

Cherokee Central Schools
86 Elk Crossing Lane, Cherokee, NC 28719

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Cherokee Elementary School
Cherokee Middle School
Cherokee High School

Annual Report 2015-2016

CCS Vision

The Cherokee Central School System will be a community where each student will graduate from high school, will be globally competitive for work and post-secondary education, will possess an appreciation for and an eagerness to preserve the Cherokee Nation, and will be prepared for life in the 21st century.

CCS Mission

The Cherokee Central School System is committed to:

- Empowering our students
- Preserving our nation
- Ensuring our future

Introduction

Cherokee Central Schools (CCS) is a tribally operated school system located on the Qualla Boundary, which is nestled next to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Although schools of some type (i.e. religious, boarding) have operated on the Reservation since 1804, CCS was formed in 1962 and initially operated by Bureau of Indian Affairs. In 1990 Cherokee Central Schools became a tribal grant school under P. L. 100-297. CCS consists of three schools – 1 elementary school (K-5), 1 middle school (6-8), and 1 high school (9-12).

Governance and Leadership

Cherokee Central Schools is governed by a six member elected school board, along with a non-voting representative from the tribal council. Each member serves a two year term, and terms are staggered.

Central office personnel consists of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, nine coordinators/directors. The central office administrators facilitate programs in special education, testing, curriculum, staff development, culture, human resources, finances, facilities, STEAM, and information technology).

A principal leads each of the schools. Each of the schools also has an assistant principal. Principals at each school have formed and rely on a school leadership team.

Campus

Cherokee Central Schools is housed on a state-of-the-art Green campus. Opened in August 2009, the campus houses all three schools, central office, facilities maintenance, Hope Center, IT, and alternative learning programs.

When opened in 2009, the campus was the largest green building project in the region, achieving Silver LEED certification. Ninety percent of the waste generated from the construction project has been recycled, and it is projected to use 35% less energy. The campus boast of daylighting in over 75% of its space, and CCS also harvests rainwater.

The campus includes computer labs, science labs, cultural centers (including the 350 seat Gathering Place), alternative learning centers, 1040 seat

Performing Arts Center (the Chief Joyce Dugan Cultural Arts Center), sports arenas, stadium, stickball field, and boys and girls fitness centers.

Calendar

The school calendar provides 185 instructional days for students, and it includes teacher workdays, as well as four early releases for professional development.

Most courses in the elementary and middle school are taught as year-long courses. Most courses in the high school are taught on a block schedule, although a few are on a year-long schedule.

Federal and Tribal Mandates

Cherokee Central Schools' school board policy requires that each school implement North Carolina's Standard Course of Study, which is currently Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) requires that Cherokee Central Schools follow the North Carolina accountability workbook to meet federal NCLB requirements. Students in grades 3-8 are administered North Carolina's End of Grade (EOG) assessments in Reading and Math. They are also administered the science EOG in grades 5 and 8. High school students are administered three End of Course (EOC) assessments, Biology, English II, and Math I. In addition, CCS provides families of new students with a Home Language Survey to determine which students may need to be screen for English language proficiency. In accordance with North Carolina Department of Public Instruction guidelines, students are screened with WIDA's W-APT, and students who are identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) are administered WIDA's ACCESS assessment annually.

Successful completion of Cherokee Language and History is a local graduation requirement. Students must also complete a CPR course as a graduation requirement.

Enrollment

According to the Native American Student Information System (NASIS) on the last day of school (5/27/2016), Cherokee Central Schools had 1,108 students

enrolled. Of the 1,108 students enrolled in 2015-2016, 93.68% were American Indian students, mostly enrolled in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian (EBCI).

Table 1. May 2015 Ending Enrollment – All Students, All Schools.

Grade	Enrollment	Grade	Enrollment	Grade	Enrollment
PK	22	4	105	9	86
K	126	5	95	10	77
1	82	6	74	11	58
2	85	7	72	12	63
3	87	8	76	Total	1108

Academic Programs and Services

Hope Center

The Hope Center includes a Baby Face program, Infant toddler program, a Preschool program, and a PreK program. This year, the Hope Center added another PreK classroom for a total of 3 classrooms. The Hope Center provided several activities for children and their families including autumn and winter events, Week of the Young Child celebrations, Loving Literacy training, a Children's Fair, Spring Fling, field trips to an aquarium, as well as an end-of-year celebration. The Hope Center provided spring screenings for children including developmental, speech/language, hearing, and vision screenings. A Transition Tea was held for PreK students and parents to prepare for the transition to Kindergarten. In addition, transition services were provided for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP).

Table 2. Hope Center Enrollment, 2014-2015

Baby Face Program	Infant Toddler Program	Preschool Program	PreK Program
40	11	33	40

Exceptional Student Services

Special Education

Cherokee Central Schools' special education department provides students with disabilities with instruction, support and services as determined by an Individualized Education Plan. The department follows the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Three hundred and eighteen (318) students were served by the Special Education department in 2015-2016. Disability categories of the children served included traumatic brain injury, autism, multiple disabilities, emotional disturbance, intellectually disabled, specific learning disabled, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, speech impairment, visual impairment, developmental delay, and other health impairment.

Table 3. Ending Enrollment in Special Education.

Preschool	K-5	6-8	9-12
36	138	68	76

Cherokee Central Schools provides individualized services to students with disabilities ranging from consultation to inclusion to pull out services. For the most part, students with disabilities are provided instruction with the non-disabled peers.

The district also provides related services in the areas of occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language services, and psychological and counseling services. In 2015-2016, Cherokee Elementary School provided related services to 31 students, Cherokee Middle School provided 8 students with related services, and Cherokee High School provided 6 students with related services.

The Special Education department also provides an alternative learning program, Pathseekers, for students in middle and high school have severe emotional and behavioral needs. The program consists of two teachers, a paraprofessional, and a social worker.

In addition, Cherokee Central Schools has an autism unit, staffed by a teacher and two paraprofessionals. The autism unit implements the TEEACH method.

The department provides extended year services each the summer months.

The Special Education department also sent four students to Camp Royall, a camp provided by the North Carolina Autism Society and located in eastern North Carolina. The department also provided travel expenses to parents for transporting their child to and from the camp.

Family nights were held for parents and families of students with Autism. Occupational Course of Study (OCS) students participated in the Annual OCS Gathering with students from four other regional schools.

The program provided a placement for one student at Beacon Transitions, a residential program for young adults, who need additional guidance on the path to independence.

The Special Education department provides a special education teacher and teaching assistant for each grade level, K-12. The department also consists of two psychologists, a transition specialist, several related services team members, and an administrative assistant, in addition to the director.

[Talented and Gifted \(TaG\) Program](#)

Twenty-seven students were enrolled in the TaG program in 2015-2016. Activities for students included field trips to a Mechatronics program and colleges/universities. Students also participated in robotics, research, and community service projects.

[English Language Learners \(ELL\)](#)

Students who have been identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) based in the Wida's W-APT have a LEP plan developed for them. Modifications and accommodations are provided when appropriate. Teacher utilize ELL strategies for the students. Tutoring and intervention services are also provided.

Students are re-assessed each year with the WIDA ACCESS assessment.

Students may exit the ELL program based on their WIDA scores as determined by North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Seven (7) students were identified as English Learners at Cherokee Elementary School in 2015-2016.

The other schools had no identified English Learners.

[Cherokee Cultural Department](#)

The Cultural Department provides Cherokee Language instruction for each grade level at Cherokee Elementary and Cherokee Middle schools. Immersion courses are also available. At the high school level, Cherokee I and II are

taught, along with a Native American Literature course. In addition, the Cultural department provides paraprofessionals for grade 3.

The cultural department continued work on the Shi-yo app. Some members of the department demonstrated the app to Choctaw and Navajo educators.

The Traditional Singers, a student group, traveled to various events (e.g., 9/11 Memorial, Tsali Care Center, Dialysis Center) to perform.

The department held a two week Cultural Summer School for students, culminating in the Night of the Arts art show which drew large crowds of parents and community members.

The Cultural Department also offered professional development to teachers. The cultural department worked closely with Dr. Brent Riggs, Western Carolina University, on language and culture workshops for teachers.

The department worked with high school staff on culture and language integration in various content areas, including P.E.

[**Sacred Path**](#)

The mission of Sacred Path is to build a classroom and school-wide community and to empower students by providing leadership opportunities and conflict resolution skills while teaching the values and traditions of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Sacred Path :

- Empowers our students
- Provides leadership opportunities
- Builds community
- Retains the dignity of our students
- Turns negatives into positives
- Is Cherokee inspired
- Helps establish the identity of our students
- Makes teaching more effective
- Provides the foundation for learning to take place
- Is a platform for relevant concerns of our students (conflict resolution)
- Satisfies North Carolina Course of Study requirement for character education

Students at each school participate in age-appropriate Sacred Path activities. At the elementary school, class meetings are structured after tribal government, incorporating the roles of chief, vice chief, and recorder.

Sacred Path is for students and for staff members. With school board support, faculty and staff are able to participate in Sacred Path activities on four early release days throughout the year.

Curriculum

Teachers in all grade levels follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (SCS). Currently, for English Language Arts and mathematics, the SCS is the Common Core State Standards. All core areas have locally developed curriculum guides based on North Carolina's SCS. Cherokee language, culture, and history are integrated in all content areas. Twenty-first century skills are taught and modeled by the faculty. Teachers use benchmark assessment data to adjust their instruction.

In addition to the core subjects of English Language Arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, Cherokee Central Schools offer several arts courses and programs. All schools offer visual arts and chorus programs. The middle and high school also offer students the opportunity to participate in band and piano courses.

Students in each school are also involved in computer and technology courses.

Cherokee High School offers Career and Technical Education courses. Health Occupation, Business Education, and Auto Mechanics have been taught for many years. Newer CTE course offerings include Agriculture and Technology. Family and Consumer Sciences courses have been resurrected.

Physical Education and Healthy Living courses are taught at each of the three schools. A Health and P.E. course is a graduation requirement.

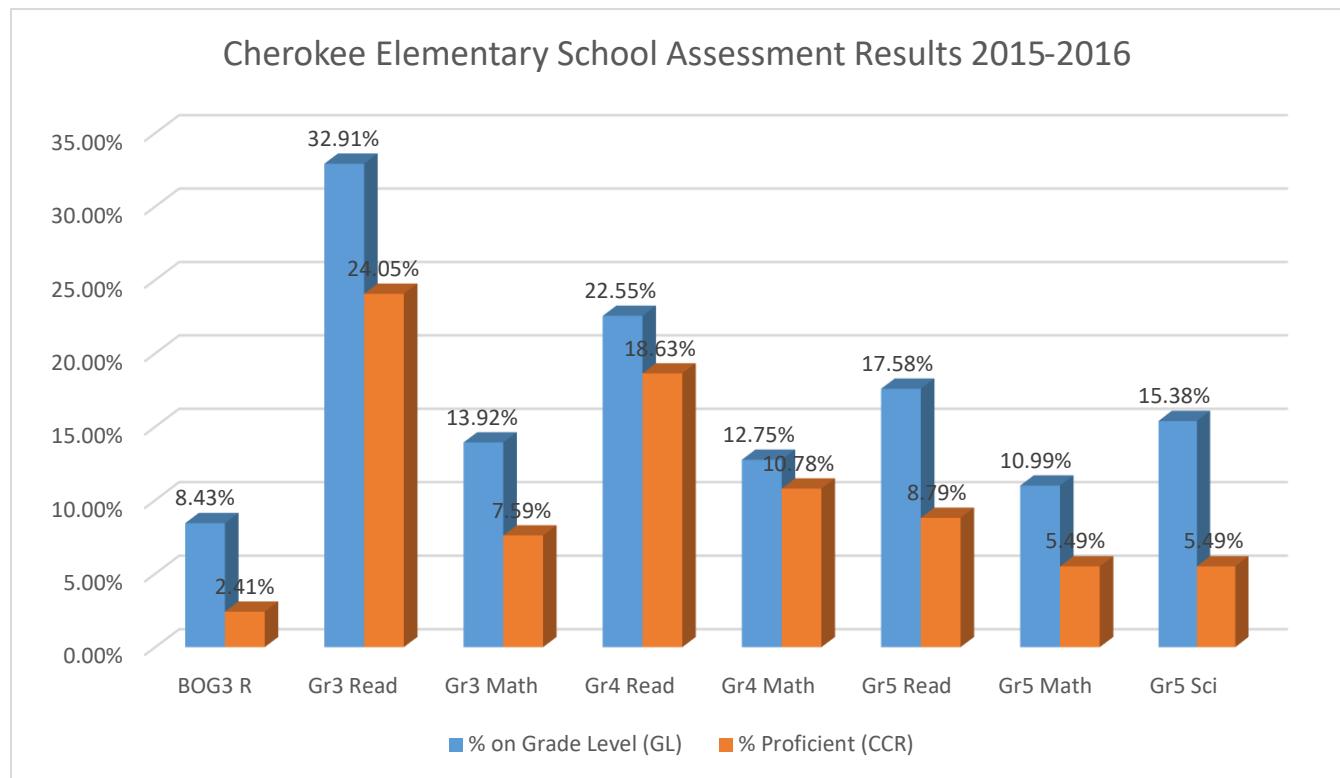
Students in the high school may opt to take online courses including college courses, Advanced Placement courses, and North Carolina Virtual Public School courses.

The Cherokee Middle School principal, Cherokee High School principal, and the assistant superintendent facilitated a Curriculum Leadership Week for teachers from Cherokee Middle School and Cherokee High School. The week included two days of technology training (new web site, Google Apps, Google Classroom) and three days of curriculum planning, using a 'backwards design' method. The curriculum work was led by a consultant from CORE, and it was partially funded with SIG funds.

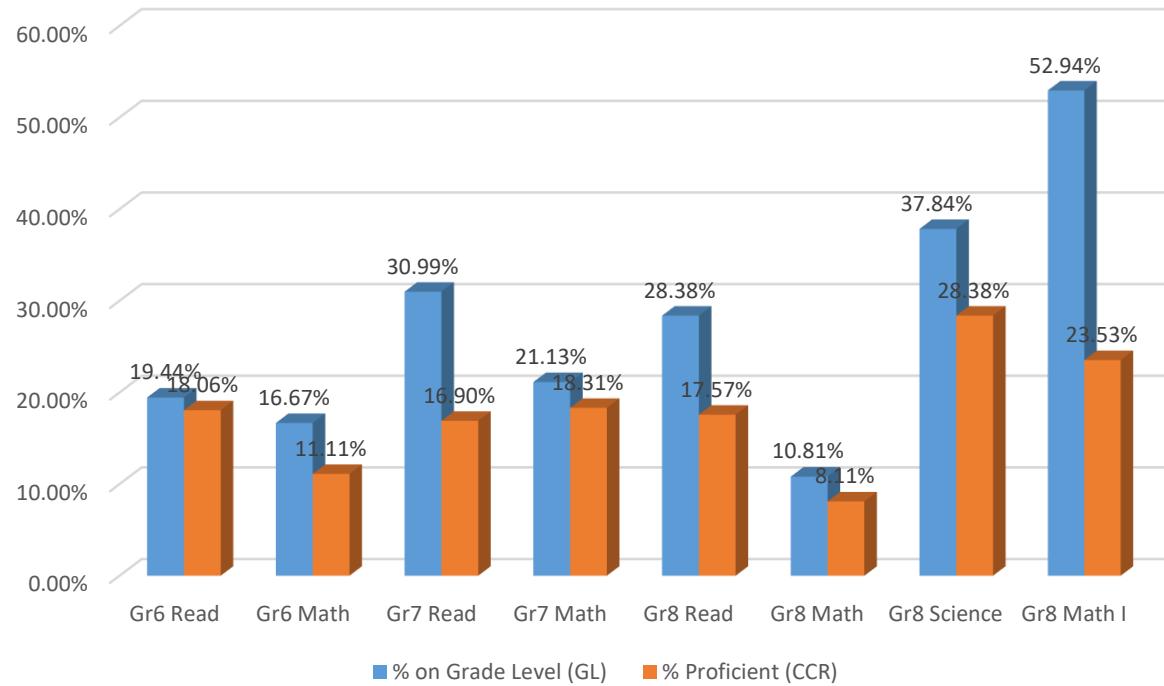
Assessment and Accountability

Assessments include North Carolina's End-of-Grade (EOG), End-of-Course (EOC), NCEXTEND1, Career and Technical Education (CTE) post-assessments, and NC Final Exams (NCFE). The EOG, EOC, and NCEXTEND1 results are used for federal accountability purposes. Students completed approximately 2,350 assessments in 2015-2016.

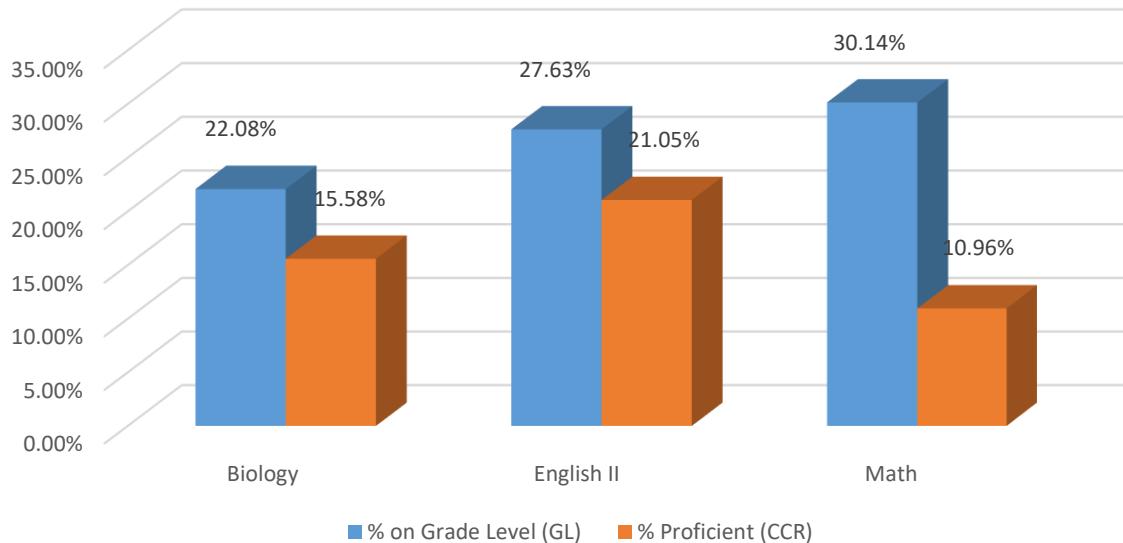
Results from 2015-2016 End of Grade and End of Course state assessments can be found in the graphs below.



Cherokee Middle School EOG Results 2015-2016



Cherokee High School EOC Results 2015-2016



In addition to the state assessments, Cherokee Central Schools utilizes the NWEA MAP assessments to measure growth in reading and math, K-11, and in science in grades 5-8. Teachers use data from the MAP assessments to determine flexible grouping and differentiation. The implementation of the MAP assessments also meets a School Improvement Grant (SIG) mandate for the middle and high school. Teachers in the elementary and middle schools use the data to develop individual student learning plans in Classworks, an online program used for intervention.

Cherokee Elementary School also uses mCLASS: Reading 3D and Dibels Next to screen, assess, and progress monitor students' reading proficiency.

Cherokee Central School also administers the ACT Plus Writing assessment to all grade 11 students each spring.

[**Professional Development**](#)

The school calendar provided staff development days and early release afternoons for professional development. Teachers were provided professional development in a variety of ways. Both in-house and outside consultants and trainers were utilized.

Principals often scheduled and facilitated professional development depending on the needs of their staff. For example, the elementary principal invited an elementary curriculum consultant from the Western Regional Education Service Alliance to provide a deep dive into the ELA Common Core standards, based on the results of the test data.

The school district is a member of the Western Region Education Service Alliance (WRESA) which provides low-cost/no-cost workshops for its member districts. Teachers and administrators attended workshops at WRESA, and the WRESA trainers also held onsite workshops.

Teachers also utilized online courses for professional development. The central office developed two culturally relevant online book study courses and offered them to staff throughout the year.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) were formed by grade blocks and departments at each of the three schools.

[**AdvancED Accreditation**](#)

While the three schools that make up Cherokee Central Schools have been accredited by SACS and later AdvancED for decades, in 2011-2012 the school system decided to strive for district accreditation. A self-assessment was

conducted by the administrative team, and cross-district teams were formed to address each of the AdvancED standards. We hosted the team in March of 2012 and was notified of our district accreditation at the end of the visit. Two years later, we submitted our progress report as required by the AdvancED process. We will be hosting another Quality Assurance Review team in school year 2016-2017 for reaccreditation. To prepare, the North Carolina state director for AdvancED provided training to a leadership group from each school and the central office in May 2016.

[Cherokee Elementary School \(CES\)](#)

The overall attendance rate (ADR) is 92.31%.

In addition to core courses, arts courses, Cherokee language courses, and physical education courses, students at the elementary school also participate in a variety of extracurricular activities. Students enter projects in the annual Science Fair and the annual Arts Show. In addition, students can opt to participate in the Traditional singing group or Traditional dancing group.

Cherokee Elementary School students participated in a variety of end-of-year field trips including the aquarium, Dollywood, and Wild Bear Falls.

The school yearbook was created by the students and was available for purchase near the end of the school year. Students also created a student newspaper that was published as part of the community's newspaper, *The Cherokee One Feather*.

Under the direction of the CES Media Specialist, students in the upper elementary grade levels formed two Battle of the Books teams. Students were required to read specific books during the school year. In the spring, the two teams battled each other by answering questions about each of the books read. This is the second year that students have participated in the program.

Students, parents, and faculty and staff attended the much anticipated Harvest Festival in October. Games, activities, prizes, and food made for an enjoyable evening for everyone. The Harvest Festival draws large numbers of parents and family members, and it is an important fundraiser for teachers.

The school hosts several open houses throughout the year. Some focus on specific curricular areas, and other focus on specific events (e.g., book fair).

Students were able to join in a variety of after school clubs this year, including robotics. In addition, students were able to receive tutoring after school.

Cherokee Middle School

The attendance rate (ADR) for Cherokee Middle School is 93.10%.

Students who met their growth target on the MAPS assessment were eligible to attend a UNCA basketball game.

Cherokee Middle School offers Math I, a high school course, to students who are prepared for a challenging math course.

The middle school implemented Classworks as an intervention tool. Classworks uses MAP data to plan differentiated learning plans for students.

Students, teachers, and administrators had a successful Eighth Grade trip. Students spent five days traveling to various sites in North Carolina and surrounding states. Many of the sites were culturally relevant to the Cherokee tribe.

An Integrated Classroom with a mental health focus was implemented in the spring. The classroom provides additional support for students who are struggling behaviorally.

In conjunction with the high school, middle school students performed *The Lion King, Jr.*, funded with an arts grant. The production ran for several nights to packed houses, pulling spectators from the surrounding communities.

CMS hosted and participated in the STAC (Student Technology Advisory Committee) conference. A zSpace lab for virtual reality and 3D was purchased for students.

Cherokee High School (CHS)

The attendance rate (ADR) for Cherokee High School is 88.15%.

CHS provided students with the opportunity to make up absences and tardies, prepare for exams, and complete graduation projects through several "Salvage Saturday" throughout the year.

Students at the high school participated in many extracurricular activities and special events. Students have a variety of clubs from which to choose to participate, including Adventure Club, Red Cross, FFA, Extreme Science, Creative Writing, Photography, Drama, Running, Swimming Safety, Board Games, Corn Hole, Debate Club, HOSA, Football Strategies, Chess Guild, Travel, Reed Ecology, Hacky Sack, Reading, and Acapella.

Students also participated in STAC (Student Technology Advisory Committee) conferences and activities throughout the year. STAC is a regional event that

brings students and student teams from various school districts together. Cherokee High School is the host site.

Students in grade 12 complete Graduation projects as a graduation requirement.

Students entered artwork they had created throughout the year in the annual Art Show. Artwork was displayed for several days in the Gallery, and an evening event was held for family and community members. Band concerts were held each semester, and high school students participated in *The Lion King, Jr.*, production, along with middle school students.

Students were honored for their academic achievement in May at the annual Academic Banquet. Athletes were honored for their achievements at the annual Athletic Banquet.

Support Services

School Nutrition Services

The School Nutrition Program provides breakfast and lunch for each student at Cherokee Central Schools, following the USDA guidelines, at no cost to the student or family.

Table. Approximate Participation of Students		
	Breakfast	Lunch
Cherokee Elementary School	63%	94%
Cherokee Middle School	33%	87%
Cherokee High School	35%	65%

Students at CHS are offered the Breakfast Grab n Go option. A BIC (Breakfast in the Classroom) program was implemented in the Kindergarten classroom. The School Nutrition department serves after school snacks to approximately 300 students.

The school system was awarded a Farm to School programming grant.

The School Nutrition Director leads the SHAC (Student Health Advisory Committee), which is comprised of students, school staff, and representatives from various community and tribal programs. SHAC hosted a Spring Fair for CMS and CHS in April. Eighteen community vendors participated in the Fair. The SHAC members also assessed and evaluated the four goals in Cherokee Central Schools' Local Wellness Policy.

The School Nutrition program will offer the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to feed students during the summer.

[Cultural Arts Center \(CAC\), Public Relations, and Development Programs](#)

The CAC averaged 48 events at its venues. Events ranged from Graduation Project presentations to Superband to Prom.

The average number of Blackboard Connect Community Outreach Messages sent during each quarter is approximately 70.

Development facilitated several grants including School Improvement (SIG), 21st century after school programs, Qualla Education Collaborative, etc.,

[Technology Department](#)

The technology team imaged or re-imaged desktops and laptops for all three schools and added the devices to the network. They provided troubleshooting assistance for tech work orders from staff. The department upgraded the VOIP system.

The technicians worked on security cameras, camera servers, and software.

In addition, the department tested a variety of wireless equipment, and wrote grants for additional equipment and services. IT staff replaced vBrick with the WOWZA server.

The department hosted the STAC conferences on four different occasions. Additionally, the IT department provided support for CREW 2015 (Collaborative Regional Education Workshops) and for the Inauguration of the new Chief of the EBCI, Patrick Lambert.

In addition, the IT department created a new web site for the school and migrated existing web pages to it. In addition, the department rolled out a new gmail-based email system and Google Classroom.

[Facilities](#)

Monthly utility services are provided for power, water and sewer, gas, and pest control. Facilities staff averaged 246 completed work requests each month. These daily work orders are in addition to the preventative maintenance schedule.

The facilities department maintains 473,000 square feet of buildings, and 14 acres of grounds. Facilities also oversees the 60,000 gallon of rain water storage in the underground cisterns in each courtyard and the 290 geothermal wells (450 feet deep) for heating and cooling.