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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

Strong Schools. Strong Community.
From the Superintendent's Desk: Where Learning Meets Community - Strong Schools Building Strong Futures

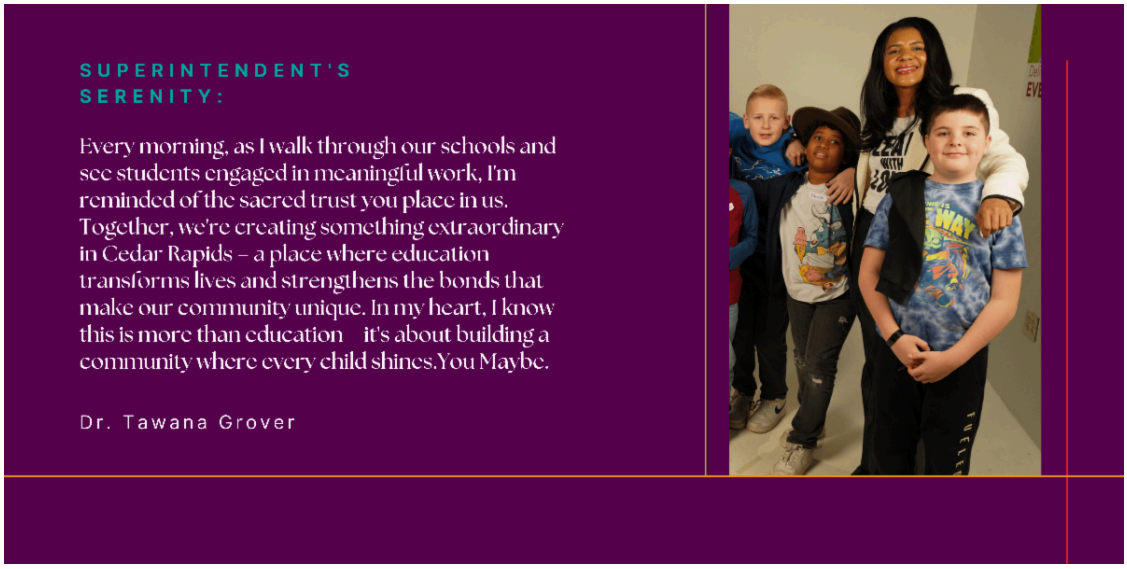
Dear CRCSD Families,

In the quiet moments before dawn, as I reflect on the heart of education in Cedar Rapids, I'm filled with profound gratitude. Two years ago, we embarked on a journey with City View High School, born from conversations with parents, educators, and business leaders who envisioned a different way of learning. When you entrust your children's education to us, you become part of this remarkable story of transformation and hope.

The numbers showcase our progress: 2,250 internship hours completed and 46 college credits earned. But parents tell the real story that moves my heart: **"My child has become a completely different person under this philosophy. She has gone from YEARS of absolutely hating school to waking up every morning wanting to go."** These transformations happen because our dedicated educators understand that each student's path to excellence is uniquely their own.

"Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly." Like this metamorphosis, City View exemplifies how we honor your trust—creating opportunities that prepare your children for life beyond our walls. In the bustling halls of the Economic Alliance, I witness students discovering their passions and building their futures. This innovative approach complements our comprehensive high schools, weaving together a tapestry of opportunities for every family.

When we invest in strong schools, we invest in the dreams you hold for your children. The upcoming bond referendum isn't just about buildings—it's about creating spaces where innovation flourishes and every child finds their path. Your support creates a ripple effect: **strong schools nurture families, strong families build neighborhoods, and together we make Cedar Rapids a place where everyone is equipped, empowered, and engaged to excel.**



This is the Heart of Cedar Rapids Schools: Everyone Equipped. Everyone Empowered. Everyone Engaged to Excel.

With deep gratitude and hope for our shared future,
Dr. Tawana Grover
Superintendent
Learn more: https://cityview.crschools.us/

CRCSD Bond Survey Arriving Next Week – Share Your Input!



Next week, registered voters in the Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) will receive a survey in the mail to gather community input on a proposed bond initiative aimed at modernizing and improving our schools to better meet the needs of our students, while still keeping our tax rate one of the lowest in Linn County. Parents and community members are encouraged to complete and return the survey by March 5 to help shape the future of our schools.

The bond proposal includes four key projects that will impact more than 5,000 students:

- Kennedy High School Renovation – $12 million
- New Middle School on the Northeast Side – $104 million
- Wilson Middle School Renovation (transitioning to an elementary school) – $35.7 million
- McKinley Middle School Renovation – $58.9 million

Learn more about the proposed bond initiative at build.crschools.us and listen to our newest podcast episode CRCSD Homeroom. This week, Joe Larsen sits down with Chad Schumacher and Evette Creighton to discuss the upcoming bond, the survey, and what it means for our schools. Listen to the audio version on Buzzsprout, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and more—or watch the video version on YouTube. Stay connected and informed with this new resource!

Audio Podcast Video Podcast

College & Career Pathways Update

Thank you to everyone who attended our second community informational meeting about the College & Career Pathways program. Your engagement helped shape important decisions about your children's future.

We Heard Your Feedback: Based on valuable input from students, staff, parents, and community members, we're making thoughtful adjustments to ensure success:

- Full program launch moved to 2026-2027 school year
- More time for student and family input
- Additional preparation time for staff and resources
- Gradual implementation to ensure smooth transition

New Learning Spaces Coming to Your Schools: To support the College & Career Pathways program, we're creating new Freshman Academy and academy classroom spaces at both high schools:

Jefferson High School
- Construction begins: Spring Break 2025
- Freshman Academy ready: August 2026
- Project completion: December 2026

Washington High School
- Construction begins: June 2025
- Freshman Academy ready: August 2026
- Project completion: December 2026

Thoughtful Planning Process
- Building principals, teachers, and special education staff are actively involved in designing these spaces
- Construction funded through existing SAVE and PPEL funds - no additional cost to taxpayers
- Spaces specifically designed to support new learning approaches and student needs

Stay Involved: Your voice matters in shaping this program. We'll continue to hold community meetings and share updates as we move forward.

Congratulations to Kayla Nelson



We are thrilled to announce that Kayla Nelson is no longer serving as *Interim Principal*—she has officially been named *Principal* of Nixon Elementary! Please join us in congratulating Kayla on this well-deserved recognition.

As interim principal, Kayla has shown remarkable dedication, leadership, and a deep commitment to Nixon's students, staff, and families. As the school's permanent principal, she is eager to continue building on that momentum. Here's what she had to say about this exciting new chapter:

"I am so honored to have the privilege of being named Nixon's principal. I am committed as Nixon's principal to ensure that every student and educator feels supported and empowered within their teaching and learning to be able to provide opportunities for students to grow and succeed. My vision for Nixon is to continue to strengthen relationships with families and our community, expand our academic foundation, equip and engage staff, provide a safe, positive, and inclusive learning environment for all, and lead with kindness and integrity. Keep an eye on us, we are building something magical here! Let's go, Bobcats!"

Kayla's passion for education and dedication to Nixon's success is inspiring, and we are excited to see all that she and the Nixon team will accomplish under her leadership. Congratulations, Principal Nelson!

Creating a Safer, More Supportive Learning Environment—Together

Parents, we have great news! Across our district, we're seeing real progress in making our schools safer and more structured for all students. Since the fall, there have been **fewer office referrals**, especially for **physical aggression, fighting, and crisis events**. Restraints have also steadily declined each month. This means fewer disruptions, a more positive school experience, and better support for students who need it.

What's making the difference? **A team effort**. Our schools are focusing on:
- **Clear expectations**—making sure students know what's expected of them.
- **Positive reinforcement**—recognizing and rewarding good choices.
- **Targeted support**—helping students who need extra guidance.
- **Better communication**—tracking data to understand and meet student needs.

By working together, we're creating a school culture built on **safety, respect, and accountability**—where every child can thrive.

Join Us: Supporting Our Students Event
February 19th | ELSC
- Hear from district leaders Ryals Parker and Janessa Carr as they discuss:
- The DOJ Agreement and what it means for our schools
- Our latest behavior data & safety initiatives
- Upcoming Safe & Secure Learning Parent University sessions
- Live Q&A—ask your questions!

Can't make it in person? Join us on **YouTube Live**!
Let's keep working together to create the best learning environment for our students. Hope to see you there!

Exciting News: Our New Reading Curriculum is Making a Difference!

We have some fantastic news to share about how our young readers are growing! This year, our K-5 students started using the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum, a research-backed approach that's changing the way we teach reading.

A Strong Start: Early Successes in Reading
We're just five months in, but we're already seeing some amazing progress! This January, students took their winter FAST reading assessments, and several schools had grade levels meeting or even exceeding the state's goal of 80% reading proficiency. Check out these impressive results:

Grant Wood Kindergarteners – 91% at or above benchmark
Hiawatha Kindergarteners – 80% at or above benchmark
Madison Kindergarteners – 88% at or above benchmark
Pierce Kindergarteners – 85% at or above benchmark
Pierce 5th Graders – 81% at or above benchmark
West Willow Kindergarteners – 83% at or above benchmark
Viola Gibson (Whole School!) – 84% at or above benchmark

A Big Thank You
This success wouldn't be possible without the dedication of our incredible **teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, and curriculum team**. Their hard work in bringing CKLA to life is already making a real impact on our students' futures.

And of course, **thank YOU, families**! Your support at home—whether it's reading bedtime stories, practicing sight words, or simply encouraging your child to love books—makes all the difference.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, selected as a Nature Everywhere Community

Cedar Rapids has been selected as a **Nature Everywhere Community**, a national initiative to expand children's access to nature. Through this program, our schools will receive support to develop greener schoolyards, enhancing outdoor learning, play, and climate resiliency.

In partnership with the Children & Nature Network, the National League of Cities, and KABOOM!, the Cedar Rapids Community School District, the City of Cedar Rapids, and Indian Creek Nature Center will work together to:

- Engage students and families in planning outdoor learning spaces
- Develop action plans for sustainable green schoolyards
- Seek funding for long-term improvements

Research shows that outdoor time benefits academic performance, mental well-being, and overall child development. This initiative will create healthier environments where students can thrive.

For more information, visit Children & Nature Network's Nature Everywhere Initiative.

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
McKinley STEAM Academy has a STEAM theme with an emphasis on medical sciences and the arts
This magnet school offers a STEAM-focused curriculum with a unique emphasis on medical sciences and the arts. It provides students with hands-on learning experiences in healthcare and creative disciplines. By blending these fields, the school encourages students to explore innovative solutions at the intersection of medicine, technology, and artistic expression.

Iowa Dental Certification Law: Kindergarten & 9th Grade Students



Iowa law requires that any student entering kindergarten and ninth grade provide a valid Iowa Department of Public Health Certificate of Dental. This form is available through your school nurse dentist or on the CRCSD website under the student services/health services section. Click here for the form.

Please ask your dentist to complete a form and turn it in to your child's school nurse. The goal of this legislation is for each student to receive the benefit of early and regular dental care, including prevention, and to establish a dental home for children who may not have one. If you do not have a dentist and need help accessing one, contact the I-Smile Program Manager at 319-329-5970.

I-Smile also offers walk-in dental screenings for kindergarten and 9th graders. Students will get screened and have a completed dental certification form. Click here to view dental screening dates and times.

I-Smile @ School

I-Smile @ School may be visiting your child's school during the school year.

Students/families will receive a consent form, and we ask that everyone fill out a form that receives one and send it back whether marked yes or no. A licensed Dental hygienist will come to the school and may provide a screening, sealants, and fluoride to those that need treatment. This is at no cost to families.

Sealants are placed on teeth' chewing surfaces to help prevent cavities from forming. They are quick, easy, and painless, helping seal in deep grooves that catch food debris. Dental Health is essential and can affect your child's ability to learn/focus, eat, and speak.

Dental concerns can also have profound health implications. I-Smile will also help families find a dental home or overcome other barriers to seeking dental treatment. This service is essential to our community.

Services for Homeless Students

If you or your family are facing housing instability or displacement, you are eligible for support under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Please contact your school office and ask to speak to the McKinney-Vento liaison to find out more about your rights and available services.

Your child's education matters, and we are committed to ensuring all students have access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, families who are experiencing unstable housing have the right to:

- Enroll their children in school immediately, even without the usual documents or proof of residence.
- Access to transportation to and from school.
- Receive support to ensure student's academic success.

Your child's education matters, and we are committed to ensuring all students have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

Glance Around CRCSD



Erskine Elementary buddy classrooms teamed up for a special activity, helping students connect across grades and strengthen their school community.



To kick off Black History Month, Washington's BSU students spoke at McKinley STEAM Academy's "Black Excellence" Program, featuring Kyra Brown on Black Excellence and spoken word performances by EJ Miller and Sebastian Powers.



Viola Gibson Kindergarten students practiced teamwork and collaboration by working together to build the strongest fortress.



Hoover Elementary Kindergarten students collaborated to create drawings of kingdoms, first individually and then as teams to build a complete kingdom picture.



Nixon Elementary 3rd graders showcased their teamwork skills, demonstrating great progress since their first activity—proving that teamwork makes the dream work!



McKinley STEAM Academy's dance team won CE Prairie Premiere Grand Champs and Best Choreography—an incredible day to be a BEAR!

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.

- KCRG: https://www.kcrg.com/2025/02/05/crcsd-sending-bond-survey-community-members/

Jefferson High School Activities Calendar

Kennedy High School Activities Calendar

Washington High School Activities Calendar

Learn more about

CRCSD is hiring! View open positions and apply here.

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.

February 7, 2025

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

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