



# Community Connections

*For our children, our community, our world, our future*

## Promises made and transparency

A little over a year ago when I wrote my newsletter article, I talked of my goal of being transparent in our building process and keeping the faith with the communities we serve. This month, I would like to review the promises we made and where we are currently in honoring those promises. First, our building campaign was based on four major assumptions: “We have no room at the inn for our kids,” “Passage of the bond will create jobs,” “Construction costs will be low,” and “Approval of the bond will not mean a tax rate increase.”

As a district we are continuing to grow, although our rate has slowed from a year ago. We still have no room at the inn, with over 870 students at our current middle school. It is our belief that the number would be even greater had we allowed “choice,” a program where students from other districts may attend our schools, into our middle school. The building of the two middle schools based on our current growth rate will provide adequate space for the next 18-20 years. At the elementary level, the opening of our fifth school will balance our school enrollments between 340-400 students with adequate space, based on current growth projections, for a minimum of 15 years.

As a district, we have already seen bond dollars flow to local construction and construction-related firms. Our site preparation work on both of our middle schools—over \$686,000 to complete the work—is helping out the West Plains workforce; and the low bidders for both of our new middle schools are companies with a strong local presence.

As I mentioned above, we have completed the bid process for both of our middle schools, and our bid prices are much lower than the average cost of middle schools over the past four and one-half years. Based on our bids, we will save over \$1.5 million—a direct result of lower construction costs.

Lastly, our district’s overall tax rate for this year (2011) will be \$5.07 per thousand of assessed value, which is slightly higher than our projected rate of \$4.96. This higher rate was driven by two factors—the first being that the projected rate was based on a 3% increase in property values within the district, and the actual rate turned out to be .57%. Keep in mind that recent growth rates were 6.5% last year, 13.2% average over the last 5 years, and 9.5% over the 10-year period. Considering that our high and low during this 10-year period were 18% and 3% respectively, our estimate of 3% was considered very conservative at the time that our \$79 million bond was approved a year ago. The second and most important factor is that we chose to take advantage of a Federal Stimulus Program known as the Quality School Construction Bond (QSCB). By issuing \$17.5 million worth of QSCB bonds (included as part of our \$79 million total) we were able to save our taxpayers over \$9.5 million in interest expense over the 17-year life of the bonds. To do so, we had to sell the bonds one year earlier than anticipated in 2010, a federal mandate, which alone caused a one-year boost in our levy rate from \$4.91 per \$1,000 of assessed value to the final \$5.07 rate. The good news is, because we competed for and received the QSCB funding, we are saving you \$817,000 in annual interest expense—thereby lowering the rate for 2012 and beyond.

You have trusted us to be good stewards of scarce resources, and we are working very hard to make the best decisions possible and to be totally transparent. If you would like to further discuss any of the above, please don’t hesitate to give Mr. Brian Aiken (Director of Finance and Operations) a call at 559-4501, or call me at 559-4502.

*For our children, our community, our world, our future ~*

Lawrence R. Keller, Superintendent

**Friday Reminder:** One hour late start for all schools in our district to provide for teacher collaborative time. Your child’s school day begins one hour later; the buses run one hour later.

## Our essential foundations

- ★ High Expectations and Continuous Progress
- ★ Involvement and Engagement with School District Community
- ★ Stewardship and Planning

## Important Dates:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| March 15-17 | Tenth Grade State Reading and Writing Assessments |
| April 4-8   | <b>NO SCHOOL</b><br>Spring Vacation               |

## Tenth grade state reading and writing assessments March 15-17

This year, all tenth grade students in Washington State will take the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE). The HSPE name conveys the goal of the test, which is to measure a student's proficiency in basic skills. The HSPE is important for the following reasons:

- By meeting standard on portions of the HSPE, students earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement, and HSPE results become part of the official high school transcript.
- Beginning with the class of 2013 (this year's sophomore class), students must meet standard on state tests in reading, writing, math and science to be eligible to graduate.
- Teachers and administrators use HSPE results to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction.
- The HSPE is how public schools in Washington meet the requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Students and teachers have worked hard to prepare for success on the HSPE. Please help Cheney tenth graders demonstrate their learning by ensuring all tenth grade students attend school and arrive promptly **March 15-17**, as the state testing schedule does not allow for HSPE make-up sessions. Students will also take the science portion of the HSPE on **April 12**. A new statewide assessment system for math will be introduced this spring during the last three weeks of school. To learn more about state testing, including information about the assessments that will be given to third through eighth grade students, please visit the Parent Resources section of the Cheney School District website.

## Home Works! students learn and play together

Monopoly anyone? How about Scrabble, or Pictureka? This might just be what you would hear if you came to visit students at Home Works! on any given day lately. Recently, students at Home Works! found themselves surrounded by new board games, thanks to a winning entry in the Hasbro Family Game Night Sweepstakes. Home Works! students and staff entered the online sweepstakes mid-October, following our first family game night at school. The entry included answering questions regarding how games are used in your school, how family game night is important to you, and how you see games bringing people together. After a few questions and answers, a quick faxed response, and a lot of patience waiting to hear the outcome, Home Works! kids got the great news just before winter vacation that they had in fact won. The winning prizes for the contest included several new board games to share with students at Home Works!, and even a few extra to donate to local charities. Home Works! families love learning and playing together and now, since they have even more board games to share, they have even more ways to do both. Congratulations, Home Works!!



Rebekah, Carlee, Caelyn, Lauryn, Sam, Austin, Jeremy, James and MaKayla enjoy board games together



## CHS swimmers shine!

Cheney High School swimmers did extremely well in the recent WIAA state competition. Rustin Babcock placed third in the 200-yard freestyle and 100-yard freestyle. Joel Watts placed fourth in the 200-yard intermediate, and sixth in the 100-yard backstroke. Brennen Wynd, Robert Meyer, Joel Watts and Rustin Babcock shared 400-yard freestyle relay sixth place in state. Shown in the photograph at the left are Brennen Wynd, Rustin Babcock and Joel Watts. Not pictured is Robert Meyer. Congratulations to all of these talented students!



## Laikyn Brophy and Elias Mason named Great Northern League Winter Athletes of the Year

Cheney High School student Elias Mason placed first in the 152-pound wrestling class at state. He certainly turned in a gold medal performance!

Laikyn Brophy was selected to the 1st Team, Great Northern League All Conference Basketball Team.

The two of them were named Great Northern League Winter Athletes of the Year. Congratulations to these amazing athletes!

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## Classified School Employee Week

As everyone who is committed to children and to high quality education on their behalf is well aware, it takes the hard work and commitment of all school employees, parents and guardians, community members, and each student to assure positive educational outcomes.

The week of March 14-18 has been designated by Governor Gregoire as **Classified School Employee Week**.

Our classified employees are integral to the success of our school district, and especially to the success of the young people we serve. We are extremely fortunate to have the talented and dedicated men and women we do in all classified positions in the district—a group that includes our maintenance and custodial staff, nutrition service employees, transportation employees, para-educators, and secretaries at each of our schools and sites.

You are encouraged to extend special thanks to each of our classified staff. Without them, our service to children would not be nearly as rich or successful.

## Books and Falcons go together

Sunset Falcons will take home free books this year thanks to a Page Ahead Grant. For several years, Sunset students have enjoyed thousands of free books donated by Page Ahead, a non-profit organization that provides books for children in schools with high numbers of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. This year, Sunset will distribute free books as we celebrate reading at our Literacy Night on March 3rd. Depending on this year's supply of books, we may also have the opportunity to offer additional free book distributions later in the year.

In addition, Sunset's administrative coordinator, Mr. Beal, has received a grant to purchase 200 high interest books for Sunset classrooms. These books will help teachers instruct students at their reading level using materials that are interesting and fun to read. This grant was provided via the Donors Choose website and supported by generous donors including Horace Mann.



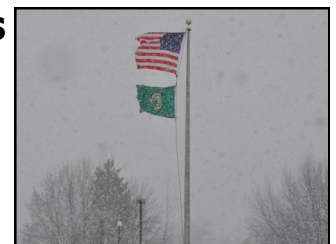
Finally, thanks to the Sunset PTO, our Falcons have the chance to win a bicycle to reward them for reading. In our library, four shiny bicycles sit atop the bookcases, awaiting avid readers who will ride them away this summer. Each time students pass an Accelerated Reader test for a book they have read, they can enter to win one of these great bicycles.

These are just a few of the ways Sunset is making reading fun. We encourage Sunset families to join us for Literacy Night on March 3rd, read together, and find fun ways to enjoy good books. Thanks to all who are helping Sunset students find fun and excitement in books, and KEEP READING, FALCONS!

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## CHS spring sports started today?

We thought you might enjoy a photo taken the first day of spring sports at Cheney High School. This is just your average spring blizzard!



Cheney Public Schools complies with all federal and state rules and regulations and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, honorably discharged veteran or military status, economic status, gender, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, pregnancy, familial status, marital status, age, the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. This holds true for all students who are interested in participating in educational programs and/or extracurricular school activities. Inquiries regarding compliance and/or grievance procedures may be directed to the school district's Title IX/RCW 28A.640 Officer/ADA Coordinator or Section 504 Coordinator. Or inquiries may be directed to the Director of the Office of Civil Rights, Department of HEW, Washington, D.C.

Title IX/Chapter 28A.640 Officer/ADA Coordinator  
 Dr. Debra Clemens, Associate Superintendent  
 Cheney School District, 520 Fourth Street  
 Cheney, WA 99004 Phone: (509) 559-4550

Section 504 Coordinator  
 Kristi Thurston, Director, Student Support Services  
 Cheney School District, 520 Fourth Street  
 Cheney, WA 99004 Phone: (509) 559-4507

Requests for Disclosure of Public Records  
 Sharon Throop, Public Records Officer  
 Cheney School District, 520 Fourth Street  
 Cheney, WA 99004 Phone: (509) 559-4502



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### CHS Spokane Scholars

Six students at Cheney High School have been selected as Spokane Scholars to represent the district at the Spokane Convention Center on April 20th.

- English: Sydney Brock
  - Mathematics: Jacob Kimball
  - Science: Daniel France
  - Social Studies: Melissa Jamison
  - World Languages: Justin Bockstruck
  - Fine Arts: Lauren McKinley
- We are proud of these students and of their accomplishment.

### Windsor and Sunset Schools selected for Washington Achievement Awards

The State Board of Education and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction celebrate schools for overall excellence and special recognition in language arts, math, science, graduation rate, improvement and closing achievement gaps through the Washington Achievement Award. Schools are selected based on their statewide assessment data for the three previous years. Windsor Elementary School was recognized with the Overall Excellence - Elementary award due to their overall two-year average placing them in the top five percent statewide. Sunset Elementary School received the state's Closing Achievement Gaps award. Quoting the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website, "By lifting up our most successful schools, the Washington Achievement Award shines a light on some of the best practices that are making that success possible." For further information on this prestigious award, visit [www.k12.wa.us/EducationAwards/WashingtonAchievement/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/EducationAwards/WashingtonAchievement/default.aspx).



### Emily Audet named "Best of the West Teacher of the Year"

Recently, CMS 8th grade science teacher Emily Audet was honored with the Teacher of the Year award at the West Plains Chamber of Commerce "Best of the West" awards banquet. Emily has worked at Cheney Middle School for five years. She is an AVID teacher who works with the AVID Site Team to make college a reality for many of our students. She has provided leadership to the science team and has helped her students achieve well above standard on the MSP. Emily is truly the Best of the West!



### Jim Missel is Great Northern League AD of the Year

CHS Assistant Principal Jim Missel was recently named GNL Athletic Director of the Year, and will be representing the league at the state level later in the year. All of us who work closely with Mr. Missel know how much he deserves this recognition, and how hard he works on our students' and athletes' behalf!