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CRCSD Future Ready Today Newsletter



Updates on CRCSD College & Career Pathways

COLLEGE & CAREER PATHWAYS
CEDAR RAPIDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

At Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD), we're embarking on an exciting journey to redefine student success with the launch of our College and Career Pathway program. This initiative is designed to equip students with the skills and experiences needed to excel in today's dynamic world, whether they pursue higher education, enter the workforce, or enlist in the military after graduation.

Schools across the country are already seeing the transformative impact of college and career-connected learning programs. Research shows that these programs have improved graduation rates, reduced adverse behaviors, enhanced academic achievement, and increased college enrollment. To explore some of the inspiring data and success stories behind these programs, we've compiled a list of recent case studies and research — view it here.

At CRCSD, we're excited to launch this program to achieve similar transformative results for our students. But we know that student success is a team effort, and parents/guardians play a critical role in shaping this program. We're thrilled to share that 110 parents from across the district have signed up for our new Pathways Parent Advisory Team. This group will start meeting in early January to provide essential feedback and ideas to help us refine and enhance the program to meet the diverse needs of all of our students.

Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to prepare students for a bright future. Don't forget to check out the College & Career Pathway website for more information and frequently asked questions.

Celebrating Big Wins for CRCSD at the IASB Convention

The Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) proudly received statewide recognition at this year's Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) Convention, showcasing our commitment to

excellence and leadership in education.

Team Award Recognition
Our school board earned the prestigious Team Award, a distinction given to only 46 school boards across Iowa. This honor highlights their dedication to professional learning, collaboration, and a steadfast focus on student success.



Dr. Grover Receives the Award of Honor
We are excited to congratulate Dr. Grover on receiving the highly esteemed Award of Honor. This recognition, awarded to just 40 superintendents across the state, celebrates Dr. Grover's exceptional leadership and dedication to advancing education within our district.
These achievements are a testament to the passion and hard work of our board members and leaders. Their commitment to learning and putting students first continues to make a meaningful impact on our community.

Let's take a moment to recognize and celebrate these accomplishments as we continue working together to create a bright future for CRCSD.

CRCSD Student Musicians Spread Holiday Cheer

Student musicians from across the district spread holiday cheer throughout the community. From orchestras to choirs, our students truly showcased the magic of the season.

On Wednesday, December 18, the McKinley Jazz Band and Chamber Orchestra brought the holiday spirit to the Cedar Rapids Community School District. Their performances at the district's Educational Leadership and Support Center (ELSC) featured a beautiful selection of songs, highlighting these middle school musicians' incredible talent, dedication, and hard work. The music created a festive atmosphere and was a true treat for everyone who had the chance to listen. Thank you to the McKinley Jazz Band and Chamber Orchestra for sharing your music with us—it was a true gift to our staff and community!

Van Buren Elementary students also spread holiday cheer by singing carols at Wednesday's Cedar Rapids West Rotary meeting. Several groups, including the Green Team, Business Partnership Committee, Snack Doctors, and Vitality Show Choir, represented the school with heartwarming performances.

The Washington High School Madrigal Singers carried the holiday spirit far and wide during their "12 Days of Daybreak Performances." On Friday, December 20, they brought festive carols to the Daybreak Rotary Club as part of their tour, which included a special performance at the Paramount Theatre. The group's harmonious renditions captivated audiences and showcased the best of our high school talent.









Community Rallies to Support Grant Elementary Students for Winter Break



As winter break approaches, Grant Elementary's halls have been filled with more than the usual holiday cheer. Over the past several weeks, a heartwarming initiative has brought staff, families, and community members together to provide essential winter gear, toys, and books to students in need.

Recognizing the challenges many families face during the colder months, the staff reached out to over 50 families to identify specific needs. From warm clothing to encourage outdoor play to toys aimed at reducing screen time and books to foster a love for reading, the goal was to ensure every student could enjoy a warm and enriching winter break.

The response from the community was nothing short of inspiring. Donations poured in, totaling over $1,000 in value. Items ranged from hats, mittens, coats, snow boots, and socks to toys and books, both new and gently used. The generosity of local individuals and organizations transformed the school's art room into a bustling "Grant Gift Shop" for a morning.

At 7:30 a.m. on distribution day, the art room was stocked and ready, brimming with colorful clothing, exciting toys, and stacks of books. By 9:30, the space came alive with the excited chatter of students selecting items to help make their winter break more comfortable and joyful. One teacher reflected on the impact, saying, "It's incredible to see the way our community has come together to support our kids. These small acts of kindness make a big difference in their lives."

Thanks to the generosity and collaboration of the Grant Elementary community, dozens of students will head into the holiday season with warm winter gear, engaging toys, and books to spark their imagination. This effort highlights the power of community spirit and the collective commitment to ensuring that every child has what they need to thrive.

As the school year continues, the staff at Grant Elementary look forward to building on this momentum to support their students and families further. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this initiative—you've made a lasting impact!

Jefferson Holiday Dinner

On December 19, Jefferson High School hosted its 12th Annual Holiday Dinner, a cherished tradition that brings together hundreds of students, staff, and community members to celebrate the holiday season. This year's event was record-breaking, with 1,228 plates of food served and 115 take-home meals prepared, bringing the total served to an incredible 1,343—surpassing last year's record of 1,318.

What began 12 years ago as an initiative by the school's kitchen manager has grown into a vibrant community gathering, offering a traditional holiday meal. Guests enjoyed a delicious menu of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, green beans, and desserts, all prepared with care by dedicated volunteers, including students, staff, and local donors.
One attendee summed up the event's spirit perfectly, saying, "It really makes the holidays special."



The dinner's success is made possible by the generosity of local businesses and individuals, who donate time, resources, and funds to ensure the event's continued impact. Jefferson High looks forward to building on this tradition next year, as it remains a cornerstone of community connection and holiday cheer.

Reminders

Winter Break/School Closure Schedule



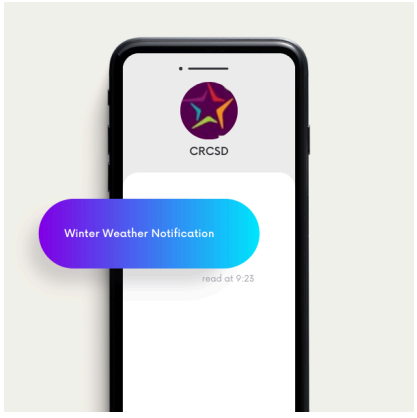
Winter Break & School Closure Schedule
The holiday season is just around the corner, and we want to ensure everyone is aware of our upcoming schedule changes. We hope that students, families, and staff can enjoy a well-deserved rest, spend quality time with loved ones, and return to the classroom refreshed and energized for the new year.
Key Dates:

- **December 23–January 2:** Schools will be closed for the Winter break.
- **December 24, 24, 31, & January 1:** District Offices Closed.
- **January 3:** Staff Professional Learning Day. While students will not have classes on this day, our dedicated teachers and staff members will use this time to participate in valuable training and professional development activities that will ultimately enhance the educational experience for all students.
- **January 6:** Schools reopen and classes resume. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to a productive and positive second half of the school year.

We encourage all students and families to take advantage of this break to relax, recharge, and engage in meaningful activities together. Whether you're celebrating the holidays, enjoying outdoor winter fun, or simply catching up on some leisure reading, we hope you find time to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and look ahead with enthusiasm.

Thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration. Your involvement helps make our community and our school district a vibrant place to learn and grow. We wish you a joyful holiday season and a wonderful start to the new year!

Winter Weather Communications



Since we have already seen the first snowfall of the season, we wanted to provide information on the district's winter weather communications procedures.

The safety and well-being of students and staff is our top priority, and the decision to modify the school day due to extreme weather conditions is no simple matter. Every weather event is different and requires district leaders to consider a multitude of factors.

The district tries to make weather-related decisions as early as it is clear that we will need to change our regular schedule. That said, sometimes Mother Nature does not appreciate our need to meet timelines.

We hope you can appreciate and understand that as well. Announcements of district weather-related decisions are communicated through multiple district communication platforms: School Messenger (phone calls, e-mails, and text messages), the district website, the district's Facebook page, and local media/news outlets.

Late Start/School Delay:
Delaying the start of school due to weather conditions that are expected to improve throughout the school day.

- If we are delaying the start of the school day, the decision will be made and communicated before 5:30 AM, if possible.
- There will be no morning preschool, morning practices, and before-school programs. Full-day preschool at Truman Early Learning Center will be delayed by two hours.
- School breakfast will still be served at school when students arrive.
- The district will monitor the weather conditions throughout the morning and reassess if any changes to the late start should be made.

Classes Canceled/Schools Closed:
Canceling classes due to weather conditions that make it exceedingly hazardous or impossible for school buses to travel their routes and/or for employees and students to report to school safely. These hazardous conditions are not expected to improve throughout the school day.

- If possible, the decision will be made and communicated before 5:30 AM.
- All CRCSD schools and preschools will be closed. There will be no before or after-school programs/practices and no school events for elementary and middle schools.
- Each building's administrator or athletic director manages and communicates the cancellation of high school activities, practices, and athletic events.
- All weather-related cancellations must be made up.

Early Dismissal:
Releasing schools early due to weather conditions that are expected to worsen throughout the school day.

- If possible, the decision will be made and communicated by 10:00 AM.
- Early dismissal times may vary depending on weather conditions, but typically, they are as follows: High Schools and Middle Schools—1:20 PM, and Elementary and Preschools—2:20 PM.
- No afternoon preschool, after-school programs, afternoon-school practices, or evening activities unless otherwise noted.
- Each building's administrator or athletic director is responsible for managing and communicating any cancellations of high school activities, practices, or events.
- Lunch will be served to students if school is dismissed early.

Proposed 2025-2026 District Calendar



At this week's Board of Education meeting, the district's Calendar Committee presented the proposed 2025-2026 District Calendar. The committee focused on several key priorities while developing the proposal: maximizing instructional time, limiting disruptions from modified schedules, improving average daily attendance, supporting staff health and well-being, and providing time for staff to learn, apply, and collaborate.

Highlights of the Proposed Calendar

- **Continuity from 2024-2025 Calendar:** The proposed calendar closely mirrors the current year's calendar, incorporating feedback from staff and families. All-day Professional Learning Days and Teacher-Directed Days will continue. Students will also continue to receive two weeks off for winter break and one week for spring break.
- **Contact Hour Requirement:** CRCSD will continue counting student contact hours (minimum 1,080 required) instead of days for the academic year.
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Day:** January 19, 2026, is proposed as a Staff Professional Learning Day, with potential opportunities for staff to engage in community MLK Day events.
- **Start and End Dates:** The school year would begin on August 26, 2025, and end on June 2, 2026, provided no snow make-up days are needed.
- **Built-in Hours:** The calendar currently includes 60 extra hours for potential late starts and early dismissals due to inclement weather.

- **Virtual Learning Days:** The committee is exploring the option of virtual learning days on snow days. This option would prevent adding days to the end of the year to make up for these missed snow days. The committee is still working on the required guidelines and addressing challenges, such as limited internet access for some students.

We Need Your Feedback!
The Calendar Committee invites staff and parents to provide feedback on the proposed 2025-2026 calendar. Your input will help refine the plan before the committee shares it with the Board of Education in January. Click here or the button below to share your thoughts and questions.

Share Feedback

Marcus Theater Discount



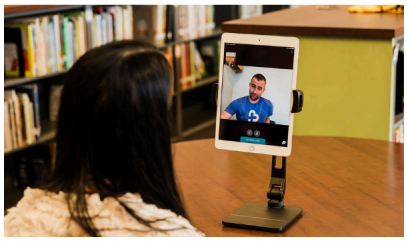
Did you know Marcus Theaters offers a special deal for CRCSD students and staff on Thursdays? That's right! Any student can catch the latest blockbuster for just $7.50 per person. Perfect for something to do over winter break! Simply show your school-issued ID at the box office to enjoy this exclusive discount.

Please note that this offer is only valid for in-person ticket purchases—online purchases are not eligible for the discount. Additionally, the discount cannot be used for movies premiering in theaters on the same day.

For more details, visit the Marcus Theaters website and take advantage of this fantastic deal!

Student Mental Health Assistance Over Break

hazel



The Cedar Rapids Community School District recognizes that winter break can be a challenging time for some students, as changes in routine and reduced access to friends and school support systems may impact their emotional well-being. To support our students during this period, CRCSD offers free online mental health therapy through Hazel Health. This service ensures that students can access professional support and guidance when they need it most.

This service provides students with access to licensed therapists who can offer professional support and guidance. Online therapy sessions are available at no cost to all CRCSD students during winter break, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., excluding holidays (December 24-25 and January 1). Click here to learn more.

Glance Around CRCSD







Kennedy High Schoolers enjoyed holiday-themed dress-up days this week. Today was ugly sweater day, including a visit from Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the Grinch.

The Maple Grove 5th Grade Student Leadership Team volunteered with the Salvation Army. They rang the bell at Fleet Farm to help raise donations for the community. Way to go, Maple Grove, for making a difference and serving others!

Johnston STEAM Academy 4th graders explored the magic of theatre with a behind-the-scenes tour of *Beauty and the Beast* at Theatre Cedar Rapids, learning about the art and technology behind the production.



Cleveland Elementary students enjoyed a trip to ice skate. For many of the students, it was their first time.



The McKinley show choir spread holiday cheer during their annual Holiday Tour, performing at Johnson STEAM Academy, Erskine Elementary, Grant Wood Elementary, and Mercy Cedar Rapids



Van Buren Elementary kicked off Tuesday morning with big smiles and a special morning greeting to celebrate earning our PBIS safety points. What a fun way to start the day on a positive note!

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: What are the options for Cedar Rapids schools' next possible multimillion bond referendum?
- Gazette: Schools see better student attendance under new Iowa law
- Gazette: Cedar Rapids schools: Petition asking to 'slow down' Pathways program invalid
- Gazette: Fully funding 4-year-old preschool top legislative priority of Cedar Rapids schools
- KCRG: Cedar Rapids school district rejects College & Career Pathways petition
- KCRG: Cedar Rapids School District looking into virtual snow days
- KCRG: Hundreds visit Jefferson High School for annual holiday dinner
- KGAN: Cedar Rapids Schools pitch priorities to lawmakers ahead of new legislative session
- KWWL: Petition concerning Cedar Rapids School District's College & Career Pathways program deemed invalid

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.

December 20, 2024

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

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