

COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



For our children, our world, our future

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Community Members,

How is it already mid-October?!

Our first two months of school have flown by, filled with lots of learning and activities. As the end of the first quarter approaches, several fun fall events are taking place across the district. Our elementary students are competing in their final cross-country meets, Cheney High School welcomes the inaugural class into the Hall of Fame, and district seniors will be honored in their final home competitions. Thank you to our community for your support of our students and our district!

Equally exciting things are happening in our classrooms. At Cheney Middle School, students are working together in weekly sessions about what it means to be safe, observant, accountable, and respectful (S.O.A.R.). Ideas generated during these sessions across all three grade levels are implemented into the school's guiding principles. Across the district, our K-2 classrooms are implementing a new reading program called Heggerty, a highly-rated phonemic awareness curriculum. Lots of learning and new opportunities are alive across the district!

The November 5 General Election is also inching closer, and community members will once again see a measure from Cheney School District on the ballot. In February, the District's bond measure received 54.5% approval from our community; the District is re-running the \$72 million bond in search of the 60% supermajority approval required to pass.

Following February's election, we delivered a district-wide survey both electronically and by mail, asking for feedback from our voting base about why and how they voted. We received some valuable insight, and although our community understood how we decided on projects to be funded by the bond, they needed more information about the impact of the bond. Thank you for your responses; for us, it is about getting it right, not being right.

In an effort to be more transparent, we have several videos detailing specifically what the bond will fund and why these changes are important, as well as digital renderings showing what some of these changes might look like. Scan the QR code above or visit cheneysd.org/community/bond-levy-information to view our videos and renderings. Please exercise your right to vote in the November 5 General Election. We are Cheney Public Schools!



Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Ferney'.

Ben Ferney, Ed.D.
Superintendent | Cheney Public Schools



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

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On the Cover:
A Sunset Elementary student heads into the building to start the day.



Mark Scott
School Board Vice President
District 1



Liz Winer
School Board Member
District 2



Henry Browne
School Board President
District 3



Bill Hanson
School Board Member
District 4



Mitch Swenson
School Board Member
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.



On the Ballot: Cheney Public Schools Re-Running Bond in November General Election

Last February, Cheney Public Schools had three measures on the ballot. With the support from our communities, both levies passed at over 55%. The bond measure had 54.5% approval but required 60% supermajority approval to pass, so, the District is re-running the \$72 million bond in the Nov. 5 General Election.

“The bond is a community-based effort that we want to re-run,” Superintendent Ben Ferney said.

The bond plan was developed by the Long-Range Facilities Planning Committee, composed of parents and key stakeholders with representation from each of the three communities within the district—Airway Heights, Cheney, and the broader West Plains region. The group studied the district’s facilities and enrollment projections, met with the community, and developed a plan to address growth and modernization in the district’s buildings.

Following February’s election, Cheney Public Schools distributed surveys to the community, requesting feedback on how and why people voted. The economy, a request for more transparency, and the need for additional details on bond projects were the top reasons community members voted against the bond.

“The process, the grassroots community-based efforts, the road shows, the meetings all went really well. But where we could tweak and focus more is on the impact, the why and what does that bring us?” Ferney said. “It was really good, because it’s about getting it right, not being right.”

The November bond includes the same proposed construction projects as February’s bond, and community members will notice the decreased estimated tax rate due to fluctuating property values. The proposed rate is 45 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value to be



Signage on the land purchased on Craig Road near First Avenue in Airway Heights for a future elementary school.

collected over 21 years, 8 cents less than the estimated 53 cents in February. If voters approve the measure, that amount will add the current tax rate of \$3.41 per \$1,000, settling on an estimated \$3.86 per \$1,000.

Airway Heights is the district’s fastest-growing community and currently ranks within the top 20 fastest-growing housing markets in the United States, according to several online sources. With the growing population and proximity to Spokane International Airport, available land within Airway Heights’ city limits continues to shrink, highlighting the need to purchase land now.

“Elementary schools require about 10 or 11 acres, middle schools are around 30 acres, and high schools are 50 to 60 acres,” Ferney said.

“As we continue to grow and we look to the future, buying that size of land for those areas, as the communities grow, developments grow, the available land that we can purchase becomes more challenging.”

A new elementary school in Airway Heights is the largest project as part of the proposed

bond, set to be constructed on land already purchased off of Craig Road and First Avenue. Land for a future secondary school, elementary school, and a centralized transportation site are also part of the measure. Sunset Elementary—the only school within the city limits of Airway Heights—is at 121% capacity, and due to overcrowding, many students are bussed to other schools within the district.

The bond will also fund projects for safety and security across the district. The most notable projects include significant traffic revisions for safer bus loops and parent pick-up areas at both Salnave and Windsor elementary schools; new fencing, pathway, stadium bleachers, and ADA upgrades at Cheney High School; and upgraded security access to Snowdon Elementary, Westwood and Cheney Middle



Rendering of updated bus loop for Salnave Elementary.

Schools.

District-wide student health and facility upgrades are the final piece of funding that completes the trifecta of the bond. If approved, this portion of funding would support kitchen expansions and improvements at both Salnave and Windsor elementary schools, as well as HVAC upgrades at Windsor, Salnave, Betz, and Sunset elementary schools, and Cheney High School.

“You lose cooling equipment in the fall or spring when it’s hot, or you lose a boiler at Christmas; it’s scary,” said Maintenance and Operations Director Rich Brown. “Your main components of your heating and air conditioning systems are basically the heart and lungs of the entire program. For this upcoming bond proposal, we’re targeting the larger workhorse equipment. It’s all equipment that’s end-of-life.”

In some cases, the equipment is so old that the necessary replacement parts are not even made anymore, so the M&O staff has fabricated the parts themselves.

“When they have to make the part, it’s like 3, 4, 5 times the price,” Ferney said. “So, they’re keeping the [machines] alive, but we really do

need to be able to upgrade those.”

The state does not provide funding for construction, major maintenance, or buying property, so school districts must ask their community to approve a bond to fund capital projects. After the February election, our district saw an opportunity for increased voter participation, with 30.49% of registered voters returning their ballots, positioning us for growth.

Community members have the final say on the proposed bond for Cheney Public Schools when the measure is on the ballot on November 5, 2024; our district is hopeful the community will turn out to vote and have their

voices heard.

“We want people to turn out, so we think that’s going to help us,” Ferney said. “But you never really know until the day of the election.”

You can vote in person until 8 p.m. on Election Day, or by mail. If you still need to register to vote in Spokane or Whitman counties, you can do so online at VoteWa.gov or in person at your county’s election office.

For more information about Cheney Public Schools’ proposed bond, please visit cheneysd.org.



Superintendent Ferney addresses staff at Windsor Elementary as part of the November bond roadshow.

LaunchNW & Mpower Mentoring: Helping students navigate post-high school education opportunities

Navigating post-high school education opportunities can be overwhelming, and it can be difficult to know where to start. The Mpower Mentoring Program aims to change that. Mpower is a collaboration between local school districts, nonprofit partners, universities, and LaunchNW (an initiative of the Innovia Foundation) that connects students with mentors who can help. The Mpower Mentoring Program is in its second year at Cheney High School (CHS).

Mpower mentors can be a fellow high school peer, a college student, adult, or family mentor, and their goal is to offer support in areas like researching careers, applying for college, locating scholarships, and other financial aid opportunities. Mpower’s network of community partners—which includes programs like Communities in Schools, Bite2Go, Big Brothers Big Sisters,

and Greater Spokane Incorporated—can connect students to job shadows, local professionals, career coaching, and more.

CHS seniors who are active in Mpower and have a yearly family income at or below 150% of Washington State median family income levels are eligible for the LaunchNW Scholarship, a scholarship opportunity intended to fill the gap between a student’s existing financial aid and their actual cost of attendance at a local post-high school program (includes 2- and 4-year degrees, registered apprenticeships, and technical certifications). LaunchNW awarded \$20,000 in scholarships to CHS students for the 2024-25 academic year.

To learn more about the programs or to become a mentor, please reach out to Vanessa Flowers, the onsite coordinator at CHS, at vflowers@cheneysd.org.

Child Nutrition Eligibility and Education Benefit

All families in Cheney Public Schools received a Child Nutrition Eligibility and Education Benefit (CNEEB) packet prior to the start of the 2024-25 school year. This packet, along with the Parental Consent Survey SY 24-25, are required for qualifying families/students to be eligible for additional benefits such as:

- Sunbucks (previously known as Summer EBT)
- Reduced fees on other programs and activities

It is important to note that CNEEB is separate from the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP); the CEP allows schools with high numbers of low-income students to serve one free breakfast and one free lunch to all students at no cost.

A Pop of Color on the Playground



From L to R: Christian Beal, Travis Devine, Gabe Sady pose with the hand-painted hopscotch at Snowdon Elementary.

It began as a typical work order from Snowdon Elementary, a request to re-paint the hopscotch, four-square, and basketball courts on the playground. Bored of the usual yellow lines and equipped with some extra paint to use, groundsman Gabe Sady presented an alternate option to Director of Maintenance and Operations Rich Brown: adding a pop of color.

“I had a bunch of excess paint and decided to use it before it went bad,” Sady said. “Rich has built a team he can rely on, and Travis [Devine], he’s our foreman, he kind of lets us play to our strengths. We had the time, and with [the rest of the team] doing other work, it allowed me to do more complex things.”

The complexities of the paintings surpassed simply a pop of color as Sady took the opportunity to flex his creative muscles. Gone are the days of boring yellow outlines and empty spaces, making way for a new era of polka dots, flowers, and planets.

“The paintings have brought so much color and cheer to the playground,” said Shawna

Coerver, Snowdon Elementary Principal. “Kids have said they are more interested in playing on them now, and the games are easier to play, because you can see the newly painted lines.”



Gabe Sady tapes the playground at Salnave Elementary.

“Before, they were just basic lines and empty squares,” said Christian Beal, a fellow groundsman Sady recruited to be part of the playground facelift. “They were pretty faded.”

Snowdon’s specialty paintings have generated a bit of buzz among the other elementary schools in the district. Sady’s artistic abilities have now been specifically requested at nearly all of the district’s elementary schools.

“[We received a] workorder from Betz called ‘Hopscotch Snowdon Treatment’,” Sady said with a smile. “[Christian] helped quite a bit with that. We have a brand-new basketball court painted out back, and the key is painted in this really nice blue that matches Betz’s colors.”

The painting process, even basic lines, is multifaceted. It all has to happen outside of school hours, and the area needs to be prepped and cleaned of extra debris—like rocks and leaves. In some cases, like at Salnave Elementary, additional care is required for the decades-old asphalt.

“I went to school [at Salnave], and it was in pretty rough shape when I was there,” Sady said with a laugh. “We’ll do some patchwork and some coverup and get that taken care of before we paint.”

Once the asphalt is in acceptable shape, the taping starts. Nearly all lines painted on the playground must first be taped by hand to provide a makeshift stencil. Some lines are painted freeform, like the center courts on basketball courts.

“It’s a lot of tape,” Devine said. “You have to outline it all in tape, figure out stencils—whether you cut them out, make them, whatever you can. Fight the wind, weather, and fit it all in....Gabe’s dedicated a ton of time on his weekends to doing this stuff.”

Sady and his crew are quite resourceful in

what they use for painting stencils. Instead of purchasing expensive pre-made stencils, Sady makes use of everyday household items, like a trash can for planets.

The flowers he painted at Betz Elementary were made from shapes he cut out of an \$11 rubber mat; the equivalent stencil online retails a little over \$300.

The color and the creativity all support the end goal of bringing happiness to district students. Sady, who has a background in education and was in the middle of his Master's of Education

at the University of Washington when his program was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, believes that bringing happiness to students is our moral duty.

“I think we’re morally and ethically obligated to make schools fun and engaging for kids. If we can run them to the point of exhaustion, perhaps they’ll be more compliant in the classroom and make teachers’ jobs a little easier,” Sady said with a laugh. “And you know, a splash of color never hurt anybody.”



Hand-painted flower hopscotch at Betz.



Hand-painted wall-ball wall at Betz.



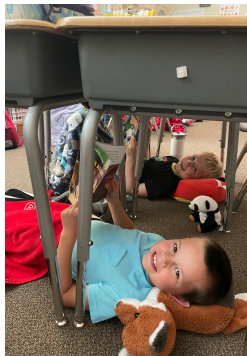
Colorful four square court at Betz Elementary.



Gabe Sady with a planet-inspired hopscotch he painted at Snowdon Elementary.

Cozy Up and Read Day

On Friday, September 27th, Snowdon Elementary participated in a school-wide event, Cozy Up and Read Day. The event was designed to help support the love of reading for students in all grade levels. Several students and staff wore their favorite pajamas, brought their favorite blanket, and found a spot to cozy up and read their favorite books.



West Plains Crisis Response Team

Airway Heights Police Department officers Kayla Illsley and K9 Tonks are part of the West Plains Crisis Response Team, specializing in de-escalating crises. Both officers visited with district students and staff after a lockdown was lifted at Windsor Elementary and Westwood Middle schools on Wednesday, Sept. 18. A big thank you to the Airway Heights Police Department and officers Illsley and K9 Tonks for helping our students, staff, and families feel safe.



Airway Heights Police Department Officer Kayla Illsley (left) and K9 Tonks visit with Windsor staff and students following a lockdown on Wednesday, Sept. 18.

Join Our Team!

Interested in joining our team? Scan the QR code below or visit cheneysd.org to view all available job openings.



We're Hiring



Music Notes & High Hopes

Summer 2024 was unlike any other for Cheney High School's Avery Mitchell. The senior percussionist was accepted to the prestigious and elusive Summer Percussion Seminar with The Juilliard School in New York, NY. Mitchell spent two weeks in mid-July working with and learning from some of the best percussionists in the country, and the world.

"So many talented people and so much new information," Mitchell said, recounting her experience. "The whole time I'm like, 'Oh my gosh.' Taking in so much information in the whole two weeks. Just a really insane learning experience."

"I think it's important to know how much hard work went into this," said Cheney High School Director of Bands, Josh Wisswell. Mitchell, a Running Start student through Eastern Washington University, takes mostly online classes, freeing up more time during the day to practice. "She can take advantage of the school's instruments that normal percussion students do not have at home, like a marimba or timpani. That hard work and practice is what allowed her to be one of only a handful selected for this opportunity. Not to mention the hours and hours we spent in the auditorium recording take after take of the solos she had to prepare."

Mitchell was just one of about 18 students in the world selected to attend the seminar, and the admissions process was extensive. She was required to prepare five separate videos—one introductory video with her name and background as a percussionist—and four solos highlighting her skills. This included: one snare drum solo, one timpani solo, one two-mallet solo, and one four-mallet solo.

Hours and hours were spent ensuring each solo was perfect. Weeks passed following her submission for the program, and Mitchell lacked confidence that she would be selected.

"It took like two extra weeks than what they had said, so I wasn't confident I would get in at all," Mitchell said. "It was super

exciting. I had seen something earlier in the day in my email, but I was on my way home from college classes [so I didn't look at it]. My mom and I opened it together. It was really fun."

Four months later, Mitchell was in New York as a seminar student at Juilliard.

"It was crazy," Mitchell said. "Being in New York was wild, riding the subway and everything. Just to get [to Juilliard] was crazy. We stayed in the dorms at Juilliard and ate in their cafeteria. I had a key to all their percussion rooms. It was very surreal to have that experience of being a student there."

Each day of the summer percussion seminar was filled with guest artists, master classes, clinics, and rehearsals. There were several performances throughout the seminar, with multiple finale performances at the end of the seminar. Mitchell was exposed to different styles of percussion, like Afro-Cuban and Arabic-style, and new practice regimens. She even worked alongside one of her percussion idols, Haruka Fuji—"It was surreal to meet her"—in a marimba intensive class.

"There are just so many different tips and tricks that I get to implement into my playing now," Mitchell said. "I get to share with the other people who weren't there with me, and I get to bring some pieces of that back. [Things like] practice tips and different kinds of repertoire that we haven't really looked at here. I just feel like I get to share all that knowledge, and it's really fun."

Her experience also provided some great connections, expanding her options for post-secondary musical education.

"[At Juilliard], you are exposed to world-class caliber teachers and instructors who really, really know their stuff," Wisswell said. "Avery had the chance to make a couple more connections and is considering some other options she wasn't originally considering before attending [Juilliard] and having met some of the professors from other colleges who were brought in as guests

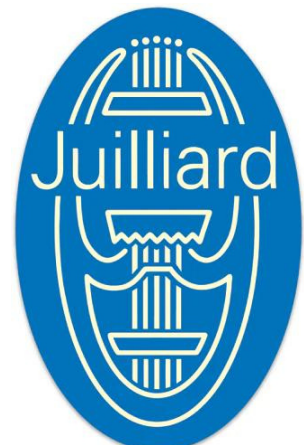


CHS senior percussionist Avery Mitchell.

to the seminar."

Mitchell will be taking advantage of her new connections as she works toward her goal of earning a performance degree after high school.

"My plan for the last couple years has been to go get a performance degree, go to music school," she said. "I have some connections [at Juilliard], and I met professors [from other schools] who were guest artists...I'm planning to meet with some more professors, so it's looking like auditions in the winter and then music school next fall."





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www.cheneyisd.org
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..... *Important Dates*

October 23

School Board Meeting - 4:30 p.m.
Windsor Elementary School

October 30

End of First Quarter

November 5

Election Day

November 11

Veterans' Day Holiday - No School

November 13

School Board Meeting - 6:00 p.m.
Snowdown Elementary School

November 26-27

Conferences - No Students

November 28-29

Thanksgiving Holiday - No School
.....

Remember To



Cheney Public Schools



@cheneyschools



@CheneySchools

Are you a member of a military family?
Please visit <https://www.cheneyisd.org/community/military>
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