

COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



For our children, our world, our future

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



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

IMPORTANT DATES

April 3
End of Third Quarter

April 6-10
Spring Break - No School

April 15
Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
Cheney High School

April 21
Boundary Community Feedback
Night - 6 p.m.
Cheney Middle School

April 22
Boundary Community Feedback
Night - 6 p.m.
Westwood Middle School

April 27
Emergency Make-Up Day



On the Cover:
Home Works!
second grader
Brylee Jacobson
smiles during her
Living Museum
presentation as
Cleopatra on
March 12, 2026.

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

There are so many exciting things happening across our District this month! Following last month's district-wide Professional Learning Day, it has been great to see staff learning translate into student success. Across our schools, students are learning at high levels—something many families experienced during conferences earlier this month or heard directly from their students through student-led conferences.

Several major projects funded by the voter-approved November 2024 bond package are scheduled for construction this year, including kitchen expansions at both Salnave and Windsor elementary schools, interior updates at Betz Elementary and Cheney High School, and Salnave switchgear updates. Construction on the bond's largest project, a new elementary school in Airway Heights, is scheduled to begin in April. I am happy to share that this project is within budget and will even include two additional classrooms from the original plans. [Click here](#) for more information on all the projects funded by the November 2024 bond package.

With the addition of a new elementary school, elementary boundaries needed to be adjusted. The Boundary Review Community Partners Team (BRCPT)—which is made up of volunteers from each of our three distinct communities, district staff, and administrators—was responsible for this task. Across four meetings, this team dedicated hours to reviewing data, considering community perspectives, and mapping potential boundary scenarios. Guided by consultants from Teater Crocker, Inc., this work was grounded in balancing enrollment, supporting long-term stability, and fair access to programs and resources for all students. During the meeting on March 16, the team reached a consensus on a recommended elementary boundary scenario, which will be presented to the School Board later this spring. In April, our greater community will have two opportunities to share feedback before boundary recommendations move forward for Board consideration. Thank you to each of the BRCPT members for your dedication and hard work to finding the best solution for all of our students and families!

If you have visited our website in the last few weeks, you were greeted with a colorful popup announcing kindergarten registration! Kindergarten registration, as well as registration for all new students for the 2026-2027 school year, is now open. It is important for families to register as soon as possible as new student numbers help our district budget for the next fiscal year, predict staffing, and manage enrollment numbers. For more information and to register your student, please [click here](#).

I hope everyone is enjoying the extended daylight and warming temperatures as spring turns the corner. With Spring Break just a little over a week away, I am reminded of how quickly the school year is going. Wishing you all a safe and happy week away from school! We are Cheney Public Schools!

Onward,

Ben Ferney, Ed.D | Superintendent



Mark Scott
School Board Member
District 1



Elizabeth Winer
School Board Legislative Rep
District 2



Henry Browne
School Board Member
District 3



Bill Hanson
School Board Vice President
District 4



Mitch Swenson
School Board President
District 5

DISTRICT NEWS

Pride in the Community: The Westwood-Windsor Connection

Ryan Wagner is in his second year at the helm of the leadership program at Westwood Middle School, and his vision for the leadership class—also known as Wolverine Pride—expands beyond the confines of the building. Wolverine Pride still leads the work in typical leadership events, such as spirit weeks, assemblies, and fund runs, but Wagner’s greater vision for the program more closely aligns with part of Westwood’s motto: Pride in the Community.

Pursuing a community connection, Wagner set his sights on Windsor Elementary, a stone’s throw from Westwood. It began with a few outdoor activities with third and fourth grade students toward the end of the 2025-2026 school year, and it opened the door for more engagement opportunities.

“I didn’t want [the leadership class] to be just about spirit weeks,” Wagner said. “One of our mottos is *Pride in the Community*, and Windsor is obviously part of our community. It’s just a good experience for everyone involved.”

This year, the connection has evolved into weekly visits with Windsor’s second and fourth graders, focusing on helping students with reading and math skills. The Wolverine Buddies, as the Windsor students affectionately call the visiting eighth graders, work with students on both math and reading skills, spending about 40 minutes each week at the neighboring elementary school.

At the second-grade level, Windsor teachers provide Tier 2 instruction while Westwood students support that learning by facilitating activities with a small group of students. For second grade teacher Kristen Myers, it has been helpful having extra hands in the classroom during Tier 2 instruction time, more commonly known as What I Need (WIN) Time at Windsor. In reading, that time is often used to increase phonics skills such as words with digraphs, blends, and



Fourth graders in Kristen McGuire’s class at Windsor Elementary listen as Westwood eighth grader Tatum Dresback explains a matching fractions game on February 18.

VCe (Vowel-Consonant-e).

“They’re just getting extra practice with their Wolverine Buddy on accuracy, and then reading fluency which transferred over from the math fluency that we worked on in the first semester,” Myers said. “Just having someone else listen to a second grader read, they get excited and they’re proud. They love reading, and they love when someone listens to them read.”

“Just having extra hands is always really appreciated and impactful,” she added.

For second grader Waylon Walter, his Wolverine Buddy provided support for an extension project, a biography he needed to finish for his classroom presentation. Not only did he receive support to finish his project, but he also learned a few extra things along the way.

“[My Wolverine Buddy] is helping me with typing and giving me ideas,” Walter said. “...It’s really hard, and she taught me how to copy and paste in an easier way.”

At the fourth grade level, the Westwood leadership class has a bit more ownership in the lesson plans, aligning daily games and activities with the curriculum.

“At fourth grade, we kind of have the reins of what they are doing,” Wagner said. “They give us a topic, I come up with some games, and then we practice. It’s all what they are doing, with fourth grade, they tell us, like, we’re doing equivalent fractions. So, we’re doing a matching game and previously we’ve done simple addition, double-digit addition, multiplication, things like that.”

“It’s fun because it’s different,” said fourth grader Alex Mirabelli. “It’s like you’re working with a friend.”

A recent fourth grade lesson centered around a fractions-themed matching game. Westwood students opened the lesson with a brief introduction before breaking into smaller groups of four to five students. Once they were in their small groups, they explained the game and started to play. Windsor students would flip over a card with



Windsor second grader Waylon Walter (left) teams up with Westwood eighth grader Anna Pettet for help with his biography on March 11.

one fraction, then try to match it with another card showing an equivalent fraction. It paired quick calculations with memory, and Westwood students were there to help.

“I love matching fractions, and like, seeing who can get the most,” Mirabelli said. “Probably when they’re like really different, and they’re like $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{5}{6}$, those are hard for me ... It’s kind of, giving us like a fast reaction—not too fast—but you’re trying to figure it out in your head.”

The weekly lessons are packed full of leadership development for Wagner’s students. Not only did they learn how to lead a classroom lesson and engage with students of different ages, but they also learned how to tackle adversity and thrive in a new environment.

To help students navigate moments of adversity and challenge during their visits, Wagner has emphasized the importance of leadership, adaptability, and problem solving.

“One of the things that I kind of told them was, you’re going to be put on the spot, or you’re going to have a kid that’s misbehaving of, ‘I don’t know how to play this game,’ or whatever it might be,” Wagner said. “So, the biggest thing is just being a leader, figuring things out, and problem solving.”

“They were very unruly sometimes; it was hard to get them under control,” eighth grader Chaselynn Hurley said. “But once you did, they were kind of like, locked in and listened to you. We weren’t like, just their teacher and just like, this person of

authority. We were also their friend. So it was kind of fun.”

Through those experiences, students saw significant growth in their own leadership skills.

“I strengthened so many of my leadership skills, whether that’s patience or responsibility,” eighth grader Kinley Myers said. “There were a lot of times where it was just me looking after six kids. Yes, the teacher was in the room or Mr. Wagner was in the room, but I was responsible for them, and I had to make sure they were getting a good learning opportunity, but one they also remember.”

Wagner’s vision is taking shape, and it is leading to additional collaboration opportunities between Westwood and Windsor.

“I think it has strengthened our community,” Kristen Myers said. “Other teachers are now partnering. Some sixth graders are coming over and working with our first graders. Our librarian is going over to Westwood’s library with some identified fifth graders, and they get to check out middle school books. So, it’s definitely spreading. They’re such a great resource for us. Every single Wolverine Buddy we’ve had has been engaged, and really helpful to these kids, which is nice.”

There is a video version of this story as well. To view, [click here](#) or visit youtube.com/@cheneypublicschools.



This group of Windsor fourth graders enjoy matching fractions during Wolverine Buddies time on Feb. 18.



Westwood eighth grader Seth Vallee works with second graders from Kristen Myers class on March 11.

DISTRICT NEWS

CHS Director of Bands Josh Wisswell Named NEMEA Region Educator of the Year

Cheney High School Director of Bands Josh Wisswell was named the Northeast Music Education Association (NEMEA) Region Educator of the Year in February, recognized during the Washington Music Educator Association's bi-annual awards ceremony in Yakima, Wash.

Selected by NEMEA members and leadership, the award honors outstanding contributions to music education across the region.

Wisswell, a Cheney High School alum, has led the CHS band program for the past eight years, building a culture of excellence and belonging. In November 2024, Wisswell led the CHS Marching Band and Color Guard at the Bands of America Grand National Championships in Indianapolis, Ind., becoming the first Washington state program in history to perform at the national event. His leadership continues to support the success of students, colleagues, and the entire CHS band program.



Josh Wisswell addresses the crowd during the District Jazz concert on March 23.

In recognizing Wisswell, NEMEA shared:

"The membership of the Cheney Band program lives under the motto 'Every Moment. Every Chance. For Each Always.', a powerful message for students to feel like

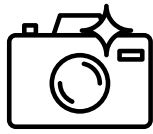
they contribute to a community. It is clear Josh has instilled a powerful culture within his program! Thank you Joshua Wisswell for all your dedication to Music Education in the Northeast!"

Help Name Cheney Public Schools' Newest Elementary School

We invite our entire Cheney Public Schools community to help name the District's newest elementary school, which will open in Airway Heights in fall 2027. This is an opportunity to help shape the identity of the new school and leave a lasting mark on our community.

If you would like to submit a name for consideration, please complete the Google Form [linked here](#). The form will remain open through Friday, April 10.





District Snapshots



Hailey Hammer, a speech therapist at Salnave Elementary, engages with this kindergartener in Mrs. Larson's class during free play on March 11.



This duo enjoys a round of Jenga during Westwood Middle School's 3rd Annual Literacy Night on March 9.



KXLY meteorologist Kris Crocker smiles as 3rd graders in Mrs. Craig's class at Snowden Elementary give her hugs following a classroom presentation on March 4.



District HVAC journeyman Rod McMichael shows Superintendent Ben Ferney some of the equipment he maintains and services every day.



Cheney High School junior Madison Anderson readies for the serve during doubles play against Pullman on March 12 at Salnave Park.



Clara Kissell, part of Mr. Wagner's 8th grade leadership class at Westwood Middle School, helps Windsor second grader Napua Kauhola during Westwood Buddies on March 11.



Andy Gardner (right), Jennifer Foland (center) and Mariah Stearns served as Community Representatives during the Principal Candidate Community Forum on March 3.



Home Works! 1st grader Anna O'Banion takes a pause during her Living Museum presentation on Irena Sendler, a Polish nurse and social worker, on March 12.



Cheney Mayor Elsa Martin addresses students at Cheney Middle School about bringing joy to the Cheney community on March 5.

NOTICES

Join Our Team: Journeyman Plumber Needed!



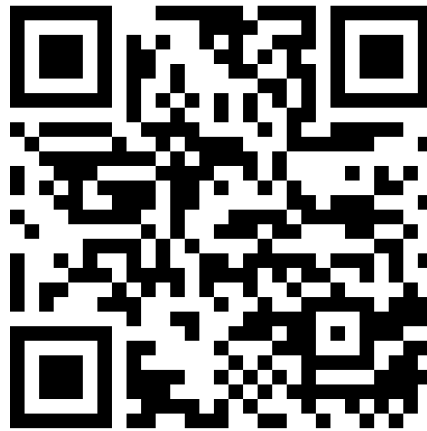
Cheney Public Schools is seeking qualified applicants for a journeyman plumber. The pay ranges from \$36.77 - \$41.50 per hour, depending on experience. This position includes perks such as:

- Job Stability
- Regular Working Hours
- Paid Holidays
- Paid Time Off
- Health Benefits
- Retirement Benefits

Click [this link](#) or scan the QR code below to access the application, then search Plumber, State Licensed Journeyman (PL01).

The application is open through Sunday, March 29 at 11:59 p.m. PST. To apply, you must provide:

- Resume
- Cover Letter
- Three (3) References & Three (3) Letters of Recommendations



Kindergarten Registration is Now Open!

Will your child be five (5) by August 31, 2026? If so, it's time to register for kindergarten! Kindergarten registration, as well as registration for all new students for the 2026-2027 school year, is now open. [Click here](#) or visit cheneysd.org for more information and to register.



Corrections & Clarifications

In the February edition of *Community Connections*, Jennifer Burgard's title was listed incorrectly. Her correct title is Resource Room Teacher.



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



Cheney Public Schools @cheneyschools



Questions or Feedback?

Do you have questions or feedback?

We're here to help! If you have any questions, concerns, or if there is something you would like to know more about, please reach out to Jenna Larson, Communications Coordinator at jl Larson@cheneysd.org.

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