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**October 9, 2025**

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### Listen To The Newsletter

We know you all have busy schedules, so we are sharing this important information through a short podcast-style recording. Click the button below to listen to an overview of the newsletter, and then you can dive deeper by reading below!

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## DR. GROVER'S MESSAGE



Dear CRCSD Families,
When we think about our schools, we think about our students, all our students. Each child deserves a school where they can learn, grow, and feel welcome. Each family deserves to step through doors that open easily, not just physically, but in every way. We must imagine a school where no child is turned away. A school where every student can move freely, learn fully, and dream without limits.
That is the future we are building. That is the future our students deserve.
As we continue to review our buildings, we've found that some entrances, classrooms, and restrooms are not yet fully accessible. In fact, when several of our bond schools were proposed as satellite voting

locations, three of the four were denied because they are not accessible to everyone. That's exactly the kind of barrier we are working to remove through our current facilities and accessibility projects.
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), shaped in part through leadership and advocacy that began right here in Iowa, reminds us that access and opportunity are not optional. They are essential to who we are as a caring community, and they reflect the values we hold for our children and one another. Community members of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences continue to add tremendous value to our schools by reading with students, volunteering, mentoring, and uplifting classrooms in meaningful ways. Their presence reminds us that learning is most powerful when it is shared.
By ensuring every building meets the full spirit of access that the ADA envisions, we create spaces where everyone, students, families, and community partners, can participate freely and fully. That's why we are investing in safe, modern, and welcoming schools across Cedar Rapids, where connection and belonging are part of every child's experience.
Please remember, the Cedar Rapids Schools Bond Referendum will be on the ballot this November 4th, and we encourage all families to get out and vote.
The bond proposal is designed to help shape a future where every student in every neighborhood and every community member can access schools that are safe, modern, and welcoming. Thank you for all you do to support our students, our schools, and this shared vision for access and opportunity.
Together, we are building a sense of belonging with care!

Dr. Tawana Grover
Superintedent

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



This past summer, Kennedy High School senior Divya Ramadugu took her learning far beyond the classroom—over 8,000 miles away, to be exact. Divya was one of only a handful of students worldwide selected as a Borlaug-Ruan International Intern with the World Food Prize Foundation. For eight weeks, she conducted field research in rural western Kenya, studying how access to credit affects farming strategies and livelihoods on smallholder farms in the region. She interviewed more than 80 farmers, met with banks and government officials, and produced a research paper sharing her findings along with a weekly blog about her experience.

Divya quickly realized the real-world impact of global challenges, such as climate change. "*Since most farming in the region is rainfed, everything depends on the weather and markets*," she explained. "*It made me realize how the countries that contribute the most carbon emissions aren't always the ones facing the harshest consequences*. *Global issues, such as climate change and access to credit, affect families every day. They're not just abstract statistics, but lived experiences,*" she added.

Divya credits her educational opportunities at Kennedy High School for preparing her to succeed in the internship. Debate, Model UN, and AP classes taught her to ask thoughtful questions, analyze complex issues, and connect scientific and policy concepts to real-world problems. Leadership opportunities at Kennedy also gave her the confidence to communicate across cultures and navigate unfamiliar environments.

Looking ahead, Divya plans to study economics and international relations on a pre-law track. *“This experience pushed me outside my comfort zone and gave me lessons no textbook could ever teach. I know I’ll carry it forward into everything I do.”*

Divya’s journey is a shining example of how CRCSD students are prepared and future-ready, empowering them to make an impact—both locally and globally.

## HOOVER GROUNDBREAKING




Join us Today, October 9th, for a public groundbreaking ceremony for the new Hoover Community School. The event will take place outside, behind the current building, at 2:00 PM. Event parking is available at Concordia Lutheran Church, located diagonally across the street from the school.

This exciting milestone marks the start of construction on a modernized school building while honoring Hoover’s history and legacy in the community.

## IOWA KID CAPTAIN LILY SEBASTIAN



We are thrilled to celebrate Wilson 7th grader Lily Sebastian, who has been selected as an Iowa Kid Captain for this weekend’s University of Iowa Hawkeye football game against the Wisconsin Badgers!

Lily’s story is one of incredible courage and resilience. She was born prematurely at 31.5 weeks, weighing just 2 pounds, 4 ounces, and had a rare birth defect called Giant Omphalocele. The defect caused her abdominal organs to protrude outside of the body within a sac-like membrane. She underwent her first surgery just one day later to begin a staged process of repairing her abdomen.

After spending 299 days in the NICU at the UI Stead Family Children’s Hospital, Lily beat the odds and continues to inspire everyone around her.

Now 12 years old, Lily is thriving at Wilson—known by her teachers and friends as funny, sweet, and kind. She loves music, plays both the piano and trumpet, and approaches every day with joy and determination.

To honor this amazing accomplishment, Hawkeye football players, the Jefferson High School drumline, and the Jefferson cheerleaders will visit Wilson for a special celebration.

Please join us in congratulating Lily Sebastian—a shining example of strength, perseverance, and Wilson pride!

Let’s cheer on Lily and the Hawkeyes this weekend!

## METRO HERKY PROJECT




After an extended absence, “Laureate Herky,” one of the iconic *Herky on Parade* statues, is back on display at the Kirkwood Regional Center in Coralville, thanks to the creativity and craftsmanship of Metro High School students! *Herky on Parade* features more than 100 six-foot-tall statues of the University of Iowa’s beloved mascot, each uniquely decorated by local and regional artists. Laureate Herky celebrates Iowa City’s rich literary history, with pages of text from Iowa Writers’ Workshop authors incorporated into his design.

When Laureate Herky returned from FRYfest 2024 without his original pedestal, the literary-themed mascot spent months in storage awaiting a creative solution. That’s when Metro High School’s STEAM Academy students stepped in, turning the challenge into a hands-on class project.

Using their design and technical skills, along with table saws and CNC machines, the students built a brand-new pedestal resembling a stack of oversized books, a perfect complement to Herky’s literary theme. The result is both artistic and functional, showcasing the power of creativity, collaboration, and career-connected learning.

This partnership between Metro High School and Kirkwood Community College highlights the exciting real-world learning happening across the district, where creativity, craftsmanship, and community connections bring education to life for CRCSD students. Stop by the Kirkwood Regional Center lobby to see Laureate Herky’s new “bookstand” and admire the Metro students’ impressive work!

## IJAG PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES FOR 2025-2026

CRCSD continues its 20-year partnership with iJAG (Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates) to support students and empower them with the skills they need to succeed. The organization helps students remove obstacles while developing leadership, communication, and employability skills. Students in the program also gain experience in civic engagement and community service, along with personalized guidance to help them achieve their educational and career goals.

iJAG is a public/private nonprofit organization supported by the State of Iowa Legislature, school partners, and private support from corporations, foundations, and community members. The organization creates business, industry, and education partnerships committed to achieving the mission of JAG: ensuring that youth graduate, attain basic employability skills through classroom instruction and work-based learning, transition more successfully from middle to high school, and into the next step in their futures, whether that be education, employment, or enlistment.

**Program Highlights**
iJAG Specialists provide career counseling, skills development, and work-based learning experiences that improve academic performance, attendance, and confidence. Data from 2024 showed that students who participated in iJAG had a 98.4% graduation rate, and 70% had secured employment within one year of graduation. Additionally 38% improved their attendance and nearly 80% demonstrated academic growth. Currently, there are five specialists who serve

approximately 250 students across Jefferson High School, Washington High School, and Wilson Middle School.

**New This Year**
All five remaining middle schools will now participate in iJAG Lite at no cost to the district. This expansion aligns with CRCSD's Student Excel Plan and Portrait of a Graduate, ensuring equity and opportunity for every student.

*For more information about iJAG programs in CRCSD, contact Rebecca Vasquez at rebecca.vasquez@ijag.org or Tara Troester at ttroester@crschools.us.*

## A TRIP DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE




This weekend, Playtime Poppy Children's Theatre and Jefferson High School invite you to a world of wonder with their production of Alice in Wonderland!
Directed by Jefferson's Theatre Department Head, Joe Link, this adaptation is based on the beloved Lewis Carroll novel. When Alice is supposed to be reading, her curiosity gets the best of her, and she falls down the infamous rabbit hole into a world of talking animals, ruthless royalty, and marvelous madness.

Link's original script is a treat for all ages, filled with puppetry and magic, and it guarantees there's never a dull moment. The audience is constantly called upon to participate, offering suggestions and helping Alice make decisions as she tracks down the White Rabbit and tries to find her way back home.

Get Tickets Today

## METRO MARCHING BAND CLASSIC




Get ready for an evening of music, energy, and community spirit at the 28th Annual Metro Marching Band Classic on October 13th! This non-competitive event will showcase seven local high school marching bands—Jefferson, Kennedy, Linn-Mar, Marion, Prairie, Washington, and Xavier—performing their 2025 field shows. Adding to the excitement, the University of Iowa Hawkeye Marching Band will also take the field with selections from their 2025 program. Join us at Linn-Mar Stadium to support your local band while enjoying an evening of incredible performances. Gates open at 5:30 PM, with the show starting at 6:00 PM.

Tickets are $10 online or $15 at the gate, with all proceeds benefiting the participating high school band programs.

**We Believe In Our Students**



Taft student leaders had a great time spending time with the Truman Early Learning students this morning, reading to them and playing on the playground.



Friday, Nixon students enjoyed the CR Opera's performance of The Little Mermaid. Kids loved the show, and even a few had a chance to perform in the show!



JSA theater enthusiasts were captivated with Cedar Rapids Opera's performance of The Littlest Mermaid!



On Tuesday and Wednesday, sophomores and juniors in Layne Sheetz's AP Language and Composition class participated in a Socratic Seminar. Students crafted thoughtful, inquisitive questions to guide one another in deeper discussions.



Grant Wood preschoolers had a coconut adventure today after reading Chicka Chicka Boom Boom! With the help of their building engineer, Mr. Thompson, they drilled holes to pour out the liquid, then used a hammer to crack it open!




Hiawatha students in Ms. Blair and Ms. Kaitlin's classrooms visited Bloomsbury Farm on Thursday for a fun, sensory-filled day!

## 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.

- KCRG: Cedar Rapids 12-year-old to be honorary Kid Captain for Hawkeyes matchup against Wisconsin — Read Here
- KCRG: More high school students are getting work experience. What it means for Iowa students. — **Read Here**

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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, Educational Leadership and Support Center, 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA, (319) 558-2000.

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Jefferson Activities Calendar

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Washington Activities Calendar

Cedar Rapids Community School District
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