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CRCSD Future Ready Today Newsletter

Listen to the Newsletter This Week!

We know life gets busy—between work, family, and everything else, it can be hard to keep up! That's why we're shaking things up and bringing you an easier way to stay in the loop. Introducing our new podcast-style update! In just a few minutes, you'll get all the highlights from this week's newsletter.

Hit the button below to listen, and if something catches your ear, scroll down for all the details. You can also find it on Spotify, Amazon Music, Podchaser, and YouTube.

Listen To The Podcast

A Letter from Superintendent Dr. Tawana Grover



Dear CRCSD Families,

As we continue working toward a district where everyone is equipped, empowered, and engaged to excel, our vision remains clear: *Every Learner. Future Ready*. This week has been one of advocacy, engagement, and progress—strengthening our commitment to excellence in education, student success, and community collaboration.

Through our School Improvement Advisory Council (SIAC) meeting this week, parents, staff, and community members came together to reflect on our Strategic Plan. One key theme emerged: the importance of stronger connections. Through community conversations, school visits, and direct engagement with families and staff, we have heard your insights and are committed to making families and staff true partners in our work.

Through community conversations, including our recent Pathways meetings at Washington, Jefferson, and Kennedy High Schools, we have heard your insights. The bond proposal is moving into its next phase, shaped by the valuable input of our task force and community members. The district aims to "right-size" its buildings, optimize operations, and manage financial resources efficiently. Declining enrollment means that the district operates more buildings than it needs.

Your strong support—90% from our dedicated high school staff, 95% from our parent advisory team, and 94% from community members—shows we're moving forward together thoughtfully.

Our focus remains clear:

- Modernizing facilities to enhance learning environments
- Improving safety & security for all schools

- Creating spaces that support 21st-century learning

Early childhood education remains at the forefront of our efforts. Research is clear: when children attend early childhood programs, they are more likely to graduate and succeed beyond high school. This is the first and most critical step in fulfilling our Portrait of a Graduate, ensuring every learner is equipped for college and career, empowered for life, and engaged in the community.

Cedar Rapids has a strong foundation and a rich tradition of excellence. Moving forward, we remain committed to these four key priorities:

1. Safe and Secure Schools – A learning environment where every student feels protected and supported
2. Students Ready for Life – Equipping learners with knowledge, skills, and experiences for their future
3. Strong Family & Staff Partnerships – Engaging families and staff as key partners in student success
4. Fiscal Responsibility – Making sound financial decisions that prioritize student learning

Our schools are more than just buildings—they are the heart of this city, preparing the next generation to lead, innovate, and serve.

Superintendent's Serenity:

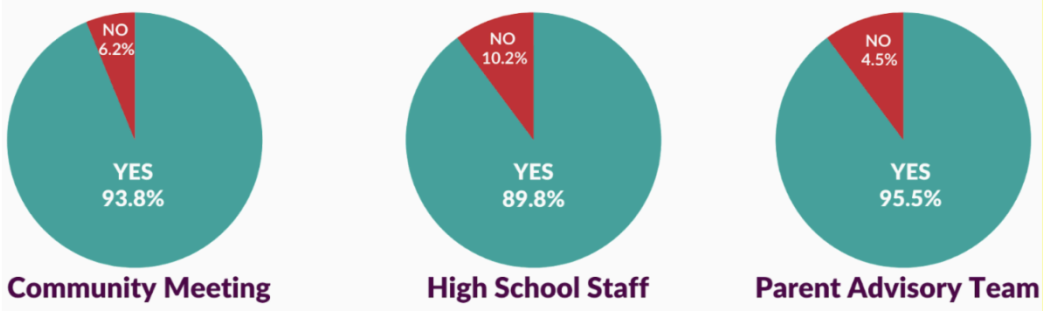
Serenity is not found in the absence of challenges but in the clarity of purpose. It is the quiet confidence that we are moving forward together, creating a future where every learner is equipped, empowered, and engaged to excel. When we focus on what truly matters—our students, our families, and our community—we create spaces where learning flourishes, voices are valued, and every child has the foundation to thrive.

With deep appreciation for our partnership,
Dr. Tawana Grover
Superintendent

College and Career Pathways: A Vision for Student Success

Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) recently held its second community informational meeting around the College & Career Pathways program. Students, staff, parents, and community members gathered to learn more about the program's development and implementation timeline. Based on feedback the district has received, an amended implementation timeline has been proposed that would allow for a more gradual rollout of the initiative. The proposed amended timeline would delay the full implementation of the program by one year. [You can find the proposed amended timeline here.]

Feedback from high school staff, the College & Career Pathways Parent Advisory Team, and attendees at the community meeting was overwhelmingly supportive of the revised timeline:



Construction and Facility Updates

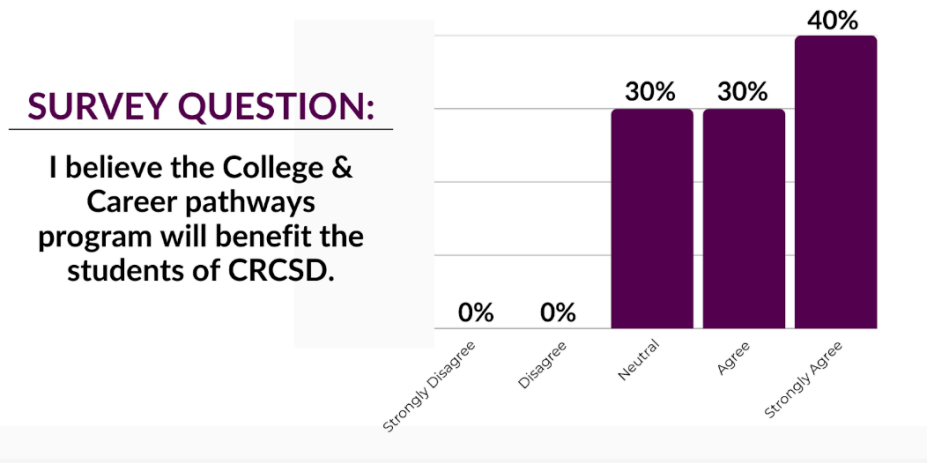
Attendees at the meeting also had the opportunity to view renderings and review the construction timelines for the Freshman Academy space and additional academy classroom space being added at Jefferson and Washington High Schools. These spaces will support the implementation of College and Career Pathways and provide dedicated learning environments for students.
Construction Timeline:

- Jefferson teachers voted to begin construction during **Spring Break 2025**.
- Construction at Washington High School will begin in **June 2025**.
- Freshman Academy spaces will be **ready for students by August 2026**.
- The remainder of the construction will be **completed by December 2026**.

Funding for these renovations and additions is being provided through **SAVE (state sales tax revenue) and PPEL (Physical Plant and Equipment Levy) funds**. Building principals, teachers, and special education staff were involved in the construction planning process and provided input into the design of the new spaces. The new spaces aim to provide flexibility to accommodate future programming needs.

Next Steps
Superintendent Dr. Tawana Grover acknowledged the need for improved communication and engagement regarding the College & Career Pathways program.
"*We remain steadfast in our belief that this program will equip our students with the tools they need to graduate future-ready*," said Superintendent Grover. "*However, we also recognize the importance of ensuring the implementation process reflects the needs and priorities of our students, families, and staff.*"

Attendees at the community meeting were also surveyed, and **70% believe this program will benefit CRCSD students.**



CRCSD remains committed to a thoughtful and collaborative approach to the College & Career Pathways program, ensuring that all students have access to high-quality, future-ready education.

The proposed amended implementation timeline and community feedback will be presented to the Board of Education on February 3, 2025. The Parent Advisory Group will continue to meet monthly to provide input and recommendations on the program. The district is planning another community informational meeting in June to provide further updates and gather additional feedback.

Stay tuned for further updates as we continue this important work together!

CRCSD Advocates for Students



On January 28, members of the Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) Board of Education, along with Superintendent Dr. Tawana Grover, traveled to the Iowa State Capitol for *Day on the Hill*. They joined statewide representatives from the Area Education Agency (AEA), Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB), and School Administrators of Iowa to advocate for critical public education issues impacting our students.

The CRCSD team met with nearly all Cedar Rapids area legislators, engaging in productive discussions on key topics such as increasing Supplemental State Aid and funding for full-day preschool for four-year-olds. They stressed the need for additional state support to sustain vital personnel, initiatives, and support systems for students.

Additionally, representatives from CRCSD's Office of Academics set up a display in the Capitol Rotunda, highlighting the district's work in early literacy, the science of reading, and the implementation of the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum in K-5 classrooms this year.

Day on the Hill is a valuable opportunity for CRCSD leaders to ensure the voices of students, educators, and families are heard at the state level. The district remains committed to advocating for the resources needed to provide a high-quality education for all students.

Click here to see CRCSD's legislative priorities.

Superintendent's Community Cabinet



CRCSD Superintendent Dr. Tawana Grover met with her Community Cabinet this week to discuss key initiatives shaping the district's future. These meetings foster collaboration between district leadership and community leaders, ensuring schools continue to evolve to meet the needs of students, families, and educators.

A major focus was the **upcoming bond initiative**, which is key to right-sizing our district to be more fiscally responsible. The district aims to "right-size" its buildings, optimize operations, and manage financial resources efficiently. Declining enrollment means that the district operates more buildings than it needs. Every year CRCSD spends approx. $30 million more than necessary to operate these buildings. **The College & Career Pathways Program** was also highlighted, providing students with opportunities to earn college credits, gain industry-recognized credentials, and participate in career-focused experiences—helping reduce tuition costs and prepare them for the workforce.

For parents, these initiatives mean better resources for students, stronger schools that maintain property values, and a say in shaping their children's education. Engaging families in these conversations ensures schools remain well-supported and responsive to the needs of the community. Stay tuned for updates and ways to get involved!

Magnet Spotlight



The **Cedar Rapids Community School District Magnet Lottery** is now open for students in **grades K-8**! Families interested in unique, theme-based learning opportunities are encouraged to apply. Learn more about the lottery and how to apply here.

Magnet Spotlight
Kenwood Leadership Academy is a magnet school with a strong focus on leadership development through the "Leader in Me" program. This approach empowers students to build essential skills such as responsibility, communication, and teamwork—helping them grow into confident, proactive leaders.

By weaving leadership principles into everyday learning, Kenwood nurtures students who are prepared for success both in school and in life. The school's hands-on, student-centered approach ensures that every child is equipped to take initiative, make thoughtful decisions, and contribute positively to their community.



RoughRiders Educator Appreciation Night

Great teachers shape great futures. Every day, CRCSD educators go above and beyond to support students academically and personally. This year, Corda Credit Union, the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders, and the Teacher Store are honoring educators who make a lasting impact.

Meet the CRCSD Educators Being Honored!

- Christy Bryant – Erskine Elementary
- Lauren Erickson – Grant Wood Elementary
- Nicole Herman – Jefferson High School
- Megan Lewis – Washington High School
- Sarah Lowe – Kennedy High School
- Brooke McWilliams – Nixon Elementary
- Katelyn Schrader – Hiawatha Elementary
- Allison Vallad – Harding Middle School

Let's pack the arena and show appreciation for the incredible teachers who make a difference daily! Your cheers and support mean the world to them and remind us all that education is a team effort. Get your tickets here

SIAC: Community Voice Matters



The **School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC)** met on Tuesday, January 28, bringing together parents, students, teachers, administrators, board members, and community members to discuss key district initiatives. CRCSD leaders shared updates on student achievement, graduation, and attendance data, along with progress on long-term and annual goals in reading and math. The group also reviewed the first pillar of the district's Strategic Plan—Elevating Student Plans, Passions, and Pathways—which focuses on Student Achievement, Equitable Student Outcomes, a Safe & Secure Learning Environment, and Graduating College & Career Ready Students.

Discussions included student proficiency data from the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress, showing that students are currently below the state average in Language Arts and Math. Members emphasized the need for greater student accountability and additional resources for those not meeting proficiency standards. Attendance has slightly improved since the state law change, and the group reviewed School Resource Officer (SRO) data, noting progress in reducing charges and addressing disproportionality. Additionally, bullying and harassment policies were reviewed to ensure alignment with Iowa Code Section 280.28.

Committee members also discussed student services, special education, and behavior support initiatives and reviewed the amended timeline for the College & Career Pathways program rollout based on community feedback. The SIAC plays a crucial role in shaping the future of CRCSD, providing valuable input that directly influences district decisions. Thank you to all SIAC members for your time, dedication, and commitment to our students and schools!

Sharing Our Vision with Community Leaders: Rotary Presentation



Superintendent Dr. Grover presented Cedar Rapids Community School District's vision for the future to Daybreak Rotary, along with Director of Business Services Adam Zimmermann and Director of Operations Chad Schumacher.
The presentation explained how the district aims to "right-size" its buildings, optimize operations, and manage financial resources efficiently, expanding on the priorities she outlined in her message above. With declining enrollment, our district currently operates more buildings than needed, spending approximately $30 million more than necessary annually to operate these buildings.

These community presentations strengthen local business and civic leaders' engagement in supporting your children's education. Strong community partnerships help maintain property values, create career opportunities for your students, and ensure our schools remain well-supported pillars of Cedar Rapids.

We encourage you to stay informed about these exciting changes that will shape your children's educational experience. Watch for upcoming announcements about community presentations and bond information sessions. Your voice matters in this important conversation about our schools' future. Together, we're building schools that will prepare your children to lead, innovate, and serve.

Glance Around CRCSD



Kenwood's Mrs. Weber's 1st Grade Leaders earned a trophy for making the most growth at KLA on FAST this Fall/Winter and celebrated by ringing the Goal Gong.



Trailside held its first-ever specials concert, showcasing the talents of 4th and 5th graders in Art, PE, and Music.



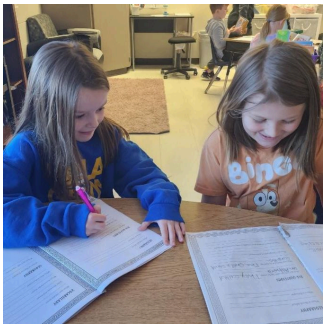
Hiawatha students wrapped up their balance kit and gymnastics unit in PE, mastering new skills and movement techniques.



McKinley STEAM Academy welcomed Erskine 5th graders for a robot extravaganza, where they built robots, explored digital design, raced Sphero bots, and even drove a real robotics team robot.



Kennedy's Jazz 1 recorded for the KCCK Corridor Jazz Project with guest artist and Kennedy alum, Laci McHenry.



Viola Gibson's third graders embarked on an epic Viking adventure, exploring Norse mythology, legendary explorers, and daring voyages to Greenland, Iceland, and Newfoundland.

In the News

In case you missed it, here are recent news items about or of interest to Cedar Rapids Community School District students, teachers, and parents.

- Gazette: Cedar Rapids schools to host Pathways update meetings
- Iowa News Now: Cedar Rapids schools assures families of law enforcement guidelines amid ICE concerns
- KCRG: CRSD parents continue to question "Pathways" program after district slows the rollout

Jefferson High School Activities Calendar

Kennedy High School Activities Calendar

Washington High School Activities Calendar



CRCSD is hiring! View open positions and apply here.



Learn more about breakfast and lunch meals here.



View your school's virtual backpack

Follow us on social media for the latest updates:

Sign up for Future Ready Today

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the Cedar Rapids Community School District not to discriminate in educational programs and/or activities on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, gender identity, socioeconomic status, national origin, religion, disability, age (except for permitting/prohibiting students to engage in certain activities) or genetic information and in employment opportunities on the basis of age, race, creed, color, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability or genetic information. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact Darius Ballard, Chief of Human Resources, Educational Leadership and Support Center, 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA, (319) 558-2000.

January 31, 2025

Cedar Rapids Community School District | 2500 Edgewood Dr NW | Cedar Rapids, IA 52405 US

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