

COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



For our children, our world, our future



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

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

Did you know that there are over 30 languages represented across our district community? Cheney Public Schools is rich in diverse cultures, and this month, there were several opportunities to share and celebrate them. Cheney High School's Black Student Union (BSU) hosted a Diversity Assembly, showcasing cultural dances, speeches, and songs from groups like the Nesian Hawks, BSU, CHS Pride, and Native American tribes. Then, the community-led Marshallese School & Parent Night at Sunset Elementary brought families and staff together for a shared meal, meaningful conversations, and valuable feedback. What an inspiring start to the month!

Our district continues to progress with construction projects funded by the voter-approved November 2024 bond. Most recently, the Garco Construction/Integrus Architecture progressive design-build team was selected to lead the new Craig Road Elementary School project. This progressive design-build team emerged as the highest scoring finalist following an extensive selection and award process that lasted over two months. We are so excited to begin the next phase of the project, which includes ed specs that began March 24, with design work beginning in April. So many great things to come!

Our Bond Advisory Team continues to meet monthly to support transparency, accountability, and the effective use of bond funds to meet the District's capital improvement needs. Questions posed from the team during the first-ever meeting on February 10 led to a more robust FAQ section on our website. FAQs now filter questions into seven different categories, including General, Budget & Funding, Project Planning, New School & Redistricting, Land & Property, Traffic & Infrastructure, and Staff Input. Do you have a question that is not yet answered in the FAQs? Send them along to Jenna Larson, Communications Coordinator at jl Larson@cheneysd.org.

Work on the District's Strategic Plan continues forward, specifically on the Profile of a Graduate/Portrait of a Learner (POG/POL). A district-wide survey was distributed via Parentsquare and social media to parents, guardians, students, staff, and community members to collect community feedback on the major themes identified by the POG/POL committee. Director of Teaching & Learning Dr. Kelly Niccolls, with assistance from the POG/POL committee, will analyze the data and finalize the requirements.

There continue to be changes nationally that could affect Cheney Public Schools. Recently, there have been cuts to the Department of Education, and in Washington state, we are still waiting to see the impacts of this change. Federal funding accounts for 6.1 percent of our district's total operating budget; we will keep you informed if there are federal cuts.

We are Cheney Public Schools!

Take care,

Ben Ferney, Ed.D | Superintendent

IMPORTANT DATES

April 7 - April 11
Spring Break - No School

April 16
School Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
Salnavé Elementary School

April 21
Emergency Make-Up Day

April 30
School Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
Cheney High School

May 14
School Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
Cheney High School



On the Cover:
Superintendent Ben Ferney chats with a kindergartener in Mrs. Palmer's class at Sunset Elementary during snack time.



Mark Scott
School Board President
District 1



Liz Winer
School Board Member
District 2



Henry Browne
School Board Vice President
District 3



Bill Hanson
School Board Member
District 4



Mitch Swenson
School Board Member
District 5

Passion for Curriculum Writing Earns National Recognition for CHS Teacher

Cheney High School Civics and Humanities Teacher Joy Robinette knows a thing or two about writing curriculum. A self-described history and curriculum nerd, Robinette moonlights as a contract curriculum writer, so when she learned about a curriculum development opportunity through the Annenberg Classroom at the National Council for the Social Studies conference in Boston last November, it was a no-brainer for her to apply.

Annenberg Classroom is an online collection of free classroom resources for teaching the United States Constitution. The free resources include over 65 videos on constitutional concepts and Supreme Court cases, as well as games, lesson plans, timelines, downloadable books, a glossary, and a Constitution guide.

“Annenberg Classroom puts out a new film each year for Constitution Day,” said Andrea Reidell, the Director of Outreach and Curriculum at the Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics at the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. “As part of that process, we solicit requests for proposals from teachers to submit a proposal for a lesson plan that goes with the film. We ask them to include primary source documents because we want to connect students to think critically about source perspectives, and to be able to practice some of these critical thinking skills.”

For the past three years, Annenberg Classroom has paid teachers—not curriculum writers—to create lesson plans that align with a film released on Constitution Day. Why? Reidell says teachers are the experts on how to teach, so, teachers across the country are invited to submit a lesson plan proposal each year. Reidell, along with a team of judges comprised of retired teachers and social studies administrators, read through each proposal and choose three to be featured on Annenberg Classroom.

Robinette has found creative ways to



Joy Robinette, top left, engages with her 11th-grade block humanities class during a discussion about Bernard the Misfit from a Brave New World.

engage her students since she began her career in education just over a decade ago. Instead of just reading about history in a book, Robinette has created engaging and multi-faceted lessons that encourage students to use claim-evidence reasoning and actively go through an inquiry process.

“I discovered that [writing curriculum] was so fun to put these really interesting lessons together for kids to get invested in,” Robinette said. “I think writing lesson plans is one of my favorite things to do...It’s the most fun when you get kids interested like that because they start asking questions. Those questions lead to deeper learning and more learning, and then I get to learn with them.”

Robinette was familiar with the Annenberg Classroom because she has utilized it as a teaching resource several times before. “I just love their mission of trying to create civics curriculum that reaches kids at all levels,” she said. “It’s something that’s not all the snazzy for the kids, but to try to get it to them in a way that is more interesting I think is really hard, and also really important.” Then, when she viewed the documentary about the Eighth Amendment that was meant to be the inspiration for this year’s competition lesson plans, she was fascinated.

“I just thought, I love writing lesson plans and this documentary they have is great!” Robinette said. “I would love to use it in my class. So I just wrote [the lesson plans] with that in mind, with my own students in mind.”

Robinette submitted her proposal in late December, and by mid-January she was notified that she had been selected as one of three winners across the country. The next step was to develop the lesson plans including content, discussion guides, handouts, schedules, presentations, anything and everything to be used in conjunction with teaching and learning. Three weekends and over 30 hours of work was dedicated to creating two weeks worth of curriculum that will be featured on Annenberg Classroom later this year.

“My passion is writing curriculum,” Robinette said. “I try to find new ways to get kids interested. If I can share that with other teachers, then that’s even better.”

Along with being selected to create a lesson plan for Annenberg Classroom, the win comes with an opportunity to lead workshops across the country. It is part of their professional development, Reidell says, and Annenberg Classroom offers paid opportunities for winning teachers to engage with other teachers, walk them through the lesson, and talk about their process. Robinette has already been invited to attend a conference in Southern California to guide teachers through her curriculum.

“When I go to that conference and teach that seminar, I’ll be teaching it with other people from Teach Democracy and Street Law—which are both amazing programs—and I’ll get to work with them, learn from them, and then bring it back here,” Robinette said. “I’m the PLC (Professional Learning Community) lead, and I’m also a teacher mentor here, so one of my favorite things to do is just share this stuff and get it to as many kids as possible.”

Robinette’s lesson plan will be available on Annenberg Classroom next month. Visit [Annenbergclassroom.org/lessonplans/](https://annenbergclassroom.org/lessonplans/) to learn more!

Westwood Middle School Announces Maurice Thomas as New Assistant Principal



Following an extensive interview process, Cheney Public Schools is pleased to announce that Maurice Thomas has been selected as the next

assistant principal of Westwood Middle School. The Board of Directors approved Thomas's hiring on March 12.

"Maurice brings both experience and enthusiasm for middle school students," Westwood Principal Alison Tobler said. "We are excited to welcome him as our newest Wolverine,"

Thomas will arrive at Westwood following

nearly 13 years of experience in a middle school setting, most recently as the Dean of Students at Centennial Middle School in Spokane Valley, a position he has held since September 2022.

"I am truly honored and excited to step into the role of Assistant Principal in my own community," Thomas said. "It is an honor and privilege to serve and support the students, families, and staff who make this school so special. I look forward to joining a team who prioritizes fostering a culture of inclusivity, engagement, and growth, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and eager to collaborate with the Westwood Middle School Community to make a lasting impact!"

Stacy Delcour Selected as Career & Technical Education/Secondary Success Administrator



After an extensive interview process, Cheney Public Schools is pleased to announce Stacy Delcour as the Career and Technical

Education / Secondary Success Administrator. The Board of Directors approved Delcour's hiring on March 12.

The interview process included representatives from several stakeholder groups—district administration, staff, and students—who interacted and engaged with each candidate throughout the process.

Secondary staff and district leadership collaborated to lead each candidate through the comprehensive interview process, and Cheney High School students were included as they engaged with each candidate on a tour of campus. Following this process,

Delcour was selected as the best fit for the position.

"...Stacy's daily presence will be deeply missed," said Cheney High School Principal Brett Hale. "...Her passion and dedication will have a lasting impact here at CHS, and will ensure continued growth and success for all Cheney School District students."

Delcour's transition to the CTE/Secondary Success Administrator position continues her work with Cheney Public Schools, as she has been an assistant principal at Cheney High School since 2017. Delcour has nearly 30 years of experience in education, with nearly 14 years in an administrative or leadership position.

"I am beyond excited for the role as CTE and Secondary Success Administrator," Delcour said. "This is my dream position--all of the things that I love to do in one job that serves our secondary students. I cannot wait to get started."

Marshallese School & Parent Night

The first-ever Marshallese School & Parent Night at Sunset Elementary School was a wonderful community-led event.

Attended by nearly 100 people, the event served as a listen-and-learn opportunity. District staff joined Marshallese families for a shared meal, meaningful conversations, and valuable feedback. The conversations were accompanied by amazing music, song, and dance. What a fun night!

A big thank you to Jacob Powers and Freddy Joklur Jr. for their efforts in organizing this great event!





District Snapshots



CMS students in Mrs. Baffuto's 7th and 8th grade combined T3 ELA class use song lyrics to track reading progress. What a fun exercise!



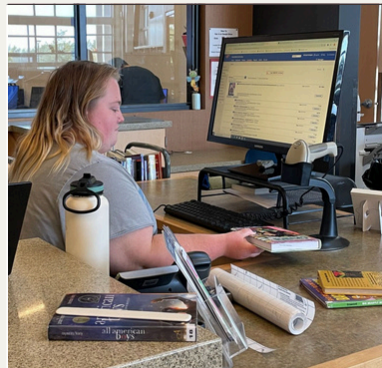
This HomeWorks! student paints during an art class at the HomeWorks! campus on March 4.



These WIN Academy students discuss the characteristics associated with right-brain dominant individuals on March 10.



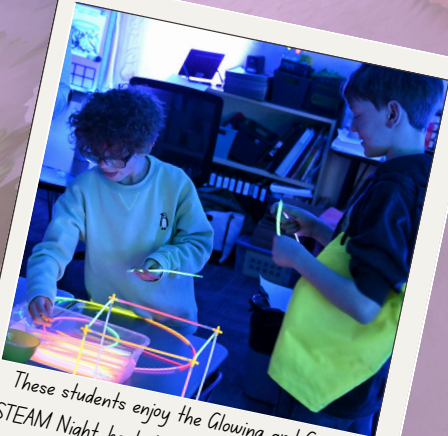
Members of the High School Superintendent Student Advisory Team discuss ways to foster connectedness and inclusion throughout the district.



This Cheney Community Transitions student volunteers at the Cheney Middle School library.



Westwood Middle School art teacher Katherine Potter (right), shares student earthenware pottery with a coiling method.



These students enjoy the Glowing and Growing STEAM Night, hosted by Windsor Elementary, on March 20.



Mark Wood, the original string master of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, treated students of Sunset Elementary to an electrifying concert on March 19.



These Cheney High School varsity fastpitch softball players are all smiles following a scored run against Central Valley on March 21.