October 2026

COMMUNITY *Connections*

News of Cheney Public Schools



For our children, our world, our future



Ben Ferney, Ed.D.
Superintendent
bferney@cheneysd.org

IMPORTANT DATES

November 3
General Election - Remember to Vote!

November 4
School Improvement Plan - 5 p.m.
School Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
Snowdon Elementary, Library

November 11
Veteran's Day - No School

November 18
School Improvement Plan - 5 p.m.
School Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
Cheney Middle School Library

November 23-24
Conferences - No Students

November 25-27
Autumn Break - No School



On the Cover: Betz Elementary FA paraeducator Juliette Katoa (right) works with a student on Oct. 21.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

Election season is upon us, and there are several initiatives across our region that are up for a vote in the General Election on November 3. Cheney Public Schools is asking our community to consider two replacement levies: an Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) Levy and a Capital Technology Levy. Both replace expiring levies that support learning across our district. Levies are for learning, and these replacement levies help support the people and programs that serve our students. They help bridge the gap between what the state funds and the actual costs of providing our students with the opportunities and resources to be successful. You can learn more about each measure by visiting our website

Progress continues on projects funded by the voter-approved November 2024 bond package! The upgraded kitchen at Salnave Elementary is nearly complete, and the kitchen upgrades at Windsor Elementary are well underway. At Skyway Elementary, most of the exterior work is finished and classrooms and hallways are taking shape. If you drive past the property today, you will see that it is prepared for pavement to be laid, which will happen within the next week. This will provide a more stable foundation for big equipment through the muddy winter.

I am so grateful for the support from our district community, as these projects would not have been possible without your continued commitment to our schools. Every day I step into a classroom across our district, I am reminded how your support positively impacts our students. Every day, we are working to prepare students for their future. We are Cheney Public Schools!

Onward,

Ben Ferney, Ed.D | Superintendent





Mark Scott
School Board Member
District 1



Elizabeth Winer
School Board Legislative Rep
District 2



Henry Browne
School Board Member
District 3



Bill Hanson
School Board Vice President
District 4



Mitch Swenson
School Board President
District 5

Preparing Students for Their Future: ProStart Culinary Club

Cheney High School senior Kodey Crane's earliest memories include cooking. Growing up, his family moved quite a bit, but restaurants and cooking became a consistent comfort for him as his mom is a waitress by trade.

"Me and my sister would sit at the table and play on our little computers that were from like, 2013," Crane recounted. "We bussed tables, filled condiments and whatnot."

An interest in cooking and the culinary arts was a natural development for Crane. He began cooking for his family around age 10, experimenting in the kitchen and learning as he went. In eighth grade at Cheney Middle School, Crane enrolled in a culinary class, and this segue into structured culinary education only amplified his love of cooking. When he arrived at CHS in 2023, he continued on the same path.



Cheney High School senior and ProStart Culinary Club President Kodey Crane (right) helps to plate the main course during the CHS Hall of Fame dinner on Sept. 25.

"When I was introduced to the culinary program from high school, it was just way more [than the middle school]," Crane said. "It ended up being what I liked."

Complementing his classroom experience, Crane has also been heavily involved in the career and technical education (CTE) program, ProStart. This program combines the food service industry and the classroom to teach high school students culinary skills and restaurant management principles, as well as employability skills such as communication, teamwork, professionalism, and time management. In essence, it prepares students for a career in the industry, right out of high school.

Part of that preparation includes real-world experiences. Most recently, CHS's ProStart Culinary Club catered the 2026 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony dinner for the four inductees in attendance and their families, as well as building and district administrators. Students helped to plan the menu, cook and plate the three-course meal, and waited tables throughout the event. ProStart provides students with hands-on experiences with real industry events that they can put on their resumes without working in a traditional kitchen.

"It's more aligned with industry standards as opposed to traditional family and consumer science, which would be more about how to be a home cook," said CHS CTE instructor and ProStart mentor Mina Green. "And so, ProStart, it's a connection."

For students like Crane who are interested in gaining experience in a traditional kitchen, Green has plenty of connections with more than 15 years of experience as a chef in the area. Through her connections, Crane was able to land his first official restaurant job as a dishwasher.

"My first job I got at Bene's Breakfast was because of [ProStart]," Crane said. "Ms. Green knows some of the people who work there…I got to do prep sometimes, and I got to make my own lunches on the line, but mostly it was dishes."

That experience led to a position at Moon River Thai Kitchen in Post Falls, Idaho, where Crane was employed as a line cook. Since his time at Moon River, Crane has made stops at other local restaurants, learning valuable professional skills along the way.

"I mean, I already have a job, but because of the experience now, if I go to culinary school anywhere, I'm already prepared," Crane said. "I already know what I need to do, what it's going to look like…so, it's just prepared me for anything. I can adapt pretty quickly."

Along with his real-world work experience, Crane is gaining valuable experience in culinary leadership as President of the CHS ProStart Culinary Club, an elected position that he has held since the beginning of the school year. A mainstay in the club for the last two years, it was a natural next step for the budding chef.

"I have to be able to rely on them [as president]," Green said. "It's a big job. He is kind of like my sous chef, right? So he helps

me with communicating with the students. He helps me plan. He's also my TA [teacher's assistant], so then I see him at least two periods a day."

At the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony dinner, Crane's leadership was on full display, helping peers plate food, keep appropriate timing, and put forth a professional-level three-course meal. But from his perspective, it's just friends having fun together.

"It's super stressful in the kitchen, whenever we're making a line or whenever we're trying to get something out in a short amount of time," Crane said. "But, when we're tearing down, it's just fun. It's friends, you know? That's what really drew me to [ProStart], is the community."

Crane also says that the skill set he developed through the club and curriculum sold him on joining two years ago during his sophomore year of high school.

"There's a lot of really good skills you learn in ProStart," he said. "I was able to get my Servsafe Manager Certification, which is amazing on a resume. It tells the state you know how to run a restaurant. And, [ProStart] teaches you how to cook, how to use proper sanitation, proper knife skills. It's a life skill."

For Kodey Crane, restaurants and cooking have been part of his life for as long as he can remember. Now, with his experiences with the ProStart Culinary Club, career and technical education options, and his own restaurant experience, he is prepared for whatever comes next.



Cheney High School freshman Avery Young serves patrons during the CHS Hall of Fame dinner on Sept. 25.



Senior Nathanael Griffin (right) plates the main course while Kodey Crane (left) observes.



A close-up of the entrée: roasted honey dijon chicken breast served with cheesy mashed potatoes and a vegetable medley.



A row of entrées ready to be served.



Time for dessert! A pumpkin tart served with house made chantilly cream and salted caramel.

Snowdon Teacher Awarded 2026 Gesa Local Heroes Grant

Kindergarten teacher Chrissy Scott recieves $600 to support play-based learning

This October, Snowdon Elementary kindergarten teacher Chrissy Scott was awarded a $600 grant from Gesa Credit Union's Local Heroes Grant Program to support play-based learning in her classroom. The grant will directly benefit students, providing additional hands-on materials and learning resources that support kindergarteners through purposeful play, exploration, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Purposeful play is learning through play, where children are actively engaged, making choices, taking risks, and discovering new things in meaningful ways. Activities like building and construction, dramatic play, and art are all examples of purposeful play, and it might look like playing school, house, building with blocks, drawing, and the exploration of other activities.

"Purposeful play allows me to meet children where they are developmentally and provide opportunities to extend their learning based on their individual needs and interests," Scott said. "My goal for every child is to feel successful, develop a love of learning, and build the confidence to try new things. When children are excited about learning, they are more likely to stay engaged, take ownership of their learning, and develop the foundational skills they need for future success."

The opportunity to learn through play has a variety of benefits, and in Scott's experience, helps bridge the gap in learning for students who may not be as inherently engaged.

"One of the most rewarding parts of purposeful play is watching children who may be hesitant during traditional lessons become excited and actively engaged when given the opportunity to explore and discover learning for themselves," said Scott. "Whether they are building structures, creating in the maker space, or engaging in dramatic play, they are developing important literacy, math, problem-solving, and social-emotional skills.

I love seeing the excitement on their faces when they figure something out, solve a problem, or accomplish something they didn't know they could do," Scott continued. "Purposeful play reminds me that learning is not just about the skills children master, but also about helping them develop a love of learning that will stay with them for years to come."



Chrissy Scott facilitates play-based learning with her kindergarten class on Oct. 7.





These students explore different options during play-based learning.

The grant-funded materials are expected to be purchased and put into use during the 2026-2027 school year, providing Snowdon kindergarten students with additional opportunities for hands-on, purposeful play and learning.

"This grant will provide kindergarten students with hands-on materials that strengthen learning through purposeful play, exploration, problem-solving, and collaboration," said Shawna Coerver, Principal of Snowdon Elementary. "Students will have increased opportunities to practice academic and social-emotional skills in meaningful and engaging ways, supporting greater independence, confidence, and growth as learners."

The grant is provided as part of Gesa Community Foundation's Local Heroes Grant Program, which is funded through the Gesa Credit Union Affinity Debit Card Program. It supports organizations that serve firefighters, law enforcement, educators, healthcare professionals, and Veterans across the Pacific Northwest.

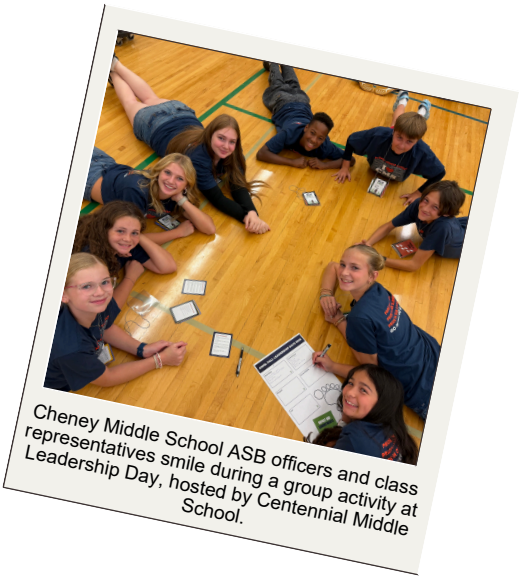
District Snapshots



Superintendent Ferney and Windsor Elementary kindergartener Jace practice upper and lowercase 'j's' together on Oct. 13.



Students at Home Works! explored construction equipment, part of a greater unit learning about the real-world careers of characters in the popular television show, *Paw Patrol*.



Cheney Middle School ASB officers and class representatives smile during a group activity at Leadership Day, hosted by Centennial Middle School.



Salnave kindergarten teacher Mandy Larson (left) and Betz second grade teacher Mikayla Rogers (right) collaborate during Deeper Learning on Oct. 14.



Girls junior varsity runners prepare at the starting line during the Battle for the 509 regional cross country meet on Saturday, Oct. 10. 1,500 athletes participated in the ninth annual cross country event.



Betz Elementary paraeducator Celeste Villa smiles during recess on Oct. 21.



Westwood Middle School seventh grader Maci Graham accepts her National Junior Honors Society (NJHS) certificate during the NJHS induction ceremony on Oct. 14.



KHQ's Leslie Lowe interviews Cheney High School leadership students and advisor Jenna Tamura (right) before kickoff of the football game against Mt. Spokane on Oct. 16.



These three Salnave scholars hold hands while participating in the bi-weekly brain break, Healthy Hawks. The structured activity helps to regulate scholars before heading back to class following a long recess.

NOTICES



Join Our Team - Apply Today!

Cheney Public Schools is in search of qualified applicants to join our team! Our district is in need of paraeducators and substitutes across buildings and departments, with opportunities in our schools, Transportation, and Nutrition Services.

Paraeducators and substitutes are an integral part of our district, providing essential support to students and staff each day.

If you are interested in learning more, please visit our website:

https://cheneysd.schoolspring.com/





Clue: The Classic 'Whodunnit' Comes to CHS



This fall, Cheney High School drama is set to perform *Clue*, the classic 'whodunnit' based on the popular board game, film adaptation, and stage play.

There will be six opportunities to catch the play:

Thursday, Nov. 19 at 7 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20 at 7 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 21 at 1 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 3 at 7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m.

Ticket prices are $5 for students and senior citizens (65+), and $10 for adults. Tickets can be purchased at the door or online.

Cheney Public Schools @cheneyschools

WASHINGTON STATE PURPLE STAR AWARD

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: ⟶

Questions or Feedback?

Do you have questions or feedback?
We're here to help! If you have any questions, concerns, or if there is something you would like to know more about, please reach out to Jenna Larson, Communications Coordinator at jlarson@cheneysd.org.

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Officer/Gender Inclusive Schools
Coordinator
Brett Hale, Assistant Superintendent
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