

COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



For our children, our world, our future

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

It seems like we blink and the 2025-2026 school year is upon us! I hope all of you have had a wonderful summer break spent with family and friends making great memories. We are so excited to have our students back for the beginning of the year!

This summer has been filled with construction across our district. Projects funded by the voter-approved November 2024 bond have been in progress since mid-May, beginning with the Cheney High School stadium renovations. The bus loops at Salnave and Windsor elementary schools are right on schedule, as are the interior upgrades at both Sunset and Windsor. Thank you to our community for making these projects possible with the passage of the November 2024 bond package. For a look at the progress of each project funded by the bond, please scan the QR code or visit our website at cheneysd.org. You can also find weekly updates on our social media pages.



Throughout the summer, teams across the district—including maintenance and operations, the business office, human resources, transportation, information technology, nutrition services, building secretaries, and administrators—have been busy preparing for the upcoming 2025–2026 school year. Summer offers a valuable window to complete projects without interrupting students or staff, and our teams have made the most of it. I am grateful for the commitment and dedication from each of these teams in preparing our schools for the year ahead!

Thank you to our entire district community for your patience and understanding as we completed the massive information systems overhaul, moving from Skyward Student Management System (SMS) 2.0 to Skyward Qmlativ. This transition was nearly a year in the making and represented a significant undertaking for Cheney Public Schools. With such a major technological upgrade, we anticipated that there would be setbacks and struggles; we are so grateful for your patience as we settle into the new system!

I am excited to see our district continue to grow as we head into the second year of our Strategic Plan. Over the past year, district administrators, staff members, parents, community partners, and students have worked together to create the Portrait of a Graduate/Profile of a Learner. These principles will help guide our district as we prepare our students for life beyond Cheney Public Schools. The Strategic Plan is a living document that will continue to guide us in the years to come. Thank you for your support!

We are Cheney Public Schools!

Onward,

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



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

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On the Cover:

Cheney High School rising sophomore Ryan Jorgensen works on a multi-dimensional wood cutting board as part of the Production and Manufacturing Institute on July 18.



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

Cheney Public Schools Bond Updates

Thanks to the voter-approved \$72 million bond passed in November 2024, construction and planning efforts have been in full swing across Cheney Public Schools since mid-May. Throughout the summer, work has continued district-wide, with several major upgrades nearing completion.

Some of the largest projects this summer include the Cheney High School stadium renovation, which features a resurfaced track, new visitor bleachers, updated fencing, and improved ADA accessibility. New bus loops are also under construction at both Salnave and Windsor elementary schools to improve traffic flow and student safety. Pre-planning and design are well underway for the new

elementary school in Airway Heights. The progressive design-build team of Garco Construction and Integrus Architecture has been working closely with our Design Advisory Team and Bond Advisory Team to develop the preliminary vision for the new school. At the July 16 School Board of Directors meeting, Garco and Integrus presented early plans, including a validation report, preliminary budget, schedule, designs, and overall site development. Scan the QR code to the right to view the full presentation.

Additional summer improvements include updates at Windsor and Sunset elementary schools, new chillers installed at Salnave,

Windsor, and Betz elementary schools, and upgraded secure entries at Snowdon Elementary, Cheney Middle School, and Westwood Middle School. We are grateful to our community for making these improvements possible. Your support is helping us build safer, more efficient, and welcoming learning environments for all students.



Cheney High School stadium renovation progress on July 23.



Windsor Elementary interior updates, July 22.



Progress on the Salnave Elementary bus loop, July 23.



Progress on the Windsor Elementary bus loop, July 22.



New paint and carpet make this hallway at Sunset Elementary feel brand new! Photo from July 23.



Chiller installation at Betz Elementary on June 24.

Supporting All Learners with Project GLAD

There are approximately 540 multilingual (ML) learners across the Cheney Public Schools district, representing 42 unique languages. Some schools and classrooms see more linguistic and cultural diversity than others; amid this diversity, many educators seek approaches that support engagement and understanding for all students. The GLAD method of teaching has been proven to engage ML learners in their classrooms along with native English-speaking students, promoting cross-cultural collaboration, empathy, and understanding.

GLAD was founded in 1989 by educators Marcia Brechtel and Linnea Haley, who developed the approach in response to the diverse needs they observed in their own classroom. Together, they led a classroom of about 70 students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, with around 10 different languages spoken among students.

“At the time, the research was abysmal on typical ESL (English as a Second Language),” said Brechtel as part of a promotional video for ‘Be GLAD!’, one of several organizations across the country providing GLAD training for educators. “We created GLAD through a need that our students had, and a need that most second-language students at that time and place so that they could return to the regular classroom.”

So, what is GLAD? The acronym stands for Guided Language Acquisition Design, and it is a research-based instructional model that provides multiple ways of differentiating instruction for linguistically diverse students. The teaching model includes visuals, collaborative activities, and language scaffolds to help multilingual learners access and understand classroom curriculum while building their communication skills and confidence. GLAD provides educators with practical tools to support an inclusive learning environment for all learners.

Sunset Elementary third-grade teacher Natalie Klawitter has been using the GLAD method since 2024, and she has seen the positive impact in her own classroom.

“I think it’s important to recognize, we had 39

multilingual students in our grade alone,” Klawitter said. “So, getting something that would not only engage students but give access to all students was super important to me. I think seeing the difference now, kids are having connections within their own culture, within cross-cultures, and they’re able to access vocabulary and understand deeper meanings. So, I think it was really valuable in that case.”

Tania Cramer, a Multilingual Learner (MLL) teacher at Sunset was trained in the GLAD method last summer, and she has integrated the strategies into both her direct English Language Development (ELD) instruction and co-teaching partnerships over the last year.

“Since using Project GLAD, my students are more engaged and confident,” Cramer noted. “They participate more, remember vocabulary better, and understand content more deeply. I’ve seen big improvements in their speaking, listening, and overall excitement about learning. In addition, students who were previously hesitant to participate now feel empowered through collaboration and visuals that support their understanding.”

The GLAD method incorporates a variety of visual and interactive learning aids to support student understanding, such as a Pictorial Input Chart and a Cognitive Content Dictionary (CCD) Chart. The pictorial aid helps convey meaning through patterns, visuals, and gestures, while the CCD serves as a graphic organizer to introduce and deepen

comprehension of new vocabulary. Beyond visual tools, GLAD also uses engaging strategies such as literacy awards, which foster intrinsic motivation, promote the use of academic language, and recognize student achievement. Another key strategy is the gallery walk, which invites students to actively engage with content by exploring and discussing peer work in a collaborative setting.

“[Project GLAD] supports all learners by combining content and language instruction in meaningful ways,” Cramer said. “Its strategies promote academic vocabulary, collaboration, and critical thinking while making learning more engaging and accessible. When used consistently, Project GLAD strategies build equity, support diverse learners, and help teachers meet the needs of all students more effectively.”

“Our multilingual learners have made so much growth,” Klawitter said. “I had a student from Colombia; he was not yet able to speak any English...Now he’s reading 10 levels higher than when he came in. Because you’re building that language acquisition with those vocabulary pieces with the retelling models and things like that.”

Following the success and growth in both Cramer and Klawitter’s classes, Sunset principal Sara McKennon—who was also previously trained in GLAD—hosted a



Sunset MLL teacher Tania Cramer presents to the School Board of Directors on GLAD strategies on March 26.

district-wide training session this past June at Sunset Elementary. The session, delivered by Project GLAD certified instructor Monica Hulubei Piergallini, included two days of research and theory followed by four days of classroom modeling. Hulubei Piergallini led a group of current Sunset students through Project GLAD instruction while more than 25 educators from across the district quietly observed.

“I think that it will impact my ML learners and my learners where English is their first language for sure because it’s a lot of collaboration work amongst the students,” said Snowdon kindergarten teacher Rachel Amann, who attended the GLAD training. “It is ownership in creating a project, and conversation skills, which all kids need. It’s just a different way of approaching our

curriculum and our standards, to help put another tool in our toolbox as teachers.”

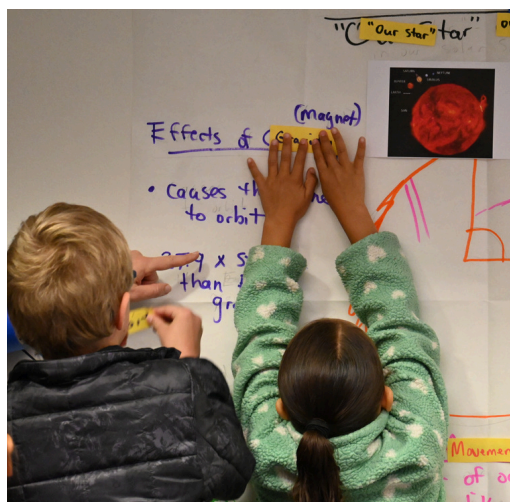
A tool, as Amann references, that comes with instructions and support. Each training attendee was provided a binder full of examples and templates for various grade levels, so teachers looking to integrate the GLAD method into their classrooms will not be starting from scratch.

“I think our presenter does a really good job of making sure that, because we have kindergarten through middle school teachers in this room, she does a really good job of telling us how to adapt,” Amann continued. “So, there might be this example that we watch with third graders, and she will always say, ‘Kindergarten or first grade teachers, this is an option that you could do.’”

For Cramer, her experience from training to implementation over the past year was so impactful that it inspired her to take her GLAD connection a step further, as she is now a certified OCDE Project GLAD Agency Trainer.

“I was inspired to become a Project GLAD Agency Trainer because I’ve seen how powerful these strategies are, especially for multilingual learners,” Cramer said. “After using them in my own teaching and seeing the positive impact, I wanted to be able to share these strategies more widely and support teachers across our district in creating more inclusive, language-rich classrooms.”

For more information on Project GLAD and its methods, visit ntcprojectglad.com.



Students work on matching vocabulary words with photos using this Pictorial Input Chart.



District educators observe the GLAD method of teaching at Sunset Elementary on June 25. GLAD visual aids are visible in the background.



These educators collaborate in learning during the GLAD training at Sunset Elementary on June 25.

Developing Skills and Exploring Careers Through PMI

Several local students experienced immersive, hands-on learning in manufacturing this summer as part of the Production and Manufacturing Institute (PMI). Founded in 2019, PMI is a local program that works to connect students with real-world experiences in manufacturing and the trades. Cheney High School science teacher Jeff Short provided oversight of the PMI site at Cheney High School (one of several PMI satellite locations across the region), which welcomed high school students from Cheney, Lind-Ritzville, Medical Lake, and Liberty school districts.

“I owned a business for about 15 years, and I did remodel that [business], so I had just

enough experience to probably be dangerous,” Short said with a laugh. “I came in, read about PMI and what they do, talked to Wade [Larson]—who is the director—and he said, ‘You know what, you’d be perfect.’ So, I got started.”

Short led a group of seven students through the entire three-week program, teaching an array of skills and principles spanning manufacturing, business, finance, and career readiness. The Institute’s purpose is to educate students on varying career paths and expose them to different opportunities, encouraging students of all skill levels to apply.

“When we start out—kids and hand tools—everybody needs to start out at the foundational level and then we build them up from there and go all the way up to some of the heavy equipment power tools,” Short said. [The first week] was at SCC (Spokane Community College), which was fantastic. Amazing facility. We had all the satellite schools together, which was amazing because you have all those instructors together, which is a wealth of knowledge. I think it’s fantastic for the students.”

The first week at SCC is referred to as the Manufacturing Certification where students

Continued on Page 6

become part of a manufacturing training program; they work in teams to develop, design, prototype, and model a product. The week was also spent learning the manufacturing cycle, how businesses operate, the basics of the manufacturing process, and career opportunities.

Following a week at SCC, Short and his students returned to Cheney High School for the final two weeks of the Institute, also referred to as Applied Learning and Production. Students continued to work in product teams to manufacture the products they designed in the first week; the CHS satellite program focused on woodworking, including the production and design of multi-dimensional wood cutting boards, benches, and decorative boxes. Students also visited local companies, received specialized training, and learned more about career opportunities in manufacturing and the trades.

“We go on these field trips to different manufacturing places and packaging warehouses,” said rising CHS sophomore Ryan Jorgensen, a first-time PMI participant. “We went to Pearson Manufacturing; it was actually really cool. I learned a lot about what jobs [are available]. I was really interested. I’m starting to think about that as one of my careers.”

Learning extends beyond manufacturing and the trades. Per the PMI master brochure, the goal is “to empower each Institute graduate to succeed in their careers as they gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve their personal and professional goals.” The brochure includes an entire page of bulleted lists of skills spanning technical skills, business skills, career readiness, and soft skills, such as interpersonal communication and teamwork.

“Obviously, skills with hand tools and power

tools, that’s a given, but being able to interact and collaborate with your peers, and problem solve, is the biggest thing I’ve seen,” Short said. “So you have a group of students who are interacting together, trying to problem-solve. You can have alphas and you can have followers; everybody is trying to collaborate together. We’re switching team members. These students are finding out, ‘How do I collaborate with my teammates? How can we problem solve?’ You see them progress over the week, and they really grow.”

“Teamwork is probably one of the most important things when it comes to doing stuff like this,” Jorgensen said. “If you’re doing the whole thing [on your own], it’s going to be really slow. But if you have someone with you that you, like, you have that chemistry, you can be fast and quick and you can really get things out. Especially if

you are working hard, and especially if you really want these to be good. It’s really about the mindset and the quality you want your work to be.”

The Institute is fully funded through sponsorships, community support, and grants from the U.S. Department of Labor and Career Connect Washington Program Builder (Round 10). Approximately \$124,500 was financed by federal allocations during the 2023-2024 program years, with additional program, materials, and overhead funding received from private contributions. This funding enables all students to attend the institute at no cost, and students who successfully complete the three-week

program are eligible for 0.5 elective credit at their respective high schools.

Sponsorships also help to cover the cost of materials, tours, and rewards. PMI features a point system, which Short says is a great motivational tool in teaching students about workplace competency and personal leadership. Students who reach a specific threshold of points are eligible for specific rewards.

“It’s just like a job,” Short explained. “Show up for work on time, show up with a great attitude, collaborate with your team members, make sure you’re in the proper dress code, and follow safety procedures... they are really excited about their points because they can go out, they can get power tools, 3D printers, all kinds of things. That really motivates those teams.”

Points and rewards aside, the lessons and experiences afforded students in PMI help prepare them for future careers and life beyond high school.

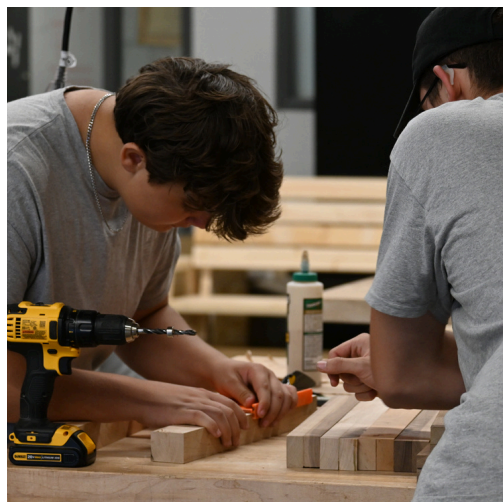
“When you look at cutting boards and decorative boxes and things like that, from the outside looking in, they might look like simple projects,

but they are extremely complex,” said Short. “To watch them succeed through a lot of those challenges has been fantastic, and working together. They have been working hard from the moment they get here to the moment they leave, and every single day the shop is spotless. They do a fantastic job, and I am blown away every single day.”

Students interested in applying for the PMI should check out their website at manufacturinginstitute.net/. Applications for the 2026 program will be available on their website in late fall 2025.



CHS science teacher Jeff Short assists this student with a miter saw during the PMI on July 18.



Ryan Jorgensen (left) works with his teammate to assemble a multidimensional wood cutting board.

NOTICES

Reminder: Start & Dismissal Times to Shift in 2025-2026 for Four Elementary Schools

Beginning this upcoming 2025-2026 school year, Betz, Snowdon, Sunset, and Windsor elementary schools will adopt new school hours. At these buildings, school will begin at 9 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, with a 10 a.m. late start on Friday.

"The change in start and end times for Cheney Public Schools was primarily driven by challenges with the bus transportation schedule," Director of Transportation Shane Ableman said. "Specifically, the high school/middle school routes were taking longer than anticipated...This created logistical issues and delays across the District's transportation system."

During the 2024-2025 school year, buses had turnaround times of one hour in the morning and 50 minutes in the afternoon. This schedule left little room for unexpected delays, such as traffic congestion or inclement weather. On average, buses were arriving for elementary school pick up at 3:33 p.m., 13 minutes after the 3:20 p.m. dismissal.

Under the new schedule, the morning turnaround time will extend to 1 hour and 10 minutes, and the afternoon turnaround will increase to a full hour, providing a more flexible and dependable system for both students and drivers.

"The shift in start and end times provides key benefits for both students and bus drivers," Ableman continued. "For elementary students, it means shorter wait times after school and a more predictable, consistent ride home. For transportation, this change allows for more realistic, manageable route timing, helping drivers stay on schedule without feeling rushed, which also enhances safety for all students on board."

Cheney Public Schools remains committed to providing safe, efficient, and reliable transportation to all of our K-12 students.

"The goal is to have buses available for pick-up as quickly as possible after dismissal," said Ben Ferney, Superintendent of Cheney Public Schools. "As our district continues to grow alongside our community, we are grateful for our transportation team's hard work in navigating the increasing congestion. While we understand this shift may not be ideal for all families, we appreciate their understanding and cooperation. This is a challenge that will only grow with time, and we are committed to working closely with our cities and county to continually improve the system."



Reminder: Revised Policy 3245-Students and Telecommunication Devices

Revisions to Policy 3245 were unanimously adopted by the Board of Directors on June 25. It will take effect at the start of the 2025-2026 school year. The policy states:

1. *Telecommunication or mobile devices will be accessed and operated only before and after the regular school day, except for high school, where they may be accessed anytime except during classroom instructional hours—unless an emergency involves imminent physical danger or a school administrator authorizes use.*
2. *Exceptions to mobile device restrictions may be made when access is determined necessary by the appropriate school team based on the student's individual educational, behavioral, or medical needs.*
3. *Students not following school/district rules regarding acceptable times and use of a mobile device may have their devices confiscated and returned the same day. Repeated offenses may result in a required parent/guardian meeting to discuss a plan.*

The updated policy and new procedure are available online and will be shared prior to the start of the 2025-2026 school year.

Reminder: Kindergarten Registration Now Open

A reminder to all new and existing families within the Cheney Public Schools district boundary: kindergarten registration for the 2025-2026 school year is open. If your child will be five-years old on or before August 31, 2025 and you reside within the district boundary, please register today!

Registration can be completed online or in person at your neighborhood school. If you are unsure of which attendance boundary you reside in, please visit the School Site Locator on our Student Registration page. Scan the QR code to visit the Student Registration webpage, which also includes a wealth of information on required information, including proof of birthdate, immunization

records, and proof of residence.

Please direct any questions to your neighborhood school office.



Qmlativ: New District Student Management System

Cheney Public Schools has officially transitioned from Skyward Student Management System (SMS) 2.0 to Skyward Qmlativ. Thank you to our greater district community for your patience during the transition "Dark Days" of July 16-27.

Now that Qmlativ is live, the focus shifts to support and

troubleshooting as students, families, and staff begin using the new system. The most noticeable change for families is the updated look and feel.

If you previously downloaded the Skyward app, **you must uninstall and reinstall the Qmlativ-specific version, titled Skyward Mobile Access.** The app will not automatically update and must be newly configured.

Scan the QR code for FAQs, how-to videos, and the link to access Skyward Qmlativ.





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Important Dates

August 20

School Board Meeting - 5:30 p.m.
Cheney High School, Library

August 26

First Day of School (Grades 1-12)

August 29

First Day of Kindergarten

September 1

Labor Day Holiday - No School

September 8

First Day of Preschool

September 10

School Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
Cheney High School, Library



TOGETHER, WE ARE CHENEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Cheney Public Schools



@cheneyschools



@CheneySchools

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

Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator/Section 504
Coordinator/ADA 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
Megan Kensok, Public Records Officer
Cheney Public Schools
12414 S. Andrus Rd., Cheney, WA 99004
Phone: (509) 559-4502
Email: mkensok@cheneysd.org

Are you a member of a military family?
Please visit <https://www.cheneysd.org/community/military>
for more information.