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# CRCSD Future Ready Today Newsletter




## College & Career Pathways: Answers to YOUR questions

**We're Listening: Your Questions Answered!**
Thank you to all the parents and community members who shared their concerns and questions with us. Your voice matters, and we appreciate the over 800 questions submitted during our informational meetings and through our online form. We've reviewed your input, compiled the most frequently asked questions, and provided detailed answers to keep you informed, maintain transparency, and build trust. If you still don't see the answer to your question, send us your question here (insert form link) and someone from the district will respond within 5 business days).

Read the FAQ and Answers Here

**Last Chance to Join Our Parent Advisory Board:**
Don't forget—the application process for our Parent Advisory Board will close on December 17th. This is your final opportunity to contribute directly to decision-making and help shape the future of our district. The Advisory Board will begin meeting in early January. Apply Here

**Community Informational Meeting:**
We also invite you to attend a community informational meeting about College & Career Pathways on January 30th at Jefferson, Washington, and Kennedy High Schools from 5:30–7:00 p.m. This will be another great chance to engage, ask questions, and collaborate on the path forward for our students and community.

If you are still wondering what College and Career Pathways are, check out our Informational Video here.

Thank you for your continued engagement and partnership!

## KCRG A+ Teacher Award

A+ Teacher Award: Congratulations to Ms. Morobito!

We're thrilled to announce that Ms. Morobito has been honored with the KCRG A+ Teacher Award! This recognition shines a light on her unwavering dedication, passion, and the positive impact she has on her students and our school community every day.

Join us in celebrating Ms. Morobito's outstanding achievement and the remarkable influence she has on our students' lives!




## 1st Graders Receive Decodable Reader Books



We're thrilled to announce that every first-grader in our district has been given their very own decodable reader books, thanks to a $3 million statewide initiative backed by Governor Kim Reynolds. These books are designed to help young learners build confidence in their reading abilities and strengthen their foundational literacy skills.

"This is huge for our students here at Hiawatha Elementary School. Many of our kids have books at home but they may not be able to read or to decode those books. Some of our kids don't have books at home," said Holly Reeder. "There was a little girl today, I said 'Do you have books at your house?' and she said 'No.'" So now she has a whole bunch of books that she can take home and that she can read."

This effort reflects a powerful commitment to early education and the long-term success of Iowa's students. We sincerely thank everyone who helped make this initiative a reality, as it empowers our youngest readers to thrive in their educational journeys!

Check out this video sharing the students opening their books here.

Watch The Video

## Jefferson High School is hosting their 12th annual Holiday Dinner




On Wednesday, December 18, Jefferson High School invites the entire community to its 12th annual Holiday Dinner. From 5–8 p.m., guests can enjoy a complimentary meal, live entertainment, and a family-friendly atmosphere in the Jefferson gymnasium. Santa Claus himself will be stopping by from 6–7:30 p.m. to greet children and take photos. This cherished event is made possible by the dedicated efforts of our staff, students, and the generous support of local businesses. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to celebrate the season together!

# 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!

## Science Curriculum Changes




Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year changes to the high school science curriculum and course sequence will be implemented to support student success better. These changes include offering Biology as a required 9th-grade course, followed by Chemistry and Physics in subsequent years.

Earth Science will no longer be offered as a standalone course for 9th graders. Instead, the essential Earth Science standards will be embedded into the Biology, Chemistry, and Physics curriculum. We will work closely with all high school science teachers to ensure the content is manageable and effectively integrated. The one exception to this change applies to advanced 8th-grade students. They will continue to take Earth Science as part of their middle school advanced coursework and progress to Biology or Advanced Biology in 9th grade.

**Why the change?**

- **Alignment with Standardized Tests:** Aligning our science curriculum with state and national standards is critical for preparing students for standardized assessments like the ISASP, Pre-ACT, and ACT. Each of these tests includes several biology and chemistry concepts. Offering biology and chemistry earlier ensures students have foundational knowledge before taking these exams. Also, with ISASP science testing now required for some grades, aligning our curriculum and class sequence will help to better prepare students for this testing.

- **Student Performance:** The State School Performance Profile shows that only 52.7% of our students are proficient in science, which is below the state average of 61.55%. The proficiency rate is even lower for students from underserved groups—low socioeconomic status, ELL, and students with disabilities. The hope is that these changes will help improve outcomes for all students.

- **Supporting College & Career Pathways:** Our high school transition to the College and Career Pathways model offers science-themed academies such as medical sciences, engineering, aerospace, information technology, artificial intelligence, environmental sciences, and sustainability. Providing students with a solid foundation in biology and

chemistry earlier in their high school years ensures they are prepared to excel in academy-specific courses in the upper grades.

- **Meeting Common Practices:** Many school districts across Iowa already offer biology in ninth grade. Adopting this practice ensures our students are on a level playing field with their peers across the state.

## 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.

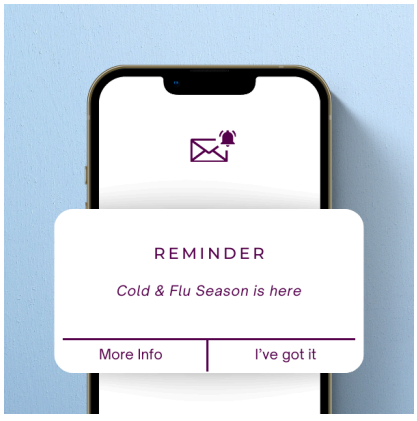
Highlights of the Proposed Calendar

- **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

## Cold & Flu Reminders




As temperatures start to fall, the number of cold, flu, and respiratory virus cases starts to rise. The flu season typically runs from October through April, with an uptick during the holidays. We wanted to provide you with our district's student illness guidelines and a few reminders to help reduce the spread of illness in our schools.

**Student Illness Guidelines:**
Students will be sent home from school if they have any of the following:

- A temperature of 100.4º F or higher.
- Active illness-related vomiting and/or diarrhea.

- Other significant symptoms - frequent/uncontrollable cough, severe sore throat, extreme tiredness, etc.

**Students Return After an Illness:**
Students may return to school after an illness when:

- Fever-free without fever-reducing medication.
- No active vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- Other symptoms of illness are improving.

**Health Tips:**

- Here are some helpful reminders to help reduce the spread of illness.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze with a tissue or your upper arm/elbow. Wash/disinfect your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines/boosters and receive a seasonal flu vaccine.

## Glance Around CRCSD



Students and staff at Kennedy High School came together to celebrate their accomplishments and boost school spirit during the Winter Pep Assembly. Lively performances, cheers, and games got everyone energized for the season ahead!



Families at Madison Elementary enjoyed a sweet holiday gathering, complete with cookies and a visit from Santa Claus. The joyful event helped bring the community together to celebrate the festive season.



Congratulations to Lucy Baranowski, Sonja Truitt, Paul Woodhouse, Ben Miller, Gavin Corver, and Trey Terrill for representing our district in the NEIBA Honor Band. Their hard work, talent, and passion for music truly shone through at this prestigious event.



Metro High School's STEAM Academy students showcased a wide range of skills, from planning and painting to marketing and



Kindergarteners at Hiawatha Elementary explored severe weather by reading a story about a thunderstorm and observing how wind moves



Second graders at Hoover Elementary had a hands-on science experience learning about arthropods with the Iowa State Zoo. The

sales, over their two-week learning period. Collaborating with community partners, they applied academic concepts to real-world projects, demonstrating innovation and creativity.

objects. They crafted their own “Breeze Buddies” to hang outside, encouraging them to notice wind direction and potential weather changes.

interactive session sparked curiosity, excitement, and a deeper understanding of the natural world.

## 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: Viola Gibson teacher finalist for Iowa Teacher of the Year
- Gazette: Cedar Rapids school leaders seek more input on college/career academies
- Gazette: Virtual learning on snow days possible for Cedar Rapids students next school year
- KCRG: One-on-one interview with school superintendent Tawana Grover
- KCRG: Teachers distribute new book packs to first graders to address literacy

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

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**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 13, 2024

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

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