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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**! 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 Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, and YouTube.**

Listen To The Podcast

A Message from Superintendent Grover



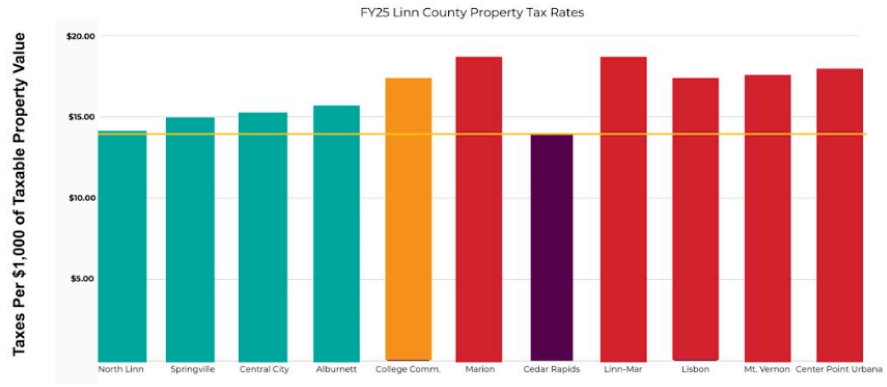
Dear CRCSD Families, Staff, and Community,

I want to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to each of you for your ongoing support and involvement in shaping the future of our schools. Your commitment to our children's education and your dedication to the Cedar Rapids community mean so much. Thank you to the more than 7,500 individuals who took the time to complete the recent bond survey. Your voice matters, and your feedback will play a critical role in shaping the future of our schools.

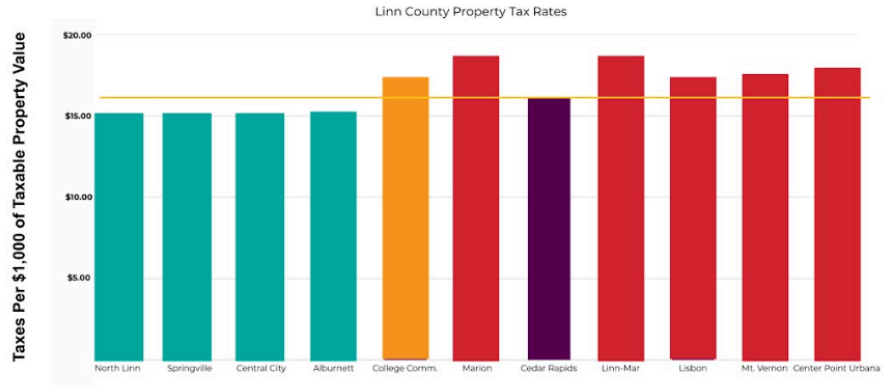
As we move forward, I want to address some of the questions and concerns many of you have shared about the proposed school bond, ensuring you have clear and honest answers as we plan for the future of our district.

Fiscal Responsibility: Tough Decisions Ahead
Cedar Rapids currently has the lowest school tax rate in our area, but we are facing significant challenges with aging school facilities. Whether or not the bond passes, we will need to make some tough decisions. Our older schools are becoming less efficient, and maintaining them in their current state isn't sustainable. While we have the lowest tax rate, it's important to note that fiscal responsibility means making these tough choices now to ensure we protect the future of our district—and, ultimately, the future of all children's education.

CURRENT TAX RATES: LOWEST IN LINN COUNTY



HOW WE COMPARE WITH THE PROPOSED BOND:



The School Efficiency Challenge
One of the primary goals of this bond is to address the inefficiencies in our elementary and middle schools. Right now, we have several schools operating below capacity, which leads to wasted resources. By consolidating some of these schools, we can provide better support for students, use staff more effectively, and free up savings to invest directly into improving the educational experience for all students.

Enrollment Realities and Our Competitive Position
While enrollment numbers have fluctuated in recent years, we are seeing strong growth in certain parts of Cedar Rapids. At the same time, neighboring districts with newer schools are becoming more attractive to families. This bond is about more than just keeping up with today's needs; it's about making sure that Cedar Rapids continues to be a great place for families to live and grow for years to come.

Understanding the Land Purchase
Many of you have asked about the $7.5 million land purchase for a new middle school. This land was bought with PPEL (Physical Plant and Equipment Levy) funds, and it's located in one of the fastest-growing parts of our community. This land's value increased when it transitioned from agricultural to educational use, making it an investment in our district's long-term future. Importantly, PPEL funds can only be used for facility improvements and land acquisition—they can't be used for things like classroom materials or teacher salaries.

The Benefits Beyond the Buildings
The consolidation and modernization of our facilities will have far-reaching benefits:

- For your child: Improved learning spaces and more resources to help them succeed.
- For teachers: Better spaces to collaborate and the latest technology to enhance teaching.
- For our community: Schools that will help stabilize and enhance neighborhood property values.

- For taxpayers: More efficient use of resources, ensuring we're maximizing the value of every dollar spent.

Continuing Our Legacy
Cedar Rapids has a long history of supporting education, and the schools we have today were built by the hard work and dedication of those who came before us. Now, it's our turn to continue that legacy by making smart investments that will benefit not only today's students but also tomorrow's community leaders, workers, and caretakers.

Your Voice Matters
Thank you again to everyone who shared their thoughts through the bond survey. Your input has been invaluable and will guide our next steps. As we move forward, we will carefully analyze the results and share those findings with the Community Bond Task Force and the Cedar Rapids

Board of Education.
Regardless of the bond's outcome, the challenges we face as a district won't go away. What matters most is how we face them—together, with transparency and a shared commitment to making decisions that will benefit all of us, now and in the future.

"While the decisions we face may be tough, they are made with one clear purpose: to secure a brighter future for our children. As we navigate the challenges of aging facilities, we do so with the unwavering belief that every student deserves the best learning environment possible. Together, as a community, we will make the choices today that will empower our students, support our families, and build a legacy of opportunity and success for generations to come."— *Dr. Tawana Grover*

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we will build a bright future for our students.

Dr. Tawana Grover
Superintendent
Cedar Rapids Community School District

Taft Middle School Welcomes New Leadership



The Cedar Rapids Community School District is proud to announce that Jessiah Gilchrist has been named the new principal of Taft Middle School, effective July 1, 2025, pending board approval.

Mr. Gilchrist will succeed Gary Hatfield, who is retiring at the end of this school year after an incredible 33 years of dedicated service to the district.

Currently serving as Taft's assistant principal since 2020, Mr. Gilchrist has been an integral part of the school community for nearly 16 years, having started as a teacher at Taft in 2009. His deep connection to the school, along with his leadership and commitment to student success, made him the clear choice for this role. The selection committee, which included Taft staff, parents, and district administrators, recognized his firsthand knowledge and experience with the strong, positive culture at Taft and his dedication to continuing that tradition while also focusing on increasing student achievement.

"Taft has held a long tradition of educational excellence among its teachers, support staff, families, and student body," said Mr. Gilchrist. "I am deeply humbled and excited to have the opportunity to serve the Taft community in this new role and look forward to continuing the great work being done every day."

Mr. Hatfield, who has been a respected leader at Taft, expressed confidence in this decision:

“As our new principal, Jessiah Gilchrist is uniquely qualified to lead the Taft Family,” said Mr. Hatfield. “We look forward to witnessing his leadership as he develops partnerships with families, creates systems to support all students, and fosters a positive learning and working environment. The future is bright at Taft.”

In the coming months, Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Gilchrist will work closely to ensure a smooth transition for students, staff, and families. Please join us in congratulating Mr. Gilchrist on this well-deserved opportunity and in thanking Mr. Hatfield for his many years of service to Taft and the Cedar Rapids Community School District.

Metro’s Chuck Tonelli Named 2025 Iowa STEM Teacher Award Recipient



Metro Alternative High School is thrilled to celebrate Mr. Chuck Tonelli, the recipient of the **2025 Iowa STEM Teacher Award!** As a dedicated science teacher and STEAM Academy Coordinator, Mr. Tonelli has spent 20 years shaping the future of education with hands-on, real-world learning experiences that empower students to thrive.

Through the METRO STEAM Academy, he has **built meaningful partnerships with over 100 community organizations**, giving students opportunities to develop critical skills in communication, creativity, and entrepreneurship. His projects extend beyond the classroom, from creating museum exhibits at the National Czech & Slovak Museum to launching the Young Entrepreneurs Market at NewBo City Market, where students see their ideas come to life in impactful ways.

Mr. Tonelli’s dedication is significant for Metro students, who face significant challenges. By fostering confidence and career readiness, he ensures that every student has the opportunity to succeed. His commitment reflects Metro’s "**Whatever It Takes**" vision, proving that all students can reach their full potential when given the right support.

Congratulations, Mr. Tonelli! Thank you for inspiring our students and making a lasting impact on our community.

Celebrating Our Young Leaders: CRCSD 14 Under 14 Awards



Our community is filled with outstanding young leaders, and we are thrilled to celebrate this year’s **CRCSD 14 Under 14 Award** honorees! These remarkable students, chosen from an impressive pool of **70 nominations** submitted by teachers and school staff, exemplify leadership, kindness, resilience, and a commitment to making a difference.

Meet the 2025 Honorees

- Adrian Snodey – Hoover
- Alyse Nyandwi – Trailside
- Amida Sumaili – Wilson
- Bishop Kahoro – Franklin
- Boshra Saifi – McKinley
- Chavez Clayton, Jr. – Grant Wood
- Hunter Sherron – Taft
- Ja'Nayah Clark – Franklin
- Justine Aklassou – Roosevelt

- Kalell Henderson – Pierce
- Kingston Tate – McKinley
- La'Shea Owens – Johnson
- Malone Lake – Roosevelt
- Saige Watts – Harding

Each of these young leaders has made a unique impact in their schools and beyond, demonstrating qualities that inspire their peers and our community. Their achievements remind us that the future is bright when we support and nurture the next generation.

Excellence in the Arts

CRCSD would like to honor three high school students. These students have been selected by the Gazette's for the 2025 Excellence in the Arts event. It will take place on Sunday, March 9th at Theatre Cedar Rapids. The Excellence in the Arts is a day dedicated to celebrating outstanding youth advocacy and student achievement in the visual arts, digital arts, spoken & written word, and performing arts.

The student honoree-led art gallery will open at 2 PM, followed by the program at 3 PM.

Our three students are:

- Annabelle Spangler, Kennedy High School - Spoken & Written Word
- Macyn Davidson-Ware, Washington High School - Spoken & Written Word
- Mira Gibbons, Washington High School - Performing Arts

Button: Learn more and purchase tickets click here.





Scholarship Opportunities



In partnership with the Cedar Rapids Community Schools Foundation (https://crcsf.com) and local partners, the Cedar Rapids Community School District would like to highlight some of our local scholarship opportunities to ensure students and families are aware of the resources available. Be sure to visit the Cedar Rapids Community Schools Foundation Scholarship Page for CRCSD-specific scholarship details. Visit Scholarship Opportunities for links to applications and deadlines.

Don't miss out on these valuable opportunities—start exploring and applying today!

Candace Lynch "Future Ready Leader" Scholarship - due 4/1
A $500 scholarship that is awarded to a graduate of any CRCSD high school that attended either Harrison or Johnson elementary schools. Student must plan to pursue any post-

secondary program, including 2- or 4-year academic, military, or trade. Priority to a student with significant financial need. Applicants must submit an essay on the topic of personal resilience or overcoming an academic or personal challenge during their K-12 school years. Be sure to visit the district's Scholarship Opportunities page for the latest updates, application deadlines, and eligibility details.

Discover Summer Camp: Exciting Opportunities for Young Scholars!

Looking for a fun and enriching way to kick off the summer? Discover Summer Camps is the perfect opportunity for academically talented students in grades 3-5 to explore their interests, learn new skills, and challenge their minds!

Held June 16-27 at Harding Middle School, these engaging morning camps allow students to choose their classes based on their passions. With a variety of exciting themes—including coding, engineering, art, writing, chemistry, movie-making, CSI, show choir, comics, physics, and more—there's something for everyone!

Spots fill quickly, so sign up early! For more details and registration, visit www.CRDiscoverSummerCamp.weebly.com.

Looking for other camps and opportunities for summer? Visit CRCSD's virtual backpack for more ideas.

Linn County Public Health Mobile Vaccine Clinic

The Cedar Rapids Community School District has partnered with Linn County Public Health to provide students with an opportunity to get their required vaccines before school starts next fall. A mobile vaccine clinic will be coming to all Middle School and High School locations. Please see below for the exact dates and times they will be at your child's school. If you are interested in your child receiving vaccines at this mobile clinic, please contact your child's school nurse.

Please note that additional paperwork must be completed and returned to the health office before your child can be seen at the mobile clinic. Now is a great time to beat the back-to-school rush and get the required vaccines done ahead of time at your child's school!

School	Date	Time
Franklin Middle School	April 24th	9:00am - 11:00am
McKinley Middle School	April 24th	12:30 pm - 2:30pm
Harding Middle School	May 6th	9:00am - 11:00am
Roosevelt Middle School	May 6th	12:30 pm - 2:30pm
Taft Middle School	May 8th	9:00am - 11:00am

Wilson Middle School	May 8th	12:30 pm - 2:30pm
Kennedy High School	April 15th	9:00am - 11:00am
Washington High School	April 15th	12:30 pm - 2:30pm
Jefferson High School	April 22nd	9:00am - 11:00am
Metro High School	April 22nd	12:30 pm - 2:30pm
Hoover Pilot	May 22nd	8:30am - noon

Glance Around CRCSD



Van Buren Elementary celebrated Read Across America with exciting activities that encouraged a love for reading.



Erskine Elementary families enjoyed a fun-filled Family Night with engaging reading and math games, along with an exciting opportunity to interact with robots.



Trailside 3rd graders were busy creating portraits of themselves during Art class!



Gibson Elementary's third annual Read-a-Palooza was filled with excitement as guest readers from the community shared their love of reading and how they use it in their careers.



The Kennedy Men's Basketball team secured their spot in the state tournament with a dominant 62-34 victory over Davenport North.



City View Student Council members visited the Iowa State Capitol, where they shared their ideas with legislators, learned about policy-making, and explored ways to advocate for their community.

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: Investing in our future: A transparent look at the school bond

- KCRG: 9 Who Care: Barb Westercamp inspires generations of readers

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.

March 7, 2025

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

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