

# COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



*For our children, our world, our future*



Ben Ferney, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
bferney@cheneysd.org

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**On the Cover:**  
Cheney High School's new Black Student Union STEP team performs at an assembly at CHS.

# LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Community Members,

I recently had the privilege to attend the annual Spokane Scholars award banquet with six of our amazing senior students, their parents, teachers, high school administration, and the school board president. The purpose of the event is to honor academic excellence and promote lifelong learning in students within twenty-nine high schools in the region. The experiences and opportunities these driven students across Spokane County have embraced are awe inspiring. Even more so now than ever, the students of today are simply incredible! I am reminded that our current students are taking on and overcoming challenges that I never dreamed of in my K-12 experience. I left the award banquet humbled and proud that our own scholars came from Cheney Public Schools.

On a separate note, the school board has a director vacancy in District 2. School Board Director Zachary Zorrozua recently shared “It is with a heavy heart that I submit my formal resignation from the Board of Directors.” While he enjoyed working with and serving on the Board, Director Zorrozua felt that “maintaining my role could potentially present a conflict of interest, in the event my spouse is chosen to transition into an administrative role in the district.” His resignation was effective March 9 and the Board acknowledged his resignation at the following board meeting on March 22. We will miss Director Zorrozua’s energy, passion, and leadership that he brought to the Board, and look forward to other ways he can continue to serve our district and community. RCW 28A.343.370 states that school board director vacancies shall be filled within 90 days by appointment. Please see the information on page three in regards to filling this vacancy.

Lastly, over the past 25 years, I have learned that schools ‘wind up’ versus ‘wind down’ in the spring, specifically once spring break is done, through the end of the school year. Embracing the ‘wind up’ has allowed me to enjoy the spring season and appreciate the incredible work our students and staff are doing in the final quarter of the school year. My hope is that spring finds each of you embracing these things as well. June will be here before we know it!

We are Cheney Public Schools!

Take care,

Ben Ferney, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Cheney Public Schools



Mark Scott  
School Board Member  
District 1



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.



## New Assistant Principal at Cheney Middle School



Following a rigorous interview process, Cheney Public Schools is pleased to announce that Mrs. Heather Zorrozua has been selected as the next assistant principal of Cheney Middle School, a decision approved by the school board on March 22.

After nine years working in Cheney Public Schools as a school counselor, Cheney Middle School is proud to have Mrs. Zorrozua continue her contribution to our district in this new leadership role. Prior to her work as a school counselor at Cheney Middle School, she served as a family therapist at an adolescent psychiatric care facility. Mrs. Zorrozua completed her bachelor's degree in psychology at Gonzaga University in 2008, and went on to complete a Masters in Social Work at Eastern Washington University in 2011. In April of 2023, she will complete her principal's certification from Eastern Washington University.

Cheney Middle School Principal Becky Parrill shared "through the interview process, Mrs. Zorrozua made it clear that she is a CMS Hawk through and through and we know she will honor the strong leadership team legacy of CMS."

Mrs. Heather Zorrozua will officially join the CMS leadership team starting the 2023-24 school year. Please join us in congratulating Mrs. Heather Zorrozua on her new role at Cheney Middle School and in Cheney Public Schools!



## Supporting Military Families Cheney High School Hosts MIC3 Training for Administrators

On March 15, Cheney High School hosted principals and district administrators from Cheney Public Schools and neighboring districts to learn from the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3). The training provided information and guidance on supporting students as they transition into and out of a school district when their military parent has a Permanent Change of Station (PCS).

Students who have a military parent often

find themselves transferring schools between six and nine times during their 13 years of schooling. The Military Interstate Children's Compact is a legal agreement between all 50 states that allow for uniform treatment for military children as they transfer between schools.

Our district was happy to host and participate in this training so we can better serve the children of our military families who do so much to serve our country!



Above: Administrators listen to presenters during the training session at Cheney High School. Right: Training materials.



## Accepting Applications for Open Director Position

The School Director position for District 2 for Cheney Public Schools has been vacated and is open for applicants. Eligible citizens residing within the boundaries of District 2 and are a registered voter that would like to express interest should reach out to Helen Page, Assistant to the Superintendent and School Board of Directors via email at [hpage@cheneysd.org](mailto:hpage@cheneysd.org). Interviews for applicants and nominees will take place in a public meeting (date to be determined) in which the Board will appoint the most qualified applicant who will serve until the

next regularly scheduled Board election in November 2023. For more information on the procedure to fill the vacancy or the director district boundary information, please visit: [www.cheneyisd.org](http://www.cheneyisd.org) under News & Announcements.



# Long-Range Facilities Planning

## *Addressing the Growing Needs of the District*

Recently, Cheney Public Schools completed a district-wide Thought Exchange survey about priorities the district should consider as we plan for the 2023-2024 budget year; staff, parents, and community members all mentioned the need for additional facilities and to update the existing facilities. This need is also seen in the growth projections for the communities in Cheney Public Schools. The input from the community and the data regarding growth reinforces the reality facing the district: our communities are growing and the need to respond in turn to serve all students in Airway Heights, Cheney, and the West Plains is evident. Cheney Public Schools is addressing the ongoing and potential growth in the district through the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee.

The Committee is made up of a diverse group of parents, community members, and civic leaders. The committee represents the three distinct communities of Cheney Public Schools: Airway Heights, Cheney, and West Plains. Their work is bridging the gaps between the three communities to identify the facilities needs of the entire school district and to help plan a growth strategy that will equip all students in Cheney Public Schools



*Above: Committee members meet in a small group to discuss potential building timelines.*

to succeed. The Facilities Planning Committee began meeting in December 2022 and will provide long-range recommendations to the school board in May or June 2023. The committee is chaired by John Boerger, a Cheney community member, and Sonny Weathers, an Airway Heights community member. The Committee is supported in their work by a consultant group, Teater-Crocker. The consultants and experts from Teater-Crocker are assisting the committee by conducting an extensive analysis of our school and operational buildings to identify potential needs for the district over the next five to ten years. The consultants' analysis is based on the physical condition of the current buildings, the functional adequacy of the buildings, and likely enrollment growth scenarios. This analysis has informed the planning committee's work.

For their work, the committee was awarded a Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) Regional Volunteer Award that will be given to the committee in late April.

Through this process, the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee is looking at the need for additional schools and support for buildings in the district. The committee is also considering time frames for new building(s) to keep pace with student growth.

As part of the ongoing work, the Committee will be hosting three community feedback nights in May



as well as an online Thought Exchange Survey. These public feedback nights are a crucial step in the process prior to the presentation of a proposed Long-Range Facilities Plan to the School Board of Directors.

*Above: Committee members meet in a small group to discuss potential building timelines.*

*Below: Phil Crocker of Teater-Crocker presents data to Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee.*



**Unable to attend an in-person Community Meeting?  
We still want your feedback!**

Please consider participating in the Thought Exchange survey which can be accessed by visiting [www.cheneysd.org/survey](http://www.cheneysd.org/survey) or by scanning the QR Code.



## **Long-Range Facilities Planning - Community Meetings**

**Tuesday, May 2nd**  
**Cheney MS Commons**  
**6:00 - 7:30 pm**

**Thursday, May 4th**  
**Westwood MS Commons**  
**6:00 - 7:30 pm**

**Monday, May 8th**  
**Sunset Elementary Gym**  
**6:00 - 7:30 pm**

# Financial Picture of the District

## Grateful Stewards of our Community Support

Cheney Public Schools, like all schools in Washington State, are supported by a combination of revenue sources from state and local taxes. The state provides each school district's basic education funding through a formula that is grounded in local enrollment numbers. This funding is the bedrock of any district's educational services. In Cheney Public Schools, the basic funding provides for approximately 298 certificated staff, 20 administrative positions, and 84 classified staff. Cheney Public Schools, to meet the needs of our students, employs approximately 88 additional certificated staff, 8 additional administrative staff, and an additional 85 classified staff. The funding for these additional positions has historically come from two main sources of supplemental funding: Local Effort Assistance (LEA) funds and Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) Levy monies. The district is also supported by a Capital Levy that assists with the ongoing facilities maintenance and improvement needed in the district. Lastly, the district is supported by a bond that was passed in 2016 to fund major construction projects in the district.

**LEA funding** is a state program to provide districts that are "property-poor" with additional funding to enrich educational offerings beyond what the state's basic funding provides. For many years Cheney Public Schools was considered property poor. As our area has experienced increased development we have seen this funding largely eliminated.

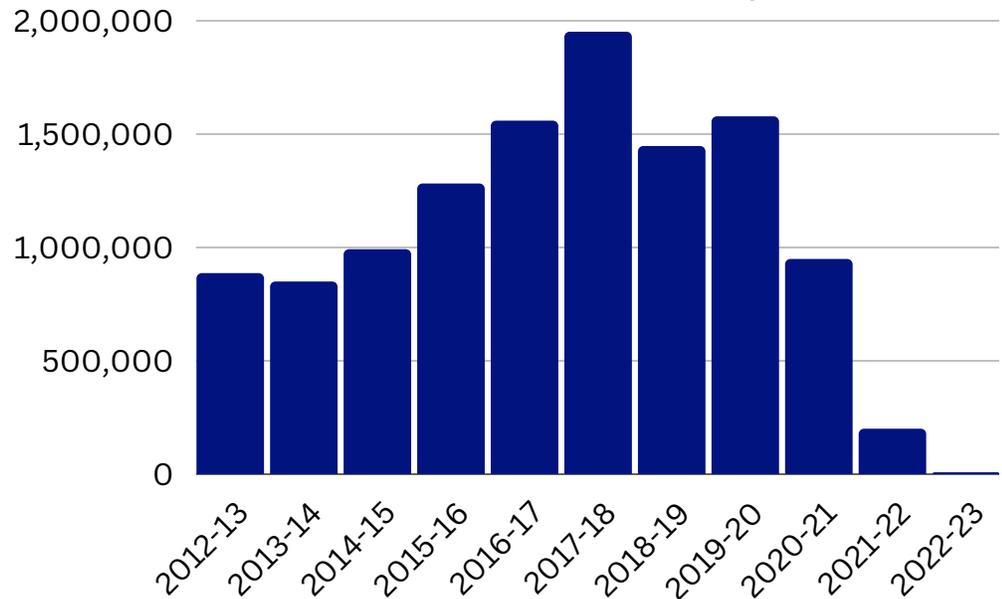
**EP&O Levy** money is an investment the local community has made into our school system. The taxes we as a community approved help our schools do more than we could on basic state funding alone; these monies enrich our children's education and help provide students with the best education and support possible.

**Capital Levy** money is an investment by the local community in improving our facilities throughout the school district for the benefit of students and the whole community. Recent levy monies have been used to resurface the Salnave Tennis Courts and refinish the Hatch Gym at CHS; as well as fund HVAC system upgrades in the district.

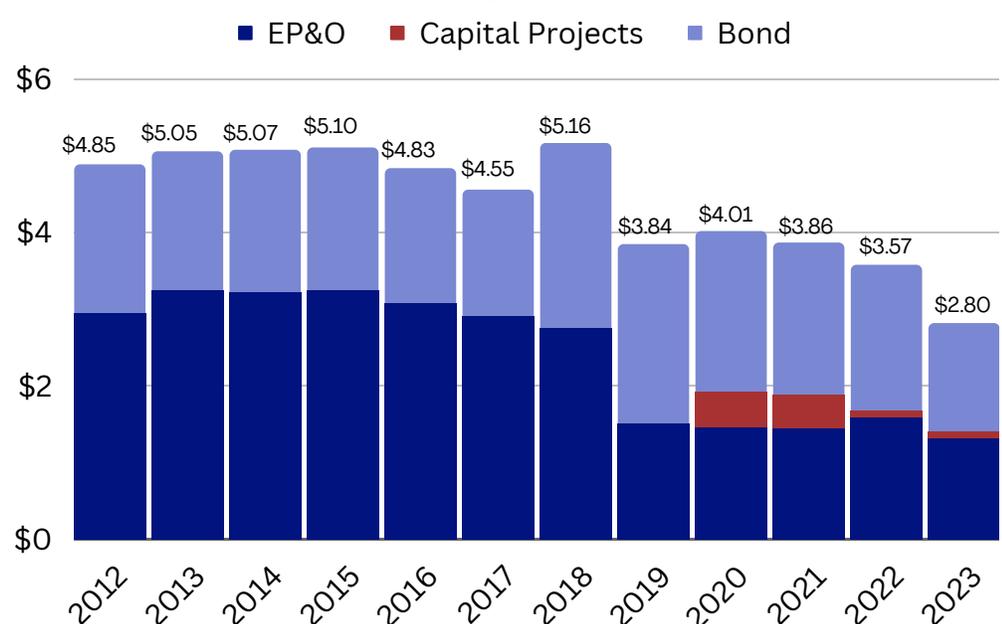
### Levy Structure

When a levy is passed it is established with a set amount of money to be collected, and an estimated cost per \$1,000 of assessed property value. In a growing district such as Cheney Public Schools, as more properties are built, the load is spread to more taxpayers lowering the cost per \$1,000 of assessed tax value. In the attached graph you can see how Cheney's effective tax rate has fallen from a high of \$5.16 per \$1,000 to \$2.80 per \$1,000. In 2023 an estimated \$263 million in new residential construction will be completed within district boundaries.

**Local Effort Assistance (LEA) Funding**



**Tax Rates per \$1,000**



We are grateful for the Airway Heights, Cheney, and West Plains communities' strong history of support for our school district.

## Cheney High School FBLA Hosts Winter Regional FBLA Conference

The Cheney FBLA Club (Future Business Leaders of America) had a great 2023 Northeast Regional Winter Conference. The Cheney Club had 32 of its 38 attending members place in the top six and qualify for the FBLA State Leadership Conference. As a team, members placed top six 96 times in the competition. Students who place top six are eligible to compete at the State Business Leadership Conference on April 20-23 in Spokane. Of the 96 different times they placed, Cheney FBLA had 24 first place finishes and 17 second place finishes.

This regional event was held at Cheney High School and was attended by 18 different local high schools with 350 students in attendance.



Cheney High School FBLA Team poses for a team photo after the Winter Regional Conference.

## Six Cheney Seniors Honored at Spokane Scholars Banquet

Six Cheney High School seniors were nominated for Spokane Scholar Awards; they are among 160 students nominated from 30 schools throughout the Spokane region.

The Spokane Scholars Foundation was founded in 1993 by community members and business leaders to recognize academic excellence among students in the Spokane region. Students are nominated in one of six academic areas.

All six nominees from Cheney High School were among the students honored at the annual Spokane Scholar Banquet on April 10th. The top four scholars in each category also received cash awards with matching one-year scholarships from local universities. One of our Cheney High School students, Terrence Yu, won the 3rd place prize in Mathematics. Congratulations to all of our Spokane Scholar nominees!

### Cheney High School Spokane Scholar Nominees

Valerie Hanes, English  
 Sophia Watkins, Fine Arts  
 Terrence Yu, Mathematics  
 Landon Moad, Science  
 Jason Hatfield, Social Studies  
 Nia Guest, World Languages

## Cheney Athletes Recognized on GSL All-League Team

Congrats to all our student athletes recognized as Spring GSL All-League Athletes



### 1st Team All-GSL

Jalisca Holmgren – Girls Wrestling  
 Alma Smith – Boys Swim & Dive  
 Dalton Taylor – Boys Wrestling

### 2nd Team All-GSL

Henry Gipple – Boys Swim & Dive  
 Joe Showalter – Boys Wrestling  
 Evan Stinson – Boys Basketball

### All-GSL Honorable Mention

Peyton Anderson – Boys Swim & Dive  
 Aidan Schmidt – Boys Swim & Dive  
 Luke Wilcox – Boys Swim & Dive

### Coach of the Year

Jennifer Hochwalt – Boys Swim & Dive



## Together, we uplift lives.

Cheney Public Schools

Seeking substitutes in all areas...



- including teachers, custodians, bus drivers and aides, nutrition services, and paraeducators.
- Set your own schedule.
- Benefits eligible at 630 hours.
- Continue other work.
- Network and expand your skills.
- Earn \$16-\$22/hr. dependent on position.
- Questions? Call Leigh Lubbers at 509-559-4542.

Hiring Multiple Positions

- Positively impact the lives of students.
- Positions available across the district.
- Questions? Call Angela Moses at 509-559-4509

Visit [bit.ly/cheneyhire](http://bit.ly/cheneyhire) to see all open positions and apply!



# Classified Employee of the Year

## *Congratulations to Rita Whittaker!*

Whether it is stepping up as a substitute kitchen lead, serving as a mentor within nutrition services, or looking up culturally sensitive recipes for a Muslim family during Ramadan Rita Whittaker is known to go above and beyond in everything she does. Ms. Whittaker received nominations from both the Nutrition Services Interim Director and the Westwood administrative team. Her dedication on behalf of students was noted by everyone who works with her.

Ms. Rita Whittaker serves as the kitchen lead at Westwood Middle School, yet took on the role of interim kitchen lead at Sunset Elementary when the need arose. The Westwood administrative team, wrote the following in their nomination: “Rita strives to support the needs of all our students because she truly cares about them. Rita also creates a caring work environment in the kitchen for her nutrition services staff to lift them up personally and professionally.”



*Ms. Whittaker poses with school and district staff.*

The Classified Employee of the Year award celebrates a classified staff member who has exhibited outstanding work performance and has contributed significantly to student or program success and to the betterment of the school district. Ms. Whittaker exhibited all the qualities of a classified employee of the year, and from the glowing nominations she received, it was clear how much of a difference she makes to her kitchen staff and schools. In the nomination letter submitted by Nutrition Services Interim Director Kellisa Kulm, it was shared that Ms. Whittaker is known for her willingness to step in and help other schools as well as serve as an important part of the training team in nutrition services.

“Rita is dedicated to the development and education of new employees in the Nutrition Services Department. She does this by connecting with and training new and continuing employees on best practices as well as being a mentor” wrote Kulm in her nomination letter.

Congratulations to Ms. Rita Whittaker! The district is fortunate that she has chosen to share her dedication and drive with the children and staff of Cheney Public Schools.



*Above: Ms. Rita Whittaker listens to the announcement of her award in the Sunset Elementary Gym during the lunch service.*

**Thank you!**



***Interested in becoming a Nutrition Services Substitute?***

*For more information call (509) 559-4594*



509-559-4599

www.cheneysd.org  
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Cheney, WA 99004

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## Important Dates

- May 2**  
Facilities Planning Community Meeting, 6:00 pm  
Cheney Middle School Commons
- May 4**  
Facilities Planning Community Meeting, 6:00 pm  
Westwood Middle School Commons
- May 8**  
Facilities Planning Community Meeting, 6:00 pm  
Sunset Elementary Gym
- May 10**  
School Board Meeting, 6:00 pm  
Cheney High School Library
- May 24**  
School Board Meeting, 6:00 pm  
Cheney High School Library
- May 29**  
Memorial Day Holiday - No School

## Graduation

All are welcome to attend!

**Cheney High School**  
June 9 - 5:00 pm  
Reese Court at EWU

**Three Springs High School**  
June 10 - 2:00 pm  
Reese Court at EWU

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  
Tom Arlt, Assistant Superintendent  
Cheney Public Schools  
12414 S. Andrus Rd. Cheney, WA 99004  
Phone: (509) 559-4550  
Email: tarlt@cheneysd.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@cheneysd.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@cheneysd.org



Cheney Public Schools



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