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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: Transforming Our Schools for Future Generations

Dear CRCSD Families,

For over 110 years, Cedar Rapids has been a community that values education—where strong schools build strong communities. Today, we stand at a pivotal moment in our journey together. This week, as I sat with our Superintendent Student Cabinet, I was moved by their powerful message: "We love our schools, but we know they can be better."

Our students deserve schools that match their potential. Right now, we have aging buildings, overcrowded cafeterias, and learning spaces that need updates to keep pace with education today and tomorrow. Our amazing students are beating the odds, but they shouldn't have to.

We recognize that this ask comes at a time of uncertainty. That's why we have been intentional in ensuring that we are asking the least while doing the most—eliminating inefficiencies, consolidating resources, and saving $11.85 million per year, $236.9 million over 20 years. This isn't just an investment in schools—it's an investment in the strength and stability of our entire community.

As we face unknowns that schools across our country are experiencing, our students understand that adjustment is necessary. They see these challenges as opportunities—first steps toward creating something better for everyone in our community.

Whether you have children in the district, own a business, or simply care about the future of Cedar Rapids, this moment belongs to all of us. Together, we build strong schools. Together, we build a strong community.

I invite you to be part of this important conversation. Please take a moment to watch our informational video. Dr. Grover Invites You to Fill Out the Survey.

Your voice matters as we shape the future of Cedar Rapids schools.

Together in service,

Dr. Tawana Grover
Superintendent
Cedar Rapids Community School District

**SUPERINTENDENT'S SERENITY:**

When it matters, we join our hands, our hearts, and our seeds together—planting today for a harvest that will sustain generations. The seed of service produces the soul of sustainability. We honor those who built before us, protect those learning today, and prepare for those yet to come. In unity, we find strength. In commitment, we find progress. And in faith, we find peace—knowing that not alone, but together, our legacy lives on.

Dr. Tawana Grover



## A Message from President Garlock: Creating a More Equitable Future for Staff and Students Through Strategic Staffing



Dear CRCSD Families,

As your Board President, I want to speak directly about the important changes we're making to better serve all our students. First, I want to acknowledge that I hear your voices and concerns about staffing changes in our schools. Your engagement shows how deeply you care about our children's education, and I share that commitment.

Our district faces a critical challenge: ensuring every student receives the support they need to excel, while being responsible stewards of our resources. Staffing represents our largest investment, and we must ensure these resources are distributed where they can make the greatest impact for our students.

As Dr. Grover recently noted, "Every student deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential, and that means providing the right support at the right time in the right place." This wisdom guides our new staffing approach, which focuses on matching resources to specific building needs through careful reallocation.

I want to be clear about our promise to you: every learner will be future-ready. This isn't just a slogan – it's our commitment to creating genuine equity in our schools. Whether your child needs additional academic support, emotional guidance, or enrichment opportunities, our staffing model will ensure they receive it. Every student matters, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Our Board's primary responsibility is ensuring safe and secure learning environments – this remains our number one priority. By strategically reallocating staff to buildings with demonstrated needs, we're working to fulfill this commitment while supporting innovative approaches to education.

I'm proud that our district leadership has developed this thoughtful approach to staffing. It reflects our dedication to helping students not only succeed in school but thrive in life beyond high school. The Board fully supports this model because we've seen how it will create more equitable opportunities for all our students while maintaining the high-quality education you expect from Cedar Rapids schools.

Your partnership in this journey is invaluable. Together, we're building a stronger, more equitable school district where every child can excel.

Sincerely,

President Cindy Garlock
Board President
Cedar Rapids Community School District

## We Value Your Feedback: CRCSD Bond Survey

**Parents, We Want to Hear From You!**

Your thoughts, questions, and opinions matter when it comes to the proposed 2025 Bond Initiative for Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD).

This week, **registered voters** in the district will receive a **survey in the mail** to gather community input on a plan to modernize and improve our schools—all while keeping our tax rate among the lowest in Linn County. Your voice is important! **Parents and community members are encouraged to complete and return the survey by March 5** to help shape the future of education for our students.

The 2025 Bond Initiative represents more than a facilities improvement plan - it is a catalyst for district-wide transformation and community renewal. This $210.6 million investment will modernize our educational infrastructure while generating $128 million in savings over 20 years, demonstrating our commitment to both educational excellence and fiscal responsibility.

**What's Included in the Bond Proposal?**
The plan focuses on 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 & Stay Informed**
Visit build.crschools.us to explore the details of the bond initiative.

Your input is crucial—help us build a stronger future for our students and schools!

## Scholarship Opportunities

In partnership with the Cedar Rapids Community Schools Foundation 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 scholarships details. Visit Scholarship Opportunities for links to applications and deadlines.

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

**Neon Dragon Tattoo Scholarship for Artists** - due 3/1
An award of $500 to a CRCSD senior who seeks to further their study and artistic abilities in the field(s) of visual and/or graphic arts. Funds may be used for art supplies and/or college courses that include art—portfolio and essay application required. Information is available on the Scholarship Opportunities page.

## Washington Speech Team Shines at State, Earns Top Honors

**Parents, Let's Celebrate Our Speech Teams' Incredible Success!**

The Washington Speech Team has made history at the State contest this past weekend, proving that hard work and dedication pay off.

After bringing the maximum 26 performances to Districts—each earning a Division 1 rating—the team continued their winning streak at State. Washington not only hosted the event, welcoming 86 teams, 425 performances, and over 5,000 attendees but also performed more than any other team in Iowa with an incredible 26 performances.



**The results were outstanding:**

- 22 performances earned Division 1 ratings
- 4 performances received Division 2 ratings

But the excitement didn't stop there. On Monday, the highly anticipated All-State nominations were announced, and Washington tied for first in the state for performances, ranking second overall. With 12 performances receiving All-State recognition, our students continue to shine among the best in Iowa.

**All-State Nominations**
Performing Groups:

- One Act Play – *Treasure Island*
- Reader's Theatre – *Anatomy of Gray*
- Choral Reading – *Parable of the Three Roses*
- Ensemble Acting – *Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread*
- Group Improv – *Davidson-Ware / Farnum / Young*
- Group Mime – *Before the Streetlight Comes On*
- Group Mime – *Pickles and Pistols: A Spaghetti Western of Dill-icious Deceit*
- Solo Mime – *Lost in a Dream*
- Solo Mime – *The Downfall of a People Pleaser*
- Radio Broadcasting – *TRNK.fm*
- Musical Theatre – *Hadestown Teen*

Non-Performing Group:

- Ensemble Acting – *Sure Thing*

With nearly 80 All-State nominees, Washington Speech continues to set the bar for excellence in performance and teamwork. Congratulations to all students, coaches, and staff for an unforgettable season.

**What's Next?**
The journey isn't over yet. All-State takes place in Ames on February 22, where our talented performers will take the stage again. Best of luck to our students as they showcase their incredible talents.

**Shoutout to Kennedy and Jefferson:**

- Kennedy's teams all received Division 1 ratings, with the Choir Reading, Short Film, Reader's Theatre, and Radio Broadcast advancing to All-State and the Musical Theatre team earning Outstanding Performer honors.
- Jefferson's Short Film, *Matthew*, also qualified for All-State and will be performing at the festival.

Parents, keep cheering on our amazing speech teams—your support makes all the difference.

## CRCSD High School Art Show Shines at CSPS

The Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) high school art team is thrilled to share the recent District Art Show opening night highlights at CSPS!

With nearly 200 talented student artists from Jefferson, Kennedy, Metro, and Washington, this show is a wonderful opportunity to see our students' incredible creativity. The exhibit features a diverse range of artistic styles and subjects, from paintings and sculptures to digital art.

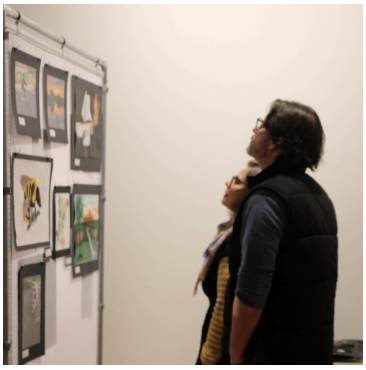
Opening night was a fantastic celebration, with student curators and hosts guiding guests through the gallery, delicious refreshments, and even student artwork available for purchase! Congratulations to Asher Meyers from Kennedy, whose digital piece, *Pretty Ladies*, won the People's Choice Award!

A big thank you to our community partner, CSPS, for hosting this special event for the second year in a row.

Plan your visit! The show is open Thursday through Sunday, 12–6 PM, in the upper galleries of CSPS (please enter through the bar area). Don't miss this chance to support

our CRCSD students and celebrate their artistic achievements!





## Elementary Third Grader Clay Projects on Display

Over the last few months, third graders from some elementary schools across CRCSD have been working on clay art projects. These pieces are currently on display at the Downtown Cedar Rapids Public Library. The exhibit will be open to the public from 9 AM to 3 PM in the Beems Auditorium A/B.

Each elementary school and its art teacher choose a theme, and then the third grade creates clay art pieces to match that theme. Check out this quick video to see some of the pieces on display. And congratulations to all our third-grade artists.

Watch The Video

## Free & Reduced Price Meal Applications and CEP School Information



If you have children attending Maple Grove, Kennedy, Pierce, Taft, and Viola Gibson and are interested in meal benefits, please complete a Free & Reduced Meal Application.

Applications can be completed online at https://cedarrapids.familyportal.cloud/

Below is a listing of the CRCSD schools that qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision for the 2024-2025 school year. This is a Federal program that offers breakfast and lunch at no charge at the qualifying schools. Receiving free meals at a CEP school does not automatically qualify your child for other school fee waivers. You must complete the Education Benefits Form at https://cedarrapids.familyportal.cloud/

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:**
Cleveland, CRA (Cedar River Academy), Erskine, Grant, Grant Wood, Harrison, Hiawatha, Hoover, Johnson, Kenwood, Madison, Nixon, Trailside, Van Buren, West Willow, Wright.

**MIDDLE SCHOOLS:**
Harding, Franklin, McKinley, Roosevelt, Wilson

**HIGH SCHOOLS:**
Jefferson, Metro, Washington, City View, Polk Alternative
Truman Early Childhood Center

## CRCSD Staff Tour Schools to Enhance Freshman Academies & Career Pathways

On February 10th, several CRCSD high school staff members went on a “field trip” as part of their Professional Learning Day. The staff had the opportunity to tour two different school districts to learn more about their Freshman Academy and career-connected learning spaces.

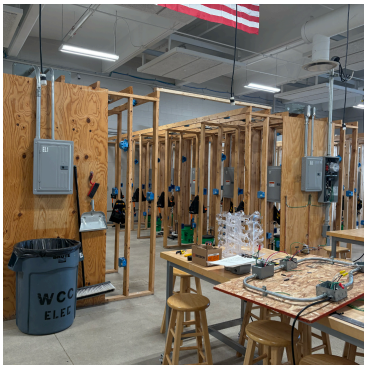


Members of the Freshman Academy teams from Jefferson, Kennedy, and Washington High Schools and district administrators visited Omaha Public Schools to learn more about their approach to Freshman Academy, teacher teaming, and career academies. Over the course of two days, they toured Central High School and Westview High School, participated in student panels, and engaged in discussions with school administrators and staff. The visit provided valuable insights and best practices that will help shape CRCSD's Freshman Academies, launching in 2026. Staff also made key connections with Omaha educators to continue exchanging ideas and support.

Additionally, 20 Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers from CRCSD high schools toured the Waterloo Career Center to explore their facilities and programming. The teachers, representing the Arts, Skilled Trades, Business, and Information Technology fields, were joined by representatives from Grant Wood AEA, Larson Construction, and INVISION Architecture. The visit allowed them to see innovative learning spaces and gather ideas for upcoming renovations and additions to Jefferson and Washington High Schools. Another visit to the Career Center is planned for the spring for high school staff from the Arts, Family & Consumer Sciences, and Medical Sciences fields.

These professional learning experiences will help CRCSD strengthen its College and Career Pathways program, ensuring students have access to high-quality, hands-on learning that prepares them for future success.







## Magnet Spotlight



**The Cedar Rapids Community School District Magnet Lottery closes next week!**

It is 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**
Roosevelt Creative Corridor Business Academy supports a business and leadership theme with the Leader in Me programming. This magnet school specializes in business and leadership, incorporating the "Leader in Me" program to develop essential skills such as entrepreneurship, decision-making, and teamwork. By integrating leadership training with business principles, the school empowers students to become confident, visionary leaders prepared for success in the global economy.

## City View Expanding College & Career Opportunities for Students

As part of our commitment to providing innovative and student-centered learning experiences, Cedar Rapids Community School District is exploring a shift for City View Community High School for the 2025-2026 school year. On February 4th, City View held an informational meeting for students and families to discuss a proposal for the next school year, clarifying the school's mission and programming for the upcoming school year.

The goal is to sustain City View's innovative approach while creating a sustainable and impactful student experience. City View provides a standalone high school option for students to engage in project-based, community-embedded learning. The City View experience guarantees students participate in an internship and gain college credit. Modifying the current program will expand opportunities for students while addressing operational challenges. Modifications include:

- College Credit - All students will take at least one credit-bearing course through Kirkwood Community College.
- Expand Student Opportunities – Increased access to internships, projects, and real-world learning experiences.
- Optimize Resources – City View will share space with the Iowa BIG program in the Economic Alliance building to lower operational costs while providing students greater access to facilities, technology, and staff expertise.
- Ensure Continued Support – Students will maintain a flexible school schedule, balancing coursework, projects, and internships.
- Maintain High School Experience – Students can still participate in sports, clubs, and extracurricular activities at their resident high school.

Starting next year, City View will serve students in grades 10-12 and remain at its current location in the Economic Alliance building while CRCSD and Iowa BIG explore long-term options to co-locate. New eligibility standards will be introduced, including demonstrated proficiency in core subjects as measured through the ISASP tests, a minimum 2.0 GPA, and the ability to thrive in a self-directed learning environment.

City View's mission will remain unchanged - empowering students through meaningful, project-based experiences that connect learning to career goals. Every student will continue to be guaranteed an internship and the opportunity to earn college credit, ensuring they graduate future-ready. If your student is interested in attending City View Community High School next school year and meets the admission qualifications, please contact City View Magnet Coordinator Dennis Becker at dbecker@crschools.us.

## Iowa BIG Expands Opportunities for Cedar Rapids Students

Iowa BIG is thrilled to offer expanded opportunities for Cedar Rapids students in the upcoming school year! With increased availability and a broader selection of classes, we're welcoming students eager for hands-on, real-world learning experiences.

At Iowa BIG, students collaborate with businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies on meaningful projects that align with their interests. Our students have earned hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships, built strong local networks, and gained valuable job opportunities and professional connections.

As a nationally recognized program featured in multiple books and publications, Iowa BIG is an exclusive opportunity for Cedar Rapids students—giving them a competitive advantage over peers nationwide with similar GPAs.

For more information, visit www.iowabig.org. If you know a student who would thrive in this environment, encourage them to sign up with their school counselor. Iowa BIG is open to CRCSD sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

## Glance Around CRCSD



Jefferson Performing Arts kicked off Silent Sky with a fantastic opening night performance!



Lots of Erskine Eagles showed up for Jr. Warrior Night at Washington on Friday!



Cedar River Academy marked 100 Days of School with hat coloring and cereal counting activities.



Grant staff learned more about our multilingual students, who make up 19% of our population and come from 20 countries—we're grateful to learn from them!



February 12 is National School Crossing Guard Appreciation Day! Lisa has kept our walking students safe in all weather for over 25 years. Last week, walkers surprised her with a gift basket as she takes time off.



Viola Gibson students lit up the gym with a glowing dance party—huge thanks to our PTA and volunteers for making it happen!

## 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 proposes $211 million bond referendum
- KCRG: Cedar Rapids Schools reveals new $210 million bond proposal
- KCRG: Jefferson High School Rugby Club puts out call for donations to support players
- KGAN: Johnson STEAM Academy joins CRCSD to celebrate Black History Month
- KGAN: Metro High School among several schools in eastern Iowa to win STEM BEST Program Award
- KGAN: CRCSD says it's "right-sizing" district staffing as student enrollment declines
- KWWL: Cedar Rapids School District unveils new $210M bond proposal

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.

**February 14, 2025**

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

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