent study. If you make that choice, you must sign the independent study agreement, and may do so electronically through the links that will be sent to you. More information about independent study is on our website.

Some key special education services may be limited or suspended if there are not enough qualified educators working to provide specialized services during a strike, District staff will be contacting parents of medically fragile students over the next two days to discuss services during a strike, special education transportation will continue during any strike. We are working to confirm that aids will remain available during the transportation of special education students if a strike occurs. We have been in communication with AC Transit about the possibility of a strike, and as of today, they have not informed us of any changes to their normal bus routes or schedules. However, AC Transit has indicated that if a driver determines it is unsafe to drop students off or pick them up at a regular bus stop due to striking workers, the driver has discretion to proceed to a safe location beyond the striking workers or to the next stop. Crossing guards are a service provided by various cities encompassed by the district, not by the district.

Again, please check our district website for all this information and more. The web page will be updated regularly as details may change. Please also look for those regular messages from your child's principal. They will come to you through parent square. Finally, let me say that I am still clinging to hope that we can avoid a strike. As a parent, I know that our families are counting on us to resolve the issues and reach an agreement without interrupting our children's learning. As a former teacher, elementary school principal, Deputy State Superintendent and now your superintendent, I know that our employees are dedicated, compassionate, and that they want to be at work serving students. It's our goal to help make that happen. Thank you for your patience and for supporting our schools and your child as we navigate through this critical period.