

November 20, 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!

Listen Now

DR. GROVER'S MESSAGE



Dear CRCSD Families,

Over the past month, I have visited every school in our district, walking halls, stepping into classrooms, and talking with educators who show up each day with heart and purpose. These moments remind me that our work with children is sacred and that our students deserve our most united and focused efforts.

This morning, I watched the Jefferson band rehearse for their statewide performance. Under Dr. Carl Rowles' direction, students listened, adjusted, and found their rhythm together. It reminded me that when a community shares

purpose, harmony is possible. And when the rhythm is disrupted, we listen, adjust, and realign.

Recently, you may have seen questions or comments about me or our district that shifted our rhythm. You deserve to hear from me directly. To strengthen our communication, we are launching Clarity Corner, a space for you to submit questions and receive clear answers. I want to start by offering clarity about myself, because recent conversations showed where our system needed more understanding to stay in rhythm.

I live in Cedar Rapids. This is my home, my community, and the place where I serve every single day. Like many of you, I have family in other states, and I cherish the moments I can visit them, but my home, my work, and my focus are here.

I do not receive financial benefit from any consulting organization. Although I have collaborated with consultants throughout my career, I have not worked for, been employed by, or received compensation from any organization contracted with CRCSD.

Consultants are not new to our district. For decades, CRCSD has partnered with external experts through board-approved processes to strengthen instruction, leadership development, and communication. They support our educators and do not replace them. We will continue elevating the incredible talent within our district.

All engagement, travel, and contracting follow district and board guidelines.

We can allow rumors to shape our narrative, or we can choose clarity and shared responsibility. I ask all of us to choose communication over speculation.

I want every student to experience strong programs, joyful learning, and a future filled with opportunity. I am committed to leading with transparency and purpose. Let's bring our notes back into rhythm. If you have questions, please use Clarity Corner. We are here. We are listening. And we believe in every child we serve.

Sincerely,
Dr. Tawana Grover
Superintendent
Cedar Rapids Community School District

Submit a Question to Clarity Corner

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Washington High School's theatre artists recently achieved a momentous honor, taking their fall musical, *Amélie: Teen Edition*, to the main stage at the Iowa Thespian Festival on Saturday, November 15.

The entire production, featuring a talented cast, crew, and orchestra, traveled to perform the full-length musical at the University of Northern Iowa's (UNI) Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. This is a truly prestigious recognition as only three

high school productions across the state are selected each year by the Iowa Thespian Committee to perform on the mainstage.

The success of *Amélie: Teen Edition* was a massive undertaking, involving over 100 students in total! Over 80 students made the trip to perform at the festival, showcasing their skills in:

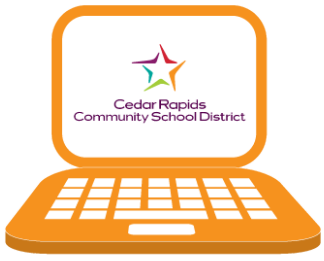
- Acting roles
- Technical roles (lighting, sound, stage management, etc.)
- Orchestral roles (musicians providing live accompaniment)

We are incredibly proud of all the students who dedicated their time and creativity to bringing this beautiful story to life. Their hard work, dedication, and artistry represent the very best of Washington High School.

Congratulations to all the Washington High School theatre artists on this outstanding achievement!



INCLEMENT WEATHER HOME-BASED LEARNING DAYS



We are excited to share an important update for the second semester of the 2025–2026 school year! For the first time, the Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) will pilot Winter Weather Home-Based Learning Days. These days will allow students to continue learning safely from home when winter weather makes getting to school unsafe, without extending the school year.

Why Are We Doing This:
Under Iowa law, school districts are allowed up to five (5) days of home-based "virtual" learning each year when in-person instruction is not possible due to winter weather. Many surrounding school districts already use Home-Based Learning Days to eliminate the need for transporting students in hazardous conditions and minimize the number of makeup days at the end of the school year.
How Home-Based Learning Days Will Work at CRCSD:
CRCSD will pilot up to two (2) Home-Based Learning Days during the second semester (January 19–April 10).

- When hazardous winter weather is predicted far enough in advance, the district will announce a “Home-Based Learning Day.” Students will work from home to complete assignments and learning activities on a schedule that fits their family's situation.
- If winter weather occurs without sufficient notice, the district will announce a regular “snow day.” Classes will be cancelled, and the day will be made up at the end of the school year.
- If the two (2) Home-Based Learning Days are used, the district will return to regular winter weather-related cancellations, and the days will be made up at the end of the school year.

What Does This Mean For Your Student:
On Home-Based Learning Days, students will continue learning from home through a combination of assignments and activities. Depending on their grade level, students may work from printed learning packets or complete assignments online. Teachers will be available throughout the day to provide support and answer questions as needed by students. You will receive more detailed information about what a home-based learning day will look like for your child(ren), from their teacher(s), after winter break.

What’s Next:
While home-based learning is “not ideal,” and not the same as being in the classroom, it helps us balance our required instructional hours while keeping students safe, protecting family schedules and cultural holidays, and avoiding extending the school year. Additional details on Home-Based Learning Days, including how to access and submit assignments, attendance requirements, student accountability, and instructional time expectations, will be shared with families before the start of Winter Break (12/19).

Thank you for your support as we pilot this new option for keeping learning going during winter weather when travel is unsafe.

NEW SCHOOL BOARD

At the November 17, 2025, board meeting, three new board members were inducted after they won the election on November 4. We would like to welcome the following:

- Laura Zimmerman, Board Director, At Large
- Scott Drzycimski, Board Director, District 2
- Ashley Burns, Board Director, District 3

During the meeting, the board voted Jennifer Neumann as the School Board President and Scott Drzycimski as Vice President for the following year.

While we welcome our new board members, we also want to thank those leaving for their time, dedication, and service to CRCSD during their tenure as board members. Thank you to the following:

- Jennifer Borcherding, Board Director - 8 years of service
- Nancy Humbles, Board Director - 16 years of service
- Marcy Roundtree, Vice President - 4 years of service

We would also like to thank Cindy Garlock for serving as Board President for the past 2 years, and her time as Vice President prior.



THANKSGIVING BREAK REMINDER



As the semester keeps moving forward and the weather cools off, it's time to remind everyone about the upcoming Thanksgiving break!

Please be advised of the following days off for all students:

- Wednesday, November 26, 2025 - Teacher Comp Day
- Thursday, November 27, 2025 - Thanksgiving Holiday Break
- Friday, November 28, 2025 - Thanksgiving Holiday Break

We look forward to classes resuming on Monday, December 1, 2025.

Please note that the District Offices will be closed in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday on November 27th & 28th. Due to the District Offices being closed, there will be no district newsletter on Thursday, November 27th.

We wish all our students and families a restful, warm, and happy Thanksgiving!

HELP SHAPE PRESCHOOL OPTIONS FOR 2026-2027



The Cedar Rapids Community School District is gathering input from parents and the community to help shape our preschool programming for the 2026–2027 school year. Your feedback will help us understand what families value in a high-quality preschool experience and guide improvements that benefit students across our community.

If you have a preschool-age child at home—even if they do *not* attend a CRCSD preschool—we want to hear from you. Your voice plays an important role in helping us create strong, accessible early-learning opportunities for all families. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and share your perspectives. Your input truly matters!

Share Your Perspective

DR. MAURA HOBSON TO TRANSITION FROM CRCSD



We would like to congratulate Dr. Maura Hobson, Chief of Schools for Area 1 and Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments, on being named superintendent at Hopewell Area School District in Pennsylvania. During her time at CRCSD, she has played a key role in advancing instructional priorities and supporting principals and teachers across Area 1. While we will miss her contributions, we wish her well in this next chapter.

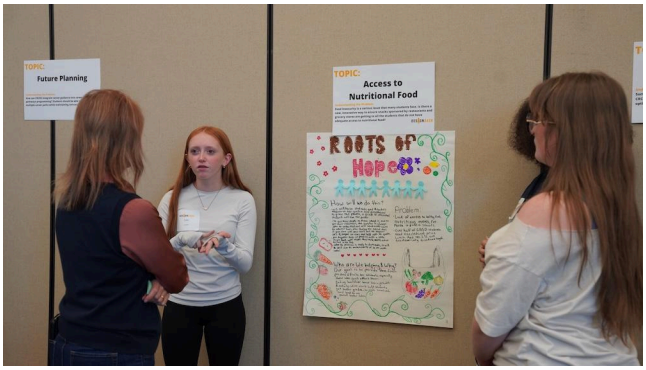
Reflecting on her time with CRCSD, Dr. Hobson shared:
"*It has been an honor to serve the Cedar Rapids Community School District and be part of a community that puts students at the center of its work. I am grateful for the relationships I have formed and the dedication of our leadership, staff, students, and families.*"



In her absence, Jeff Frost will be stepping in to support Area 1 and Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments. Jeff brings 35 years of experience in instructional leadership across Iowa, most recently serving as Executive Director of Professional Technical Education for Waterloo Schools. Under his guidance, the district's work supporting students, principals, and teachers will continue without interruption.

Please join us in thanking Dr. Hobson for her dedication to CRCSD and congratulating her on this well-deserved opportunity.

CRCSD STUDENTS TAKE ON REAL-WORLD CHALLENGES IN ONE DAY



Last week, 30 high school students from City View, Iowa BIG, Jefferson, Kennedy, Metro, and Washington became entrepreneurs for a day at the inaugural CRCSD Focused Design Dash. Hosted in partnership with the University of Iowa's Jacobson Institute, DesignDash gives students a hands-on, fast-paced experience in innovation, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership.

Students selected a topic that mattered to them, from career exploration, stress management, student enrollment, safety, accessible transportation, and school lunch options. Every topic was tied to real challenges in CRCSD, giving students the chance to design solutions that could directly impact their schools. With guidance from entrepreneurs, business leaders, and CRCSD staff, students brainstormed ideas, developed a plan, and pitched their creative solution to address some of these real-world challenges.

Throughout the day, teams learned the fundamentals of business problem-solving while developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, leadership, adaptability, and effective communication. They also had to learn how to work as a team, resolve disagreements, and manage their time, all skills that are valuable in their future careers.

By the end of the day, student teams pitched their ideas to panels of judges, sharing their innovative business solutions to the real-world challenges they had chosen to solve. From fresh ideas to improve school safety to creative approaches for boosting career exploration, each team brought forward thoughtful concepts. Some of the award-winning ideas included:

- Best Pitch: Bring It On: Summer program offering students skill development and practice in time management, employability skills, and college and career exploration.
- Best Understanding of the End User/Beneficiary/Customer: SCHUBER: School-focused ride-share program.
- Best Market Ready/Ready to Implement: Roots of Hope: Free, fresh produce from volunteer gardens using the building's greenhouses and community gardens.
- Investor's Choice: Career Connect: Connecting businesses with qualified internship candidates.

The award winners will have the opportunity to share their pitches at the December 8, 2025, Board of Directors meeting.

We are proud of the creativity, innovation, and leadership shown by all participants. CRCSD looks forward to offering more opportunities like this, because when we empower young thinkers, our entire community benefits.

KLA LEADER IN ME EVENT TOMORROW!

The student leaders at Kenwood Leadership Academy are getting ready to share their leadership an *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* with the community. Students will be sharing this habit journey with the community tomorrow morning, November 21st. KLA leaders will kick off the program in the gym and then attendees will break out into classrooms to hear directly from students at each grade level. It's a great way to see leaders in action from kindergarten through 5th Grade.



THE MADE STORE AT NEWBO MARKET

For the first time ever, Metro STEAM Academy students have a permanent stand at NewBo City Market for the holiday season! Shoppers can explore a variety of unique, student-made creations, including homemade salsa and candies, handcrafted magnets, wood ornaments, and candles, all crafted by the talented students of Metro High School.

The MADE Store offers students hands-on experience in entrepreneurship, marketing, product design, and customer service, transforming their classroom



learning into practical skills. All money earned is reinvested to support programs at Metro STEAM Academy, enabling students to continue creating, innovating, and growing.

The store is open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through December 20th, with new products added weekly. As the holiday season approaches, expect even more festive items, personalized gifts, and custom orders. Students are at the heart of it all, serving as shopkeepers, creating products, designing branding, and managing marketing and business plans.

Next time you're at NewBo City Market, stop by the MADE Store to support our local student entrepreneurs. You never know what one-of-a-kind find you'll take home! Thank you to our community partners for helping bring these learning experiences to life for our students.

Dates & Hours:

- November 8 – December 20
- Fridays & Saturdays: 10 AM – 8 PM
- Sundays: 10 AM – 4 PM



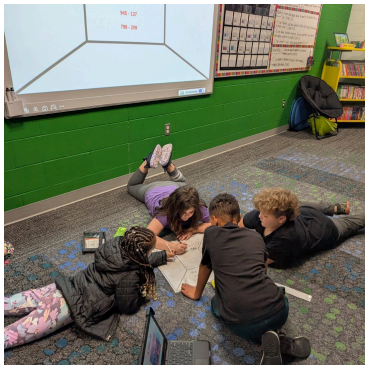
JBPA EARNS TOP PHILANTHROPIC HONOR

We are proud to share that the Jefferson Band Parents Association (JBPA) was honored with the "Outstanding Small Philanthropic Organization" Award by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Eastern Iowa Chapter on National Philanthropy Day!

This recognition highlights the essential role parents play as partners in our schools. The JBPA provides immense support, from volunteering to fundraising, to ensure the Jefferson Band Program offers a strong, accessible, and life-changing experience for all students. Thank you to the JBPA for truly embodying our priority of Staff & Parents as Partners!



We Believe In Our Students



Maple Grove 3rd graders are working hard on their math this week. Learning new strategies, applying old ones, and having conversations to defend their thinking.



KGAN Chief Meteorologist Rebecca Kopelman joined Mrs. Vandenberg's class at Harding to share what it's like to work in weather forecasting and meteorology.



Grant Dragons are learning about Ostinatos (repeated patterns) in music and enjoy practicing them together. Check out our fourth-grade musicians!



City View students traded textbooks for tool belts last Wednesday at the Construction Apprenticeship Fair in Cedar Rapids! They explored 11 different trades and even got hands-on with welding and heavy equipment simulators.



Taft's Tiger Tribe (formerly Best Buddies) did their first coffee and tea sales to staff members! Students helped each other with job skills while fulfilling orders, delivering items, and accepting payments.



McKinley 6th graders enjoyed a day of learning and fun right here in the community! They walked to the History Center, explored the exhibits, and picked up some great Linn County trivia along the way.

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: Cameron Sullenberger Overture Series honors beloved music educator — Read Here

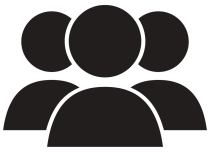
Gazette: High schoolers earn credit and save money taking college classes — Read Here

Gazette: New Cedar Rapids school board leadership promises ‘accountability’ — Read Here

Iowa News Now: New leaders elected for Cedar Rapids Community School District — Read Here



Your School's Virtual Backpack



CRCSD Is Hiring! Apply Here



Breakfast & Lunch Menus

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.

Sign Up To Receive This Newsletter Weekly

Jefferson Activities Calendar

Kennedy Activities Calendar

Washington Activities Calendar

Cedar Rapids Community School District
Every Learner: Future Ready

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