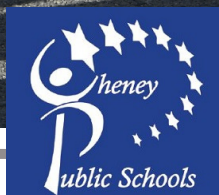


# COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



*For our children, our world, our future*



# LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Community Members,

The holiday season is upon us, with Thanksgiving right around the corner, and the beautiful Pacific Northwest fall has shifted into the coolness of winter. The energy in our district is positive as we continue to keep the health, safety, well-being, and futures of district students the top priority.

The upcoming February election is top of mind for the district, as the proposed bond and replacement levy measures will be on the ballot. Our school board has been working diligently over the past several months to determine rates for the Educational Programs & Operations Levy, Bond, and Capital Levy. When this newsletter was sent to publication, the rates had yet to be determined; the final approval was scheduled for November 8. For a look at the final rates, please visit [cheneysd.org](http://cheneysd.org). Please exercise your right to vote in the upcoming election on February 13, 2024!

Last month, we held our first district-wide Professional Learning Day of the 2023-24 school year, and schools were closed to students while district teachers, paraeducators, and administrators spent the day listening, learning, and planning for the future. Proficiency scales, which provide a way for students to demonstrate their knowledge in each subject based on standard levels for each subject, were the day's focus. Educators worked to create these scales based on priority standards; priority standards are key concepts and skills that educators focus on for students to develop strong foundations in those subjects. District paraeducators connected to learn more about de-escalation strategies and how to develop stronger relationships with other staff and students. It was a great day spent improving the educational experience for all the district's students. Thank you to our community for supporting a Professional Learning Day that allows our teachers, paraeducators, and administrators to work together, and to our staff for their tireless work toward continual improvement.

Last month, Cheney Middle School seventh graders participated in the Marshall Creek Restoration project, an ongoing effort to restore the Marshall Creek wetlands area. The project is being completed in partnership with Eastern Washington University, The Lands Council, and Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. It is a wonderful partnership of public education, federal and state organizations, and university entities coming together to help provide meaningful experiences for students in their community.

Wishing you all a safe and happy Thanksgiving break.

We are Cheney Public Schools!

Take care,



Ben Ferney, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Cheney Public Schools



Ben Ferney, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
[bferney@cheneysd.org](mailto:bferney@cheneysd.org)

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On the Cover:  
Betz  
Elementary  
students  
compete in the  
fall cross  
country finale.



Mark Scott  
School Board Member  
District 1



Liz Winer  
School Board Member  
District 2



Henry Browne  
School Board Vice-President  
District 3



Stacy Nicol  
School Board Member  
District 4



Mitch Swenson  
School Board President  
District 5

## MISSION STATEMENT:

Cheney Public Schools exists to guarantee a safe and caring environment where ALL students learn at high levels and graduate with options for post-secondary education, careers, and civic engagement.



## Community Transition Teacher Honored by The Arc of Spokane



Cheney Community Transition Program teacher Heidi von Marbod was named the Catalyst Award winner at the Stars of the Arc awards ceremony on Oct. 20.

Above: Heidi von Marbod posing with her Catalyst Award.

The Catalyst Award recognizes individuals and organizations

changing how society perceives and treats people with disabilities. Four individuals and/or businesses, including von Marbod, were honored with the award.

The Community Transition program and von Marbod partner with local businesses to provide volunteer opportunities for students, creating an environment where students can develop soft skills for future use in a work setting and independent living, among other things.

The Arc honored von Marbod and the Community Transition program for helping students embrace adulthood with skills and knowledge for success. The program offers unique classes and opportunities to build resources, social connections, and internship opportunities for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

## Betz Elementary's Shaun Kelly Named KHQ's Teacher of the Month

Betz Elementary music teacher Shaun Kelly was named KHQ's Teacher of the Month for the month of October. Mr. Kelly was nominated by fifth grader Grace Lynch.

"Mr. Kelly will make you feel welcome if you're new," Lynch said. "He's really nice."

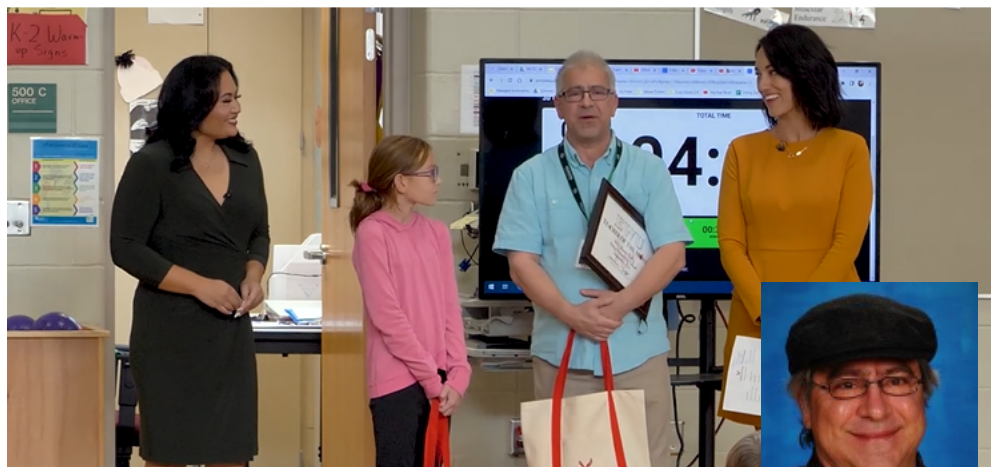
Mr. Kelly has been a fixture at Betz Elementary for the last 11 years, and he has been teaching music on and off since high school.

"I'm inspired to teach music because, music is human history," Kelly said. "It brings people together from around the world. It is

the foremost field of study for anyone to learn about other cultures foreign to our own, thus positive change can be made in the world."

"Mr. Kelly ignites students' love for music through his passion for music education," Betz Elementary Principal Mary Stoyko said. "He pours his heart and soul into the music program, ensuring that all students learn the art of musical expression and performance."

Community members and families can support Kelly and his students this season by attending each grade's public concert. The concerts will span the spring semester from February to June.



Above: KHQ anchors Kalae Chock and Jenny Power, along with nominating student Grace Lynch, present Mr. Shaun Kelly with his KHQ Teacher of the Month award.



## Windsor Teacher Named Best of the West Educator of the Year



Above: Courtnie Mirabelli

Windsor Elementary's English Language Development and Multilingual Specialist Courtnie Mirabelli has been named the 2023 West Plains Chamber of Commerce Best of the West Educator of the Year.

The award celebrates a professional educator who opens student minds and expands the realm of the possibility of the next generation of local and world leaders.

"We are so fortunate to have a growing population of multilingual learners in our community," Mirabelli said. "How wonderful that all of our students and staff can learn from each other and celebrate our unique differences that allow us to shine."

Mirabelli, who has been working with multilingual learners at Windsor for the past five years, was nominated by Windsor Principal Laura Roelle.

"Courtnie is a selfless educator who

continually demonstrates an unwavering belief in the potential of all students," Roelle said. "She goes above and beyond to create a nurturing and inclusive school environment where every student feels valued and empowered to succeed."

Mirabelli was honored and received her award at the Best of the West Awards Gala on Nov. 1 at Northern Quest Resort and Casino.

# Bond & Levy Breakdown

## What are they, what do they support, how are they funded?

Bonds and levies are an integral part of funding for any school district. But what are they, exactly? Simply put, bonds are for building, and levies are for learning. Both start as investments that fund the school structures and programs communities rely on for students' educational success. Washington State is required to supply school districts with state funding for "basic education" based on the prototypical model representing the state Legislature's assumptions of what resources are required to provide basic education. This state funding does not cover the actual costs of operating, constructing, and maintaining a school district, so districts often utilize bonds and levies to bridge the funding gap. These local measures and funding allow Cheney Public Schools to provide facilities and services to ensure every student is learning and thriving. Check out the graphic (right) for some examples of how bonds and levies are funding the gap.

Bond funding provides the district with a sum of money up front to pay for major capital projects, such as new construction or modernization of older buildings, and is financed over longer periods, usually 20 years. Levies allow districts to provide more services than Washington State's basic education funding allows. For Cheney Public Schools, past levies have funded technology support, transportation, student intervention programs, special education services, extracurricular activities and athletics, arts, music, and drama, as well as counselors, psychologists, nurses, and other staffing above the state funding formula.

Another key difference between bonds and levies is how they are approved. Both are presented as ballot measures in local special elections, and community members within the district boundary can vote either for or against each measure. Levies require a simple majority (50% + 1) to pass, while bonds require a supermajority (60%) to pass.

So, how is it determined if a district runs a

levy, a bond, or both? Depending on the type of levy (enrichment, capital, or transportation), voters can approve levies for one to six years; Cheney Public Schools is on a three-year levy cycle. After the allotted number of years, the levy expires; the district

the school board in June 2023, and it was unanimously approved.

From the recommendations of the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee and school board approval, Cheney Public

Differences in District Staff Funded by Prototypical Model vs. Actual District Staff Numbers			
	Funded	Actual	Difference
Teachers	223.24	322.38	- 99.04
Para Educators	9.16	57.58	- 48.42
Custodians	22.11	30.56	- 8.45
Building Admin	15.61	20.80	- 5.19
Psychologists	0.58	4.32	- 3.74
Nurses	5.55	6.80	- 1.25
Counselors	15.70	16.00	- 0.30

Above: Table showing state-funded staff numbers, actual district staff numbers, and the difference. EP&O levy dollars help to fund this difference.

may then ask voters for a continuation, or replacement levy, to keep the same available programs and staff available within the district. Both of the levy measures on the ballot this February are replacement levies for existing programs, materials, and staffing levels. For bonds, districts assess their current capacity, projected growth, and future needs. To assess Cheney Public Schools' needs, the district utilized parents and key stakeholders from each of the three distinct communities—Airway Heights, Cheney, and West Plains—to form the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee. This committee collaborated for more than six months to determine the facilities needs of the district.

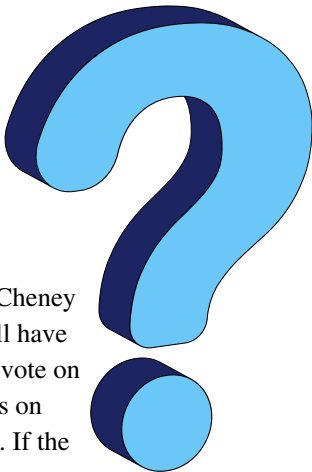
Through the research and analysis of this community-based effort, the committee determined the district facility needs are as follows: one elementary school in Airway Heights, land for a second elementary school, and campus upgrades.

The committee's framework was presented to

Schools is proposing an estimated \$72 million bond to fund the recommended additional facilities and building upgrades.

Cheney Public Schools enrollment continues to grow, already at 105 percent of pre-pandemic levels, and in the next decade, the district has predicted growth of nearly 760 students, concentrated in both the Airway Heights and West Plains communities. To better visualize the predicted growth in the district, take a look at the enrollment projection graph and building capacity table on Page 5.

So, how will the proposed bond and levies be funded? First, community members within the boundaries of Cheney Public Schools will have the opportunity to vote on the ballot measures on February 13, 2024. If the



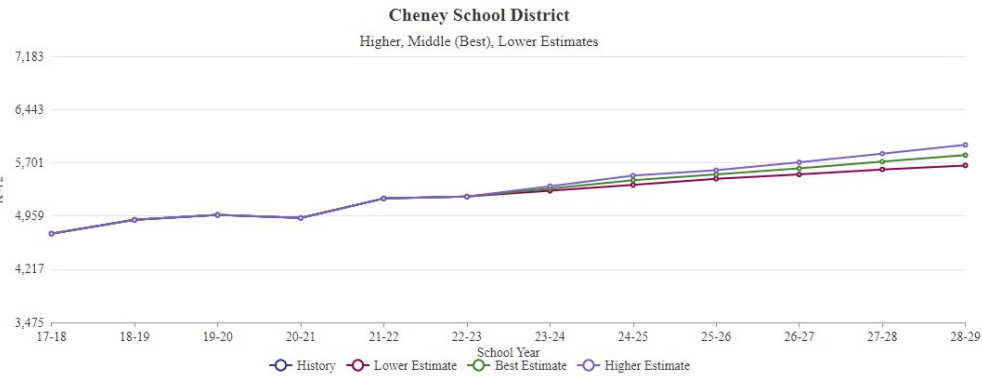


measures pass (levies by simple majority and the bond by supermajority), amounts would be paid by local tax payers, including homeowners, business owners—such as Amazon—and multi-family housing units. The proposed tax rates per \$1,000 of assessed property value are estimated to be: \$1.97 Replacement EP&O levy, \$0.09 Replacement Capital Levy, and \$0.52 for an additional School Bond for a total of \$3.94 (including current district bonds) per \$1,000 of assessed property value in 2025, 2026, and 2027. At the time of publication of this story (October 30), the Cheney School Board had not yet approved the final proposed tax rates. Please visit [cheneysd.org](http://cheneysd.org) for the final approved numbers.



Community members have the final say on the proposed bond and levies for Cheney Public Schools when the measures are up for a vote in the special election on February 13, 2024. Community members can vote in person (early or on Election Day until 8 p.m.) or by mail. If you still need to register to vote in Spokane County, you can do so online at [VoteWa.gov](http://VoteWa.gov) or in person at the Spokane County Elections Office at 1033 W. Gardner Ave., Spokane, Wash., 99260.

For more information about Cheney Public School's proposed bond and levies, please visit [CheneySD.org](http://CheneySD.org).



Above: Graph depicts low, middle (best) and high estimates for predicted growth through 2028-29.

School	Permanent Educational Capacity	K-12 Enrollment Numbers (as of Oct. 1, 2023)	Educational Utilization	Bond Threshold
Betz	445	491	110%	
Salnave	376	325	86%	
Snowdon	376	509	135%	
Sunset	486	604	124%	
Windsor	509	540	106%	
<b>Elementary Total</b>	<b>2,192</b>	<b>2,469</b>	<b>113%</b>	<b>95%</b>
Cheney Middle	714	603.5	85%	
Westwood Middle	705	615.3	87%	
<b>Middle Total</b>	<b>1,419</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Cheney High	1,631	1,297	80%	
Three Springs HS	110	90	82%	
<b>High School Total</b>	<b>1,741</b>	<b>1,386</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Permanent Educational Capacity:** The number of students each facility is equipped to house  
**Current Enrollment:** The number of students currently enrolled in each facility  
**Educational Utilization:** Number of students enrolled vs. permanent capacity  
**Bond Threshold:** The capacity at which the district is able to introduce a bond. Student capacity must be **at least** 600 students **above** the bond threshold for the district to introduce a bond.  
**Note:** Both Permanent Educational Capacity and Bond Threshold were developed by the Long-Range Facility Planning Committee. It is the committee's recommendation that when Educational Utilization exceeds the Bond Threshold, it is appropriate to introduce a bond measure to fund new facilities.

Above: Table illustrates the differences between educational capacity and current enrollment at district schools.

# Cheney High School Marching Band & Color Guard Earn First-Place Finish at the Puget Sound Festival of Bands

The Cheney High School marching band and color guard finished first overall for Division AAA at the 35th Annual Puget Sound Festival of Bands, Oct. 28th in Everett, Wash. The Blackhawks also took first place in Sweepstakes and was the People's Choice winner.

“Amazing performances and incredible kids doing incredible things...!” said Director of Bands Josh Wisswell.

CHS was awarded the best visuals, color guard, percussion, music and general effects in their first-place finish. The event concluded a successful season for the marching band and color guard.

The week prior, CHS competed at the 22nd Annual Harvest Marching Band Festival at Zaepfel Stadium on the campus of Eisenhower High School in Yakima, Wash. Performing their fall show MIDAS, the Blackhawks placed second with an overall score of 88.93.

Cheney was one of 23 total bands in attendance and took home the Best Visuals in Finals award with a score of 351.00, six points higher than the next closest competitor.

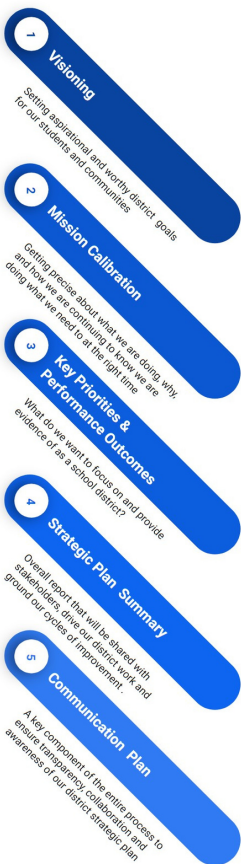
Congratulations Blackhawks on a spectacular season!



Above: The marching band and color guard pose with their first-place trophy and additional awards.

## District Strategic Plan Update

## District Middle Schools Participate in Red Ribbon Week



The Cheney Public School District strategic plan continues to move forward, following great input and insight from the key stakeholders, including district staff, students, parents, guardians, and community members. Thank you to everyone who participated in the recent ThoughtExchange survey, addressing the most important things the district needs to focus on to support the success of all students. There were nearly 40 thousand interactions, two thousand participants, and one thousand thoughts;

Above: District Strategic Plan Project Overview  
this will help the district identify key priorities moving forward to honor all three distinct communities--Airway Heights, West Plains and Cheney--as one united school district. The next step in the project includes uncovering challenges, identifying necessary resources to implement these priorities and develop action plans to achieve these priorities.

District middle schools Cheney Middle School and Westwood Middle School participated in the nationally recognized Red Ribbon Week Oct. 23-31. Red Ribbon Week officially began 35 years ago, and today, Red Ribbon Week serves as a catalyst to mobilize communities to educate youth and encourage participation in drug prevention activities.

"We watched a video on the history of Red Ribbon Week, and I asked the leadership students if they felt this was something they wanted to do at CMS for our students," seventh grade social studies and leadership teacher Beth Collins said. "[They] were pretty empathic right away, saying that they believed being drug-free was an important message to highlight at CMS."

"It's a good way to get the message out to students that drugs are not good for you," said Camden Gerard, an eighth grader in Collins' leadership class. "Some people do not have a solid foundation that influences that, so it helps other students out."

Collins' first-period leadership class led the effort in brainstorming spirit days, designing posters to hang up around the school, and providing opportunities to pledge to be drug-free.

"It's something that is important to me," seventh grader Ella Lynch said. "I have a lot of hobbies and a lot of things I'm interested in. I want to be able to pursue those and spend time with my family without having anything stopped because drugs interfered with that."



Above: CMS leadership students wear red ribbons in a commitment to be drug free. Right: Illustration from CMS students committed to being drug free.



In addition to planning the week's activities, Collins' leadership students were tasked with spreading the word about what it means to be drug-free and encouraging their peers to take the Red Ribbon pledge.

"[Red Ribbon Week] means not doing drugs because they will hurt your body," seventh-grader William Lathrop said. "At our age, it's definitely not healthy as our brains are developing."

Seventh-grader Brody Hanner added a similar sentiment. "Getting kids to pledge not to do drugs [is my favorite part of Red Ribbon Week]. I don't want to see kids take drugs and just absolutely give up. I would hate to see that."

## District Transportation: We Need Your Help!

Cheney Public School community members, we need your help! The district is currently in a major school bus driver shortage, facing a deficit of six (6) drivers for our district bus routes, and we are struggling to cover district transportation needs. This includes our morning and afternoon transportation routes, extra-curricular activities and any

additional transportation needs. If the district continues to operate with a deficit of drivers, significant measures such as creating larger walk zones may be necessary. If you or someone you know is interested in driving buses or vans for the district (CDL and non-CDL drivers), please visit [cheneysd.org/apps/pages/employment](http://cheneysd.org/apps/pages/employment) or reach out to the district transportation driver trainer Athena at (509) 559-4579.



- BUS DRIVER POSITIONS
- PARAEDUCATORS
- CUSTODIANS
- JOURNEYMAN PLUMBER
- AND MANY MORE!



# Marshall Creek Restoration

## *Cheney Middle School 7th Grade Restoration Project*

Cheney Middle School seventh graders are actively participating in the restoration and growth of forests, wetlands, and habitats around the region. On Friday, Oct. 20, the entire seventh-grade class of CMS participated in the two-part Marshall Creek Restoration Project in partnership with multiple state and federal organizations.

In recent years, the area of Marshall Creek has suffered as native-species trees that once thrived in this wetland, boosted water quality, and provided homes to local insects and animals, have succumbed to several development-related challenges. This project, which is being completed in partnership with Eastern Washington University, The Lands Council, and Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, aims to reinvigorate the area with new tree growth in two phases.

The first phase—planting trees—was completed on Oct. 20. In the second phase, which is set to be completed in the spring of 2024, seventh graders will return to the Riparian Zone Restoration to collect samples of macroinvertebrates, test water samples, and analyze the impacts of the newly planted foliage.



*Kat Hall (pictured right), The Lands Council Program Director, along with Brian Walker (pictured left), Private Lands Biologist with Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, address Cheney Middle School seventh graders ahead of planting trees.*

The Lands Council and Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge prepare the site, supply trees and tools, and coordinate with landowners, among other things. Students from Eastern Washington University participate in the effort as group leaders, providing guidance and instruction for CMS seventh graders regarding where and how to plant trees.

EWU students will continue to interact with students in between trips to the Marshall Creek Restoration site as they are scheduled to come visit CMS classes and teach a lesson this winter.

At the completion of the project, CMS students will be able to analyze how a change in structure or resource availability may affect population within an ecosystem.



*Above: Cheney Middle School seventh-graders planting trees as part of the Riparian Zone Restoration near Marshall Creek.*





509-559-4599

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## ..... *Important Dates*

### **Nov. 10**

Veterans Day Holiday - No School

### **Nov. 20**

Parent/Teacher Conferences

### **Nov. 21**

Parent/Teacher Conferences

### **Nov. 22**

Thanksgiving Holiday - No School

### **Nov. 23**

Thanksgiving Holiday - No School

### **Nov. 24**

Thanksgiving Holiday - No School

### **Nov. 29**

School Board Meeting, 6 p.m.  
Betz Elementary

## Remember To



**Election Day: Feb. 13, 2024**



Cheney Public Schools



@cheneyschools



@CheneySchools

Are you a member of a military family?  
Please visit [bit.ly/cheneymilitary](https://bit.ly/cheneymilitary) for  
more information.

Cheney Public Schools does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, economic status, pregnancy, familial status, marital status, disability, or the use of a trained guide dog or service animal, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination.

Title IX/Chapter 28A.640 Officer/  
Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator/ADA  
Coordinator/Gender Inclusive Schools Coordinator  
Tom Arlt, Assistant Superintendent  
Cheney Public Schools  
12414 S. Andrus Rd. Cheney, WA 99004  
Phone: (509) 559-4550  
Email: tarlt@cheneyisd.org

Section 504 Coordinator  
Franklin Day, Director, Student Support Services  
Cheney Public Schools  
12414 S. Andrus Rd. Cheney, WA 99004  
Phone: (509) 559-4507  
Email: fday@cheneyisd.org

Requests for Disclosure of Public Records  
Helen Page, Public Records Officer  
Cheney Public Schools  
12414 S. Andrus Rd., Cheney, WA 99004  
Phone: (509) 559-4502  
Email: hpage@cheneyisd.org