

COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



For our children, our world, our future

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



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Superintendent
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On the Cover:
Members of the Cheney High School Marching Band color guard practice during band camp on August 13.

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

Welcome back to school! We have been busy preparing for all our students to return to the classroom, and we are so excited to kick off the 2026-2027 school year. It is a great feeling to have all of our students and staff back in our buildings!

At the time of publication, several of our staff members were engaging in impactful training across the district. Administrators participated in three separate day-long trainings focused on various themes like the process of continual improvement and learning through the HR lens. At the same time, our building secretaries and office managers trained with departments across the district, helping streamline processes for more efficient service to our students and families. New certificated staff gathered for a day-long orientation and learning, while our PLC Team Leads worked together to plan support for Professional Learning Communities through the lens of continual improvement. Then, our entire staff came together for our district-wide professional learning day, the first of three this school year. I always enjoy watching our staff members learn together, continually improving their practices. Awesome work!

Projects from the voter-approved November 2024 bond continue to progress, and at the time of publication, nearly all of the projects have either started or been completed. This summer, construction crews continued work at Salnave, installing new switchgear and expanding the building's kitchen. Betz Elementary and Cheney High School both had interior facelifts with new flooring installed and a fresh coat of paint on the walls. These updates have completely changed the look and feel of the building! Kitchen renovations began at Windsor Elementary in June, including the installation of new switchgear to support the upgraded kitchen's electrical needs. Finally, our district's newest building—Skyway Elementary—is taking shape! It has been such a learning experience for me, watching everything come together. Thank you to our community for making these projects a reality!

This November, our district is asking voters to consider two replacement levies: an Educational Programs and Operations Levy (EP&O), and a Capital Technology Levy. Both measures replace expiring levies, and the funding will continue to provide essential programs and services across our district. This newsletter includes more information on each levy and how they impact our district. You can also visit our website at cheneysd.org for more information. Remember to cast your vote in the upcoming General Election on November 3!

Together, with our amazing staff and the support of our families and community, we look forward to creating meaningful learning opportunities that prepare every student for their future.

Wishing everyone an awesome school year.

We are Cheney Public Schools!

Onward,

Ben Ferney, Ed.D. | Superintendent



Mark Scott
School Board Member
District 1



Liz Winer
School Board Member
District 2



Henry Browne
School Board Member
District 3



Bill Hanson
School Board Vice President
District 4



Mitch Swenson
School Board President
District 5

November 2026 Replacement Levies



This compilation of photos illustrates a few of the essential programs and services funded by the District’s current EP&O and Capital Technology levies.

This November, Cheney Public Schools is asking voters to consider two replacement levies: an Educational Programs and Operations Levy (EP&O Levy), and a Capital Technology Levy. Both propositions will replace expiring three-year levies and will be on the ballot for the November 3, 2026 General Election.

As it relates to public education, voter-approved funding like levies help to cover the gap between what the state funds and what schools and students actually need. Washington State is required to provide school districts with funding for basic education, an amount that is based on the prototypical school funding model. The prototypical model is a

hypothetical model based on the Legislature’s assumptions about what resources are required to provide basic education, and it estimates the staff, materials, and resources needed to operate an average school. However, the state funding does not cover the actual costs of operating, updating, and maintaining a school district, so districts utilize levies to bridge the funding gap.

The graphic below illustrates what the prototypical model funds (Funded) and what our district actually staffed in the 2025-2026 school year to operate (Actual).

A simple way to remember what each measure funds is the phrase: Bonds are for Building;

Levies are for Learning. Bonds are only used for capital projects, such as new construction or the modernization of aging buildings. Bonds are financed by property tax collections over longer periods of time, typically 20 years. A levy is a property tax that collects an approved dollar amount over a much shorter period of time, typically three years. Levies support districts to provide more services than Washington State’s basic education funding allows. Levies require a simple majority (50% + 1) to pass, while bonds require a 60% supermajority to pass. Cheney Public Schools follows a three-year levy cycle, and so every three years our district must ask voters to consider replacing our levies.

Differences in District Staff Funded by the Prototypical Model vs. Actual District Staff Numbers

Numbers based on the 2025-2026 school year.

	ACTUAL	FUNDED	DIFFERENCE
Teachers*	249.00	224.30	(24.70)
Building Admin.	23.60	16.44	(7.16)
Para Educators	37.00	10.42	(26.58)
Custodians	32.56	23.35	(9.21)

*Excluding Special Education teachers

The EP&O Levy specifically provides funding for educational programs and operations, and our district uses this local funding to support areas such as athletics, extracurricular activities, music and fine arts, nutrition services, transportation, substitute teachers, and YES officers, among other things. Take a look at the graphic on page 6 titled *What’s the Breakdown of Each EP&O Levy Dollar?* to learn more about where the funding goes.

The Capital Technology Levy provides
See Replacement Levies, Page 6

Cheney Public Schools Bond Projects Update

It has been nearly two years since our community voted to approve a \$72 million bond, and as of August, nearly all projects included in that bond package are in progress or have been completed.

The spring and summer of 2025 saw multiple projects completed across the district, including massive stadium upgrades at Cheney High School, new bus loops at Salnave and Windsor elementary schools, interior updates at Sunset and Windsor elementary schools, new chillers at Salnave, Windsor, and Betz elementary schools, and upgraded security access controls at vestibules at Snowdon Elementary, Cheney Middle School, and Westwood Middle School. Salnave also received a new boiler and pumps, while the early site grading began at the new Skyway Elementary.

This year, planning, designing, and construction has continued at Skyway Elementary, and the official groundbreaking on May 18 brought the community together to celebrate the new build.

Since May, Skyway has gone vertical, and at the time of publication, the masonry of the gym was substantially completed with masonry veneer installation underway. The structural steel framing of the building had also begun, painting a picture of where the future classroom wings will stand. If you visit the site today, you will get a great feel for what the building will look like.

Another project that began this spring was the kitchen expansion at Salnave Elementary. Students and staff at Salnave, along with the District's Nutrition Services department, had

to make a few adjustments as construction began. Behind a protective temporary wall, crews began to demolish the original kitchen space in March; this expansion is expected to be completed this September. Salnave also received new switchgear this summer, an update that better supports the electrical needs of the building.

Windsor Elementary is undergoing similar renovations to Salnave, with a kitchen expansion that began in June and new switchgear to support the upgraded kitchen's electrical needs. Windsor's kitchen expansion is expected to be completed by December, while the new switchgear is already in place and functioning. The project will create a kitchen large enough to manage the nearly 530 daily meals Windsor serves to its students.



Construction progress at Skyway Elementary on Aug. 12, 2026.



Construction crews work to erect the structural steel on Aug. 12.



Superintendent Ben Ferney (right) walks the Skyway Elementary construction site with Garco Vice President Rob Decker (left) on Aug. 12.

Both Cheney High School and Betz Elementary underwent interior updates this spring and summer, tying older sections of each building with areas that had previously been remodeled or added as new construction. New flooring at both buildings, along with a fresh coat of paint on the walls, have created the feeling of one unified building.

CHS, along with Betz, Sunset, and Windsor elementary schools received new controllers and cabling this summer, and new hot water heaters and water softeners were installed district-wide. Cheney High School, along with

each of our District's elementary schools, is also set to receive updated interior lighting with LED lights. That project will continue into the summer of 2027.

We are so grateful to our community for making these improvements and projects possible. Your support is helping us build safer, more efficient, and welcoming learning environments for all students.

For more information on the November 2024 bond projects, please visit cheneysd.org or scan the QR code to the right!



New flooring and fresh paint at Betz Elementary.



Walk-in cooler installed at Salnave Elementary as part of the kitchen expansion.



A glimpse inside Windsor Elementary's kitchen expansion.



An exterior look at the Salnave kitchen expansion on Aug. 12.



A look at the new flooring at Cheney High School.

Replacement Levies,

Continued from Page 3

funding for capital projects, like technology and security and infrastructure improvements. It also helps to support larger technology needs across the district that are not funded by the state. The replacement levy also supports the district’s refresh cycle by replacing technology as it ages out or loses manufacturer support. With funding from the capital levy, our district continues to keep learning environment up-to-date for our staff and students.

Each of these propositions is a replacement levy—not an additional levy. They replace the district’s current levies that are set to expire at the end of 2027. For a look at the breakdown of the estimated tax rates, check out the graphic to the right titled *What’s it Going to Cost?* If approved, the estimated overall tax rate is expected to decrease from \$3.93 to \$3.90 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. This total tax rate includes the replacement EP&O levy, replacement Capital Technology levy, and previous voter-approved bonds.

So, what happens if property values increase? The homeowner will not owe additional school taxes; instead, they will continue to pay the

original amount toward levies and bonds. If home values increase, the amount paid toward approved levies and bonds annually will not. Total bond and levy amounts can only be adjusted by voter approval, so even if home prices increase, the amount collected will not.

For more information about Cheney Public Schools’ replacement levies, please scan the QR to the right or visit cheneysd.org.

What’s it Going to Cost?

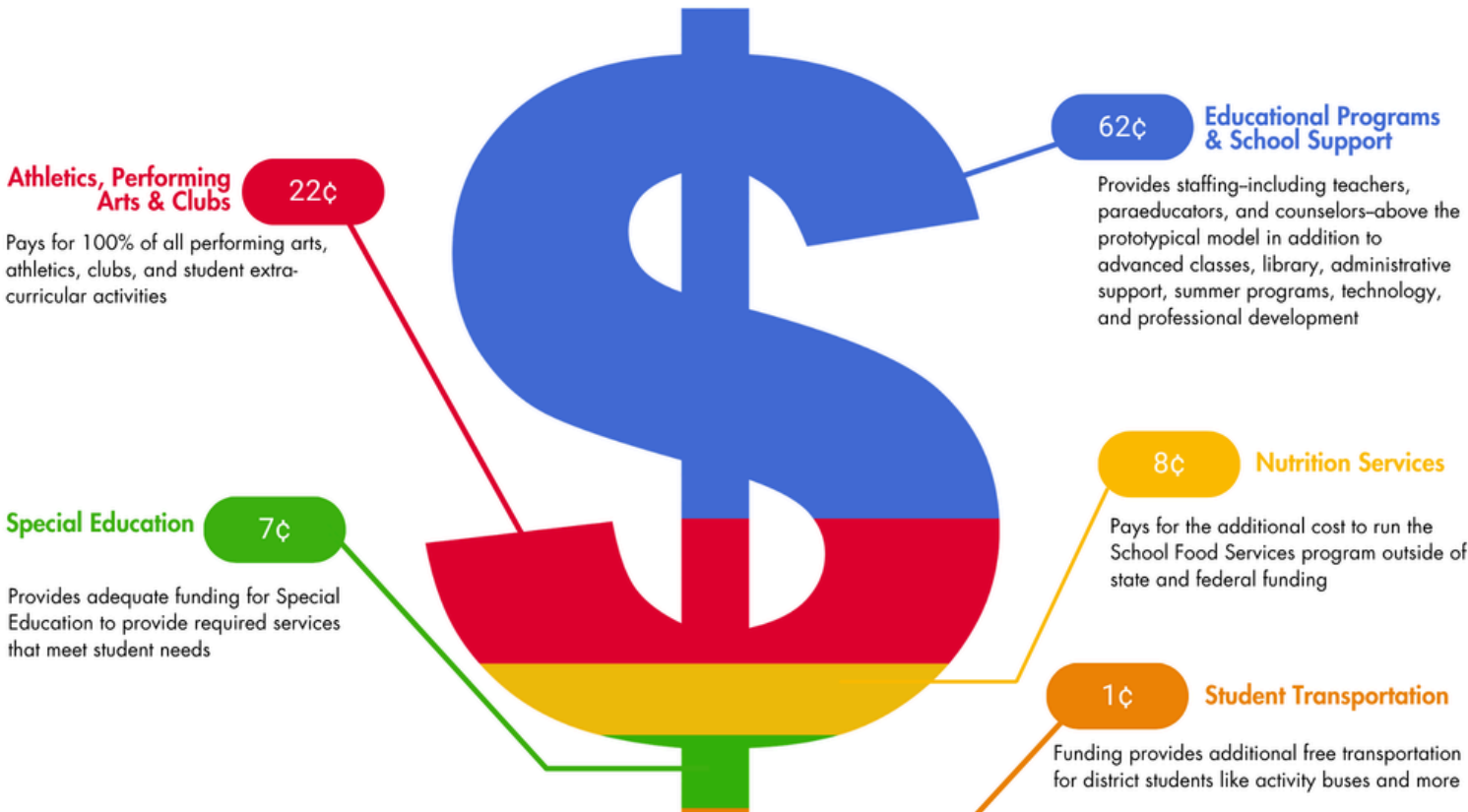
	2028	2029	2030
Capital Levy	\$0.10	\$0.15	\$0.20
EP&O Levy	\$2.10	\$2.10	\$2.10
Previous Bonds	\$1.70	\$1.65	\$1.60
TOTAL	\$3.90	\$3.90	\$3.90

Estimated tax rates, listed per \$1,000 of assessed property value.



What’s the Breakdown of Each EP&O Levy Dollar?

Numbers based on 2024-25 financial statements.



More than Free Meals: Complete the Benefits Application

As part of the Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP, every Cheney Public Schools student can receive one free breakfast and one free lunch each school day, regardless of household income. Our district is able to participate in the CEP following the passage of RCW 28A.235.300 by the Washington State Legislature in 2022.

But free meals are only part of the picture.

Depending on eligibility, students and families may qualify for even more benefits, like SunBucks (Summer EBT), waived extracurricular fees, community discounts, and fee waivers for college applications and admissions tests. Completing the Benefits Application also helps secure important funding and resources for schools across our district.

So, how do you know if you qualify? You should complete the Benefits Application if any of the following apply to your household:

- Your household income is at or below the amount listed for your household size in the chart above;
- Your household receives Basic Food, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy

USDA Child Nutrition Program Income Guidelines Effective July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027					
Household Size	Annual	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	\$29,526	\$2,461	\$1,231	\$1,136	\$568
2	\$40,034	\$3,337	\$1,669	\$1,540	\$770
3	\$50,542	\$4,212	\$2,106	\$1,944	\$972
4	\$61,050	\$5,088	\$2,544	\$2,349	\$1,175
5	\$71,558	\$5,964	\$2,982	\$2,753	\$1,377
6	\$82,066	\$6,839	\$3,420	\$3,157	\$1,579
7	\$92,574	\$7,715	\$3,858	\$3,561	\$1,781
8	\$103,082	\$8,591	\$4,296	\$3,965	\$1,983
For each add'l family member, add:	\$10,508	\$876	\$438	\$405	\$203

Families), or benefits through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR);

- You are applying on behalf of a foster child who is under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court.

The Benefits Application must be completed annually, so even if you were approved for the 2025-2026 school year, you must submit an application for the 2026-2027 school year.

The application takes about 10 minutes to complete. Taking a few minutes to complete the Benefits Application can help your

family access additional benefits, fee waivers, and discounts while also helping Cheney Public Schools receive funding and resources that support students across our district.

To qualify for these additional benefits, families must complete both the Benefits Application AND a Parental Consent Survey. Scan the QR code below or visit cheneysd.org for more information and to apply.

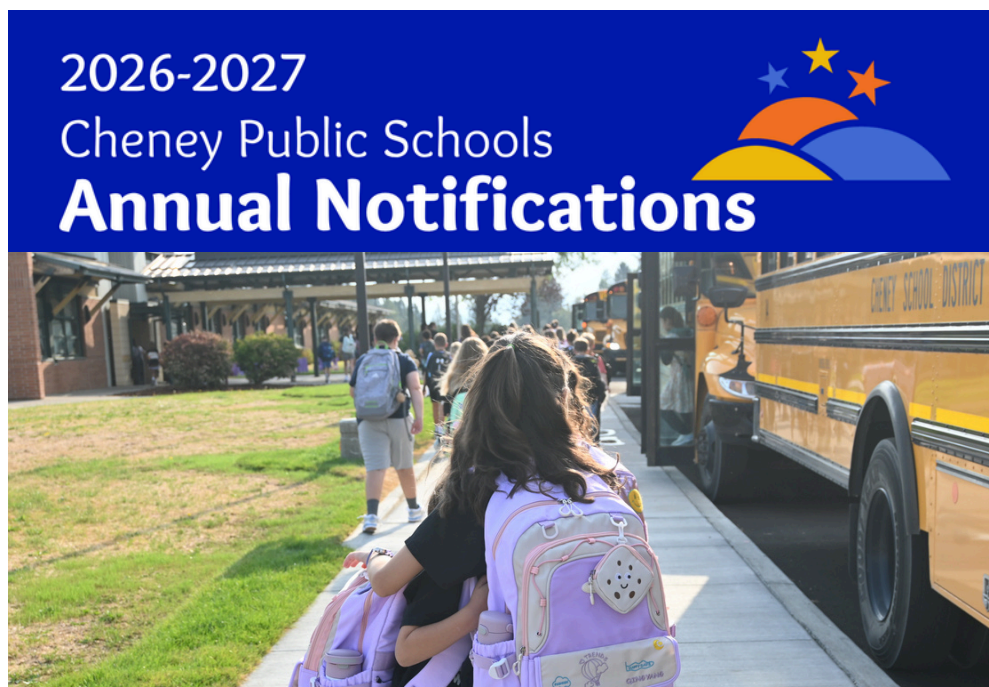


The 2026-2027 Annual Notifications are now available. Scan the QR code below to access the updated document.

Annual Notifications are distributed each school year to all students, parents, and guardians in Cheney Public Schools to inform them of their rights and responsibilities. The Annual Notifications document includes rules that define the reasonable limits of those rights, based on the rules and regulations established by the State of Washington.



Annual Notifications





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www.cheneysd.org
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Cheney, WA 99004

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Important Dates

August 25

First Day of School for Grades 1-12

August 28

First Day of Kindergarten

September 7

Labor Day - No School

September 8

First Day of Preschool

September 9

School Board Meeting | 5:30 p.m.
Cheney High School | Library

September 19

Community Day | Cheney High School

September 23

School Board Meeting | 5:30 p.m.
Cheney High School | Library



**TOGETHER, WE ARE
CHENEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



Cheney Public Schools @cheneyschools

Are you a member of a military family?
Please visit <https://www.cheneysd.org/community/military>
for more information.



Cheney Public Schools does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, economic status, pregnancy, familial status, marital status, disability, or the use of a trained guide dog or service animal, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination.

Title IX/Chapter 28A.640 Officer/
Civil Rights Compliance Officer/Gender Inclusive
Schools Coordinator
Brett Hale, Assistant Superintendent
Cheney Public Schools
12414 S. Andrus Rd. Cheney, WA 99004
Phone: (509) 559-4550
Email: bhale@cheneysd.org

Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator/Section 504
Coordinator/ADA Coordinator
Franklin Day, Director, Student Support Services
Cheney Public Schools
12414 S. Andrus Rd. Cheney, WA 99004
Phone: (509) 559-4507
Email: fday@cheneysd.org

Requests for Disclosure of Public Records
Megan Kensok, Public Records Officer
Cheney Public Schools
12414 S. Andrus Rd., Cheney, WA 99004
Phone: (509) 559-4502
Email: mkensok@cheneysd.org