



Community Connections

For our children, our community, our world, our future

Important dates:

April 4-8
Spring Vacation—
No School

April 13
School Board
Meeting—CHS
Regular Meeting
6:00 p.m.

April 27
School Board
Meeting—
District
Conference Ctr.
6:00 p.m.



April
Character Trait
TRUSTWORTHINESS:
Inspiring complete
reliability and
confidence in his/
her truthfulness,
integrity and
discretion

Friends of Cheney Public Schools,

Signs of spring are all around us during this month; nature has a way of making growth so visible. We can see it in the spring flowers that are starting to shoot out of the cold earth and in the heavy buds that are forming on the trees. Academic growth of our students is not always so visible, which is one of the reasons that we rely upon standardized assessments each spring to measure growth.

There are a few key assessments that our students will be taking (depending on their grade level) to demonstrate their academic growth in English language arts. The Smarter Balanced assessment is a required assessment for all Washington students. This assessment focuses on real world skills, including critical thinking, writing, and problem solving. It has a variety of questions ranging from traditional multiple-choice questions to ones that require students to explain their answers, solve complex problems, and compose a well-organized essay. Student results on this assessment are shared with parents and are broken down into categories of skills to show where a student is doing well or needs some extra help. Teachers use this information to provide more targeted supports or additional challenges, depending on the student's need. This assessment is administered to students in grades 3-8, and once in high school.

Another assessment that we use at the elementary level is the Developmental Reading Assessment. This assessment is administered by a student's teacher and is usually administered twice per year (fall and spring) to provide teachers with information to guide instruction. The assessment is based on what educators identified as being key characteristics and behaviors of good readers. Again, this assessment provides an opportunity for us to measure and celebrate academic growth in a student's reading skills. The results of the assessment are shared with parents with suggestions for supporting a child's growth in reading fluency and comprehension.

One other assessment of English language arts and math learning that we use in grades 2-8 and with limited use in high school is the Measures of Academic Progress. It is an individualized student-centered assessment. It is administered on a computer and is unique in that it is an adaptive test. This means that it uses each student response to a question to determine the difficulty of the next question. Therefore, it allows students to truly demonstrate their learning and capability which may exceed their current grade level. The results of this assessment measure student growth from spring to spring, with a checkpoint in the winter. The results are valuable to teachers, students, and parents.

Student growth happens every day; however, we intentionally measure our students' growth in the spring of each year. Please continue reading the reverse of this newsletter to learn more about English language arts instruction in our schools, which includes reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language skills. We have a deep commitment to helping all students become proficient English language arts learners because it is essential to their future success in school and in life.

For our children, our community, our world, our future ~

Debra J. Clemens, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Our essential foundations

- ★ High Expectations and Continuous Progress
- ★ Involvement and Engagement with School District Community
- ★ Stewardship and Planning

Cheney Middle School activities line: (509) 559-4488
Westwood Middle School activities line: (509) 559-4161
Cheney High School activities line: (509) 559-4120
Follow us on Twitter and Facebook or go to
www.cheneyisd.org for current news and information
about Cheney Public Schools.



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
Sean Dotson, Associate Superintendent
Cheney School District, 12414 S. Andrus Rd.
Cheney, WA 99004 Phone: (509) 559-4550

Section 504 Coordinator
Kristi Thurston, Director, Student Support Services
Cheney School District, 12414 S. Andrus Rd.
Cheney, WA 99004 Phone: (509) 559-4507

Requests for Disclosure of Public Records
Sharon Throop, Public Records Officer
Cheney School District, 12414 S. Andrus Rd.,
Cheney, WA 99004 Phone: (509) 559-4502



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Cheney, Washington 99004

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Elementary students engage in word study

Elementary students throughout Cheney Public Schools have been engaging in targeted differentiated word study this year through the newly adopted *Words Their Way* program.

Words Their Way is a developmental spelling, phonics, and vocabulary development program that teaches students to examine words more closely to discover the regularities, patterns, and conventions of the English language in order to improve their overall reading, writing, and spelling skills.

In a *Words Their Way* word study cycle, teachers encourage students to compare features in words beyond just how they are spelled. This allows students to make generalizations about words that allow them to learn new words faster and transfer this knowledge to both reading and writing.

You can engage with your child in a “word hunt” by looking for words around home and in the community that have the same sound or letter patterns as the words he or she is currently studying. Give it a try!

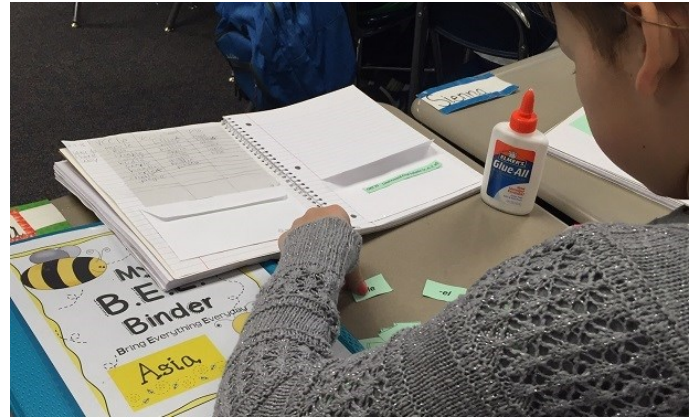
Innovative practices that meet student needs



Cheney teachers are always on the lookout for new ways to meet the differentiated needs of their diverse learners.

One need, early letter-sound learning, is being filled this year through a pilot of the *Lively Letters* program. *Lively Letters* is an intervention program for primary students that helps them learn

to connect letter sounds with written letters by turning those sometimes troublesome abstract letters into lively, colorful characters. Through embedded letter character pictures, imagery, hand, body and verbal cues, and comical stories and songs, students learn the critical skills of phonemic awareness, speech production, and phonics.



Literacy Maps guide common experiences for learners

Cheney Public Schools students have benefitted from the collaborative work of our English language arts teachers as a result of the development and use of teacher-created Literacy Maps to guide and focus literacy learning at every grade level.

Each grade level uses a Literacy Map for each grading period that provides an overarching theme and essential questions that highlight the usefulness, the relevance, and the broader benefit of the work in which students engage. Essential questions are often the “so what?” questions about material covered and often have more than one answer, allowing for differentiation and intellectual exploration.

In the fall, 10th graders grappled with the essential question, “How can analyzing cultural conflict in life and literature not only help us discover our own cultural identities, but also help us better understand cultural conflict?” while 2nd graders across the district explored the question, “How do community members work together?”

These shared questions help foster passion and curiosity in the language arts learner while allowing teachers opportunities to build differentiated instruction around authentic, relevant, and significant topics. The ultimate goal is to foster deep curious thinkers and lifelong learners with the skills needed to communicate and thrive in today's world.