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Cedar Rapids Community School District

The First Day of School is One Week Away!



A Message from Dr. Tawana Grover



Dear CRCSD Families,

I hope that all of our students and staff are enjoying the last few days of summer! I want to officially welcome you to the 2024-2025 School year! We are looking forward to welcoming ALL of our students (K-12) back for the start of another outstanding school year on August 23rd. Remember, this will be an early dismissal day, with elementary schools dismissing at 2:20 PM and middle and high schools dismissing at 1:20 PM.

To help you and your student prepare for the start of school, we have created a Back-to-School page on our district website. On the page, we have shared a variety of helpful resources, school supply lists, a back-to-school event schedule, and much more. I invite you to check it out at crschools.us/Back-to-School.

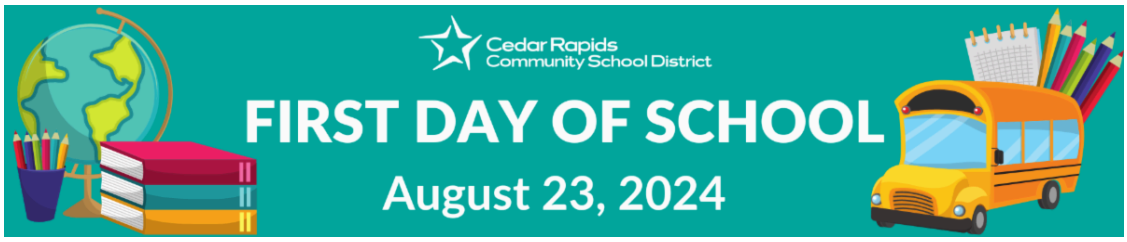
Our summer has been productive. I am grateful to all of our 12-month employees for their dedication and hard work in preparing every classroom, office, and shared school space for the new year. We have kept busy with various professional development and school improvement projects, including parking lot repairs, classroom cleaning, hiring new staff and administrators, and, most importantly, thinking of new and meaningful ways to engage our students, families, and communities!

As Superintendent, I am thankful for the continued support and partnerships with our families and community. This spring, nearly 10,000 of you participated in our community-wide survey, demonstrating your genuine interest in helping shape our district's future.

Your engagement is the cornerstone of our success. We must all continue to work together - schools, families, and communities, so our students can succeed.

Thank you for your trust and partnership in this journey. Here's to another year of growth, achievement, fun, and success!

Superintendent Dr. Tawana Grover



Getting Ready For The First Day of School

Preparations For The New Year Are Underway



Staff across the district have been busy this month working hard to prepare for the start of another school year.

Earlier this month, district and school administrators participated in several days of professional development. The sessions provided an opportunity to reflect on last year's success and identify new areas for growth. They also strengthened ties with the community by visiting and learning about several local businesses. It was a fantastic day filled with meaningful conversations and team building.



This Monday marked the start of the week-long Magnet Institute, where staff from the district's Magnet Schools gathered to collaborate on innovative curriculum development and share fresh ideas. The event underscored the district's commitment to providing unique and engaging educational experiences for students across its six magnet schools.



On Wednesday, the district welcomed 132 new teachers with a two-day orientation designed to familiarize them with our district, current policies and procedures, technology, and curriculum. These new educators are a welcome addition to the CRCSD family, and the district is eager to see the positive impact they will have on students and schools.

In preparation for the new year, the district's Transportation Department hosted a Bus Rodeo, giving bus drivers a chance to review their safety procedures and sharpen their driving skills. With the important responsibility of safely transporting students to and from school each day, the event was just one way to ensure our drivers are ready for the year ahead.

Next week, the district looks forward to welcoming back all teachers and support staff for additional professional development and the highly anticipated All Staff Kick-Off Event.

The excitement is building as CRCSD prepares to launch into another year of learning, growth, and community.



What Not to Include in Your First Day of School Photos



As the new school year begins, social media platforms will soon be filled with photos of smiling kids on the first day of school. Whether it is the first day of kindergarten, 4th grade, or 10th grade, capturing and sharing these milestones has become a tradition. However, it's important to be mindful of the details you share in these photos to help keep your kids safe.

Often, first day of school photos show kids holding a sign with their name, age, school, and even their teacher's name or favorite activities. Sharing this much information online could put your family at risk. Predators and cybercriminals can use these seemingly harmless details to track down your child or guess passwords and security questions to access your accounts.

To keep your students safe, avoid including any personally identifiable information in your posts. Ensure your photos don't show your house number, street name, license plates, school name, or any other details that could reveal your child's location. If you do take photos with personally identifiable information, try to avoid posting them online. You can also review the privacy settings on your social media accounts and limit the audience for these posts.

Complete Annual Verification For Your Student



Have you completed the Annual Verification process for your student yet? All families must complete this each year to confirm their student's enrollment in one of our schools. This is also where you will confirm your student's home address and contact information, update emergency contacts, complete yearly eligibility for reduced school fees, qualify for district transportation, and complete annual student release forms. Ensure your student is all set for the start of the school year by logging on to the Infinite Campus Parent Portal and completing their Annual Verification today!

- How to Complete Annual Verification - English
- How to Complete Annual Verification - Spanish
- How to Complete Annual Verification - Swahili
- How to Complete Annual Verification - French

Attendance Policy Updates



We want to share some important changes to our district's student attendance policy. Due to recent changes to the Iowa Code (SF 2435) concerning student absenteeism, truancy, and compulsory attendance requirements, we are revising our district's attendance policies to ensure compliance with the new legal requirements. New definitions and thresholds for chronic absenteeism and truancy have been created. Also, new guidelines for parent notification and intervention procedures have been established. It is important to note that the new legislation does not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences; all absences count toward the total time missed. With these policy changes, our goal is to enhance our procedures, give parents and students clearer guidelines, and reduce school absenteeism. Click the button below to see the key changes to our student attendance policy.

Learn more about attendance policy updates

Bus Reminder for All Students



As we prepare for the start of the new school year, our Transportation Department is working hard to finalize bus routes and student pick-up and drop-off times.

To help with this process, we are asking for your assistance. If your student rode the school bus last year, the transportation department is already planning for them to ride it again this year. If that is NOT the case, we ask that you please communicate that to your student's school office as soon as possible. If your student just needs busing for only before school or only after school, and not both, please communicate that as well. This information is essential to help us better plan bus routes for the new school year.

The Transportation Department plans to release student bus transportation details on Monday, August 19th, and this information will be posted in your student's section of the Infinite Campus Portal and in the StopFinder parent app.

CEP Schools for the 2024-25 School Year



For the 2024-2025 school year, CRCSD is participating in the Community Eligibility Provisions (CEP) Program. This government program helps to offer breakfast and lunch at no cost to students in qualifying schools. This year, 27 of our buildings have qualified for this federal program and will provide free meals for all their students. The 27 schools are:

- Elementary: Cleveland, Cedar River Academy, Erskine, Grant, Grant Wood, Harrison, Hiawatha, Hoover, Johnson STEAM Academy, Kenwood Leadership Academy, Madison, Nixon, Trailside, Van Buren, West Willow, Wright, and Truman Early Learning

- Middle Schools: Harding, Franklin, McKinley STEAM Academy, Roosevelt Creative Corridor Business Academy, and Wilson

- High Schools: City View, Jefferson, Metro, Washington, and Polk Alternative

For the five schools that did not qualify for this federal program, parents/guardians can still apply for free and reduced student meals. The five schools are Maple Grove, Pierce, Viola Gibson, Taft, and Kennedy. To apply for free or reduced meal fees at these schools, you must complete the Social Economic Survey and the release agreement through Annual Verification to determine eligibility. Meal Prices for these schools are:

Elementary Meals	Secondary Meals	Adult Meals
Breakfast - $2.35	Breakfast - $2.35	Breakfast - $2.75
Lunch - $3.30	Lunch - $3.40	Lunch - $4.85

Families can access the school breakfast and lunch menus online through Nutrislice. We recommend that you review the menus with your student ahead of time to help them plan for their meals.

Other News and Updates

New Buildings Coming for Hoover and Van Buren Elementary



The Cedar Rapids School Board was met with cheers and applause after their unanimous 7-0 vote in favor of constructing new facilities at Hoover and Van Buren Elementary Schools at a special Board Meeting on August 12, 2024. The decision comes amid ongoing enrollment growth and capacity issues within each attendance zone. Funding for the construction will be sourced from SAVE (Secure an Advanced Vision for Education) funds, ensuring that the district remains fiscally responsible while addressing these pressing needs. The new buildings will be designed to accommodate the area's growing student population, support the diverse needs of students, and provide a modern, safe learning environment. Additionally, the new facilities will help maximize the "Community School" concept, serving as vital resources for the surrounding neighborhoods. The new buildings are projected to open in the fall of 2027.

PPEL Renewal Coming

There are several funding sources for facilities-related improvements, updates, repairs, and upgrades for a school district. One of those is the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL).



For 50 years, our community has supported PPEL, a critical funding source for the Cedar Rapids Community School District. It supports essential projects such as building maintenance, equipment purchases, and facility upgrades. **PPEL is up for a renewal vote on Tuesday, September 10, 2024.**

If approved, PPEL would be extended for another 10 years without raising the existing property tax rate. This funding is vital for maintaining the district's infrastructure and ensuring safe and secure schools for students. We are so thankful that our community has historically invested in our district through PPEL. We encourage you to mark your calendars for September 10th.

Also, please see **THIS video** about different funding “buckets” and **THIS video**, which explains PPEL in more detail.

ABSENTEE VOTING: As you likely know, absentee voting provides a convenient option for those unable to vote in person on the scheduled date of an election. If you wish to vote absentee in the upcoming election, you must request a ballot in advance and ensure it is submitted by the **deadline of 08/26/2024**. For detailed instructions on absentee voting, including how to request an absentee ballot, please refer to the Linn County voting resources HERE.

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: New task force begins examining Cedar Rapids schools' needs
- KCRG: CRCSD votes to build two new elementary schools
- KGAN: Cedar Rapids Community School District holds Bus Rodeo

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.

August 16, 2024

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