

# Cherokee Central Schools

## Annual Report 2019-2020



### **Purpose**

This document provides a description of the educational programs and activities at Cherokee Central Schools for the school year 2019-2020. Cherokee Central Schools utilizes the annual report in various ways including compliance (Bureau of Indian Education) and public relations.

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86 Elk Crossing Lane  
Cherokee, NC 28719

# Cherokee Central Schools

Cherokee Elementary School

Cherokee Middle School

Cherokee High School

Annual Report 2019-2020

## 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 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## CCS Mission

The Cherokee Central School System is committed to:

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

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# Cherokee Central Schools

## School Board

### 2019-2020

| Community  | Position                           | Name                   |
|------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Yellowhill | Chairperson                        | Dr. Jennifer Thompson  |
| Wolfetown  | Vice Chairperson                   | Isaac Long             |
| Big Y      | Secretary                          | Tara Reed-Cooper       |
| Birdtown   | Representative                     | Gloria Griffin         |
| Big Cove   | Representative                     | Karen French-Browning  |
| Painttown  | Representative                     | Regina Ledford Rosario |
|            | EBCI Tribal Council Representative | Chelsea Saunooke       |

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## **Special Message Regarding School Year 2019-2020**

Neither students nor teachers, parents or administrators, could have predicted how the school year 2019-2020 would develop. Cherokee Central Schools rolled along rather typically for three-quarters of the year, but on March 14, Governor Roy Cooper closed all schools due to the pandemic resulting from the spread of the coronavirus. Shortly after, Chief Richard Sneed issued a state of emergency and closed the Qualla Boundary. Governor Cooper issued stay at home orders on March 27, 2020.

Initially, we thought that the closure would only last a couple of weeks, but it soon became apparent that we would not be able to return to school at all this year. Learning continued through Learning Engagement Packets and phone calls. CCS was able to maintain a food distribution program, providing children with breakfast and lunch. While many of the year's activities had occurred by the time the closure was enacted, several of the more important events had not.

Cherokee Central Schools endeavored to provide the most appropriate instruction and support services to students and families as possible during pandemic closure.

## **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 was initially operated by the 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 (PK-5), 1 middle school (6-8), and 1 high school (9-12).

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# Governance and Leadership

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

Central office personnel consists of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and ten directors. The central office administrators facilitate programs in special education, talented and gifted, testing, curriculum, staff development, Cherokee language and culture, human resources, finances, facilities, custodial, child nutrition services, information technology, and PK/preschool programs, and community affairs.

A principal leads each of the schools. Cherokee Elementary School has two assistant principals, with one specifically assigned to curriculum and instruction. Both Cherokee Middle School and Cherokee High School have 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 (PK and Preschool programs), 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 boasts of daylighting in over 75% of its space, and CCS also harvests rainwater to flush some of the toilets.

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 arena, stadium, stickball field, and boys and girls fitness centers.

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With the increase in enrollment in recent years and the addition of programs, CCS embarked on an Expansion plan. The tribe approved the funding and plans were made during the 2019-2020 school year. A Construction Manager-At-Risk was hired and a project manager from Tribal Construction was enlisted to assist with the Expansion project. See Special Projects > [Expansion](#).

## Calendar

The school calendar originally provided 180 instructional days for students, and it included teacher workdays. The year ended with 169 instructional days and many of them were remote learning days. Teachers were scheduled in small groups to return to campus at the end of May to close up their classrooms.

Professional development is also included in the calendar. Along with seven other school districts in the far western part of North Carolina, Cherokee Central Schools hosts CREW (Collaborative Regional Education Workshops), a one-day grass-roots conference for teachers, teacher assistants, principals, central office administrators, and superintendents. Grade blocks and departments meet regularly in Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

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

## Federal, State, and Tribal Mandates

Cherokee Central Schools' school board policy requires that each school implement North Carolina's Standard Course of Study, which is currently a modified version of the 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 ESSA 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

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science EOG in grades 5 and 8. High school students are administered four End of Course (EOC) assessments - Biology, English II, Math I, and Math III.

In addition, CCS provides families of new students with a Home Language Survey (HLS) to determine which students may need screening for English language proficiency. In accordance with BIE guidelines, the district screens students with WIDA's Screener, and students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) are administered WIDA's ACCESS assessment annually.

As do other students in the state, CHS students must also complete a CPR skills assessment as a graduation requirement.

Successful completion of Cherokee Language is a local graduation requirement. Implemented this school year, another local graduation requirement is the successful completion of a Personal Finance course.

Because of the pandemic the U.S. Department of Education (USED) waived the testing requirements for the year, as did the North Carolina General Assembly and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). State assessments were not administered in May 2020.

## Funding

Cherokee Central Schools is primarily funded through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). CCS receives ISEP (Indian Student Equalization Program) and Title (ESSA) funding through the BIE.

Education is a priority for the tribe and the tribal leadership provides funding for Cherokee Central Schools as part of its budget.

The district is also fortunate to have secured outside funding through grants to support initiatives and programs. The Cherokee Preservation Foundation has been hugely supportive of the Personalized Education initiative and other programs implemented by Cherokee Central Schools.

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# Enrollment

According to the Native American Student Information System (NASIS) on the last day of school (05/26/2020), Cherokee Central Schools had 1,352 students enrolled; 112 more students than the previous school year. Of the 1,352 students enrolled in 2019-2020, 93.34% were American Indian students, mostly enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian (EBCI). See Table I.

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| <b>Table I. May 2020 Ending Enrollment - All Students, All Schools</b> |            |       |            |       |            |       |            |
|--|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|
| Grade  | Enrollment | Grade | Enrollment | Grade | Enrollment | Grade | Enrollment |
| PK   | 40         | 4     | 104        | 9     | 104        |       |            |
| K  | 143        | 5     | 88         | 10    | 85         |       |            |
| 1  | 123        | 6     | 91         | 11    | 79         |       |            |
| 2  | 103        | 7     | 110        | 12    | 71         |       |            |
| 3  | 108        | 8     | 103        | Total | 1352       |       |            |

The enrollment on March 13, 2020 - the last day before school closure for the pandemic - the enrollment was 1,353 students.

# Academic Programs and Services

## Hope Center

The Hope Center includes a Baby Face program, Infant toddler program, a Preschool program, and a PK program. The Hope Center director oversees the PK program, which consists of three classrooms. Each year the Hope Center has a waiting list for its PK program, and CCS hopes to add additional classrooms when space is available. The Hope Center provided several activities for children and their families including monthly group nights for Baby Face participants that include an activity, book giveaway, & a meal. Larger events are planned quarterly that often involve the usual activities along with a trip to a significant location in the community for all families involved in the Hope Center. They are active participants in Week of the Young Child celebrations, Loving Literacy trainings, the local Children's Fair, and Community Screening Events.

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The Hope Center provided screenings for children including developmental, speech/language, hearing, and vision screenings. In addition, transition services were provided for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP).

Table II indicates the number of children in each Hope Center program.

| <b>Table II. Hope Center Enrollment, 2019-2020</b> |                        |                   |            |
|--|------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Baby Face Program                                  | Infant Toddler Program | Preschool Program | PK Program |
| 36   | 11                     | 49                | 43         |

## Exceptional Student Services

### Special Education

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

The Special Education department served 271 students in 2019-2020. Disability categories of the children served are found in Table III.

| <b>Table III. Disability Categories, 2019-2020.</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• traumatic brain injury</li><li>• autism</li><li>• multiple disabilities</li><li>• emotional disturbance</li><li>• intellectually disabled</li><li>• Specific learning disabled</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hearing impairment</li><li>• orthopedic impairment</li><li>• speech impairment</li><li>• visual impairment</li><li>• developmental delay</li><li>• other health impairment.</li></ul> |

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Table IV. Ending Enrollment in Special Education.

| Preschool | K-5 | 6-8 | 9-12 |
|-----------|-----|-----|------|
| 60        | 126 | 66  | 79   |

Cherokee Central Schools provide individualized services to students with different abilities ranging from inclusion, to resource services, as well as services for those with more severe cognitive delays. The Department and IEP teams make every effort to ensure that students with different abilities are provided instruction with their non-disabled peers.

The district also provides related services in the areas of occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language services, orientation and mobility, visual services, audiology and psychological services in the way of evaluations, the interpretation of evaluation results and therapy for students. Related Service personnel work closely to provide integrated services to ensure our students succeed.

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

In addition, Cherokee Central Schools has a classroom for students with autistic like characteristics, staffed by a teacher and two paraprofessionals. Staff members implement the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children (TEACCH) method as delivered and supported by the UNC School of Medicine at UNC Chapel Hill and regional centers throughout North Carolina .

The department, based on student's eligibility determination, provides extended year services during the summer months to support student learning and reduce the educational loss during the summer months.

Family nights were scheduled for parents and families of students with disabilities in the fall to address transitioning from one school to another. We met to get to know their new special education and classroom teachers, discuss the changes in schedules and the expectations for the new school year. The programs and training designed for parents and families of students with

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disabilities that were scheduled for the spring semester were cancelled due to COVID-19.

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, an employment educator, a student success advocate, several related services team members, and an administrative assistant, in addition to the director.

Each year, staff members receive CPI training or are re-certified in CPI to learn decision making skills and are able to directly intervene in a crisis situation.

Special Education students again participated in a regional SMART Tank competition. The middle school and high school teams both won money to support their program.

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

The TaG program included thirty-two (32) students in 2019-2020. The program serves students in grades 4-12 and is staffed with two teachers and a paraprofessional. Activities for students included field trips to a university and county/local libraries and colleges/universities tours. Students also participated in robotics, research, and community service projects.

CES TaG students participated in the regional SMART Tank competition and won third place.

Table V. Ending Enrollment in Talented and Gifted (TaG) Program

| 4-5 | 6-8 | 9-12 |
|-----|-----|------|
| 5   | 12  | 15   |

## **English Learners (EL)**

All new enrollees complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) that provides our schools with information on whether to screen for English proficiency. If so, the school then administers the WIDA Screener. Students who are identified for the program are re-assessed each year with the WIDA ACCESS assessment.

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Students may exit the ELL program based on their WIDA scores as determined by the criteria set by the BIE.

Students identified as English Learners (EL) based on the WIDA Screener have a LEP plan developed for them. Modifications and accommodations are provided when appropriate. Classroom teachers utilize ELL strategies for the students. Tutoring and intervention services are also available. The district also provides digital resources (Achieve 3000, Edmentum) to assist EL students. Three (3) students were identified as English Learners at Cherokee Elementary School in 2019-2020. Cherokee Middle School had two (2) students identified as an English Learner, and Cherokee High School identified two (2) EL students.

#### [\*\*Cherokee Cultural Department\*\*](#)

The Cultural Department provides Cherokee Language instruction for each grade level at Cherokee Elementary and Cherokee Middle schools. Immersion classes are also available. At the high school level, Cherokee I and II are taught. In addition, the Cultural department provides paraprofessionals for grade 3 classrooms.

Cherokee Elementary and Cherokee Middle School students completed a Cherokee Language pretest at the beginning of the school year.

The Cultural department plans various student activities throughout the year, including a pow wow, Indian market, and Honor the Elders celebration. Many of these events bring parents and other community members into the school.

The traditional dancers, a student group, performed at Western Carolina University during Native American month. The dancers also performed during the parade for Fair week.

The traditional singers performed at Tsali Care and at the hospital for the elders.

Because of the pandemic, the department was unable to offer the two week Cultural Summer Program during June 2020.

An ongoing project for the Cultural department is the Shiyo app. Level I has been available for some time and work continues on level II.

Several Cherokee Language instructors continue to be presenters at the CREW conference held each fall (October 2019). Topics of special interest are corn husk dolls, basket weaving, and traditional Cherokee clothing.

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The Cultural Department also offered professional development to teachers. The Cultural Department offered staff the opportunity to participate in a traditional skirt-making workshop. The department sponsored traditional dress days for students and staff throughout the year.

#### **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. Unfortunately, the last Sacred Path afternoon was cancelled due to the pandemic and resulting school closure.

The Sacred Path planning committee scheduled community bus tours for the staff, which are especially helpful for new teachers and staff. Other Sacred Path activities for staff involved making ornaments, dolls, quilt squares, paper baskets, pottery, beadwork, honeysuckle mats, and traditional skirts.

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# Curriculum

## Core

Teachers in all grade levels follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (SCS). Currently, for English Language Arts and mathematics, the SCS is adapted 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 formative and interim assessment data to adjust their instruction.

## The Arts

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 with performances and recitals offered throughout the year.

Students have the opportunity to participate in Performing Arts. The students revived the department's first-ever performance, *The Lion King, Jr.* The seniors were the students originally cast in the production.

The high school Performing Arts students chose to perform *Hairspray* for their spring production. Unfortunately, the performances were cancelled due to the pandemic.

The Chamber Singer performed in Washington, D.C. and across North Carolina with the *Si Otsedoha* Tour. Students also performed *Si Otsedoha* for the NC School Board Association conference in November. A review of one of their performances can be found at

<https://www.broadwayworld.com/charlotte/article/BWW-Review-Cherokee-Nation-Claims-Territory-Next-to-APPALACHIAN-SPRING-20200201>.

## Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Cherokee High School offers Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in several fields, including Health Sciences, Business, Marketing, and Finance Education, Auto Mechanics, Agriculture, Technology, Broadcast Journalism, Graphic Design, and Family and Consumer Sciences.

The high school Health Sciences students participate in HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) activities throughout the year. Frequently,

they plan and assist with Blood Drives on campus and the community. In addition, HOSA attends state and national conferences, participating in the organization's competitions, and they also run for and serve in HOSA leadership offices.

Cherokee Middle School also offers a variety of Career and Technical Education courses.

| Table VI. Middle School Career and Technical Education Courses   |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploring Career Decisions</li><li>• Coding</li><li>• 3D Printing</li><li>• Virtual Reality (zSpace)</li><li>• Introduction to Agriculture</li><li>• Carpentry</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Computers</li><li>• Exploring Personal Finance,</li><li>• Graphics Design 1</li><li>• Introduction to Healthcare</li><li>• Broadcast Journalism</li><li>• Robotics</li></ul> |

#### Physical Education (P.E.) and Health

Each school offers Physical Education and Healthy Living courses. A Health and P.E. course is a graduation requirement. We are also now recognized as a Unified Champion School District by Special Olympics NC. At the elementary school level, we have a Young Athletes' Program for students in grades K-2, where they participate in a skill development program with their non-disabled peers. Grades 3-5 and 6-8 participate in Special Olympic sports competitions with their non-disabled peers as teammates. CHS has a Unified Champion physical education class where students train with their non-disabled peers to learn skill development and compete together against other schools in the area.

#### Virtual Courses and Dual Enrollment

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

#### Personalized Education Through Blended Learning and ESTEAM (Entrepreneurship, Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) Initiative

Cherokee Central Schools continued implementation of its Personalized Education initiative (Phase 2). The district's instructional facilitators (IF)

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provided all new hires with training on Blended Learning and best practices with technology integration.

Phase 2 of the initiative focused on Careers. Instructional Facilitators worked with teachers on integrating career awareness and development activities into their curriculum guides.

The high school hired a teacher to assist with building out a work-based learning program for students that would include job-shadowing and internships. Unfortunately, the hire occurred just before the school was required to shut down due to the pandemic, so the program was postponed to the following year.

#### [ESTEAM Family and Community Nights](#)

CCS combined its ESTEAM Family and Community nights into a district event, *Gear up for 2020*. Middle and high school students and teachers from all schools led activities aimed at our elementary students. These activities included Lego tower, gear art, gear builders, Squishy Circuits, Beebot, Matter -Silly Putty, Slime, Hot Hands, Parachutes, Water Cycle, Ecosystems- Make a terrarium, and an art show.

Several tribal and local organizations participated in the spring event, including Tribal Natural Resources department and the Great Smoky Mountains Park service. District partners, AISES and The Science House, also providing activities such as Spheros and coding for students.



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## STEM-Related Programs and Activities

### Tech Fair 2020

The Technology Fair Planning Team prepared throughout the fall and early winter for the second annual CCS Tech Fair.

The team met most every week from fall through early spring to plan the district's first Tech Fair. All students, PK-12, and all staff were eligible to participate in Tech Fair 2020. Tech Fair 2020 included 42 individual projects and 17 team projects. A total of 89 students prepared projects.

Categories included computer animation, computer drawing, photography, video, audio books/podcasting, programming (game and non-game), music, Minecraft, app development, websites, robotics, model build, and 3D design.

The planning team approached community members to comprise the cadre of judges.

The Fair was scheduled for March and was subsequently cancelled due to the pandemic.

### ESTEAM Camp/Virtual STEAM Camp

CCS was poised to provide a two week ESTEAM Camp in June as it had done the previous two years. Since North Carolina and the Qualla Boundary was still in Phase 2 of the reopening plan, a face-to-face camp was not feasible.

In a short period of time, CCS pivoted and planned a Virtual STEAM Camp (VSC) for CES and CMS students. Teachers were recruited and lessons and activities were planned. Students were invited, and CCS distributed laptops to students and also provided a hotspot for some students.

One issue that arose was the data limit on the hotspots that were provided to CCS by the Dogwood Health Trust. Because the VSC relied heavily on Google Meets and video, the data limit was not sufficient in some cases.

Supplies and materials were purchased so that students would have at-home STEAM kits. One activity involved building a rocket. Students watched the teacher virtually launch a rocket. Some students attended the launch at a local park, but remained socially distanced.

CES enrolled 18 students in the VSC, and CMS enrolled 9 students.

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The Virtual STEAM Camp (VSC) was successful and the experience helped teachers and students feel more comfortable with what the next school year might bring.

The Virtual Steam Camp planning document can be found [here](#).

#### Makerspaces

To introduce the new Makerspaces in each of the schools, our partners at WRESA held an open house/reception in each of the Makerspaces during the teacher workdays at the beginning of the year. Teachers were also provided training on the various parts of the Makerspaces with a focus on how to integrate Makerspaces into the curriculum and classroom activities. Students and teachers participated in makerspace activities and learned more about the different opportunities it provided. Examples of Makerspace activities include paper circuit cards, littlebits construction, green screen video production and makey makey activities.

CES held an open house in August to introduce teachers to the Makerspace collection. Carol Douglas from WRESA (regional partner) worked with our Media Coordinator, Kim Cox, to help set this up.

Hands-on stations were set up in the media center for teachers to see how Makerspace will be offered to students during Media time

Darcy Grimes (from The NC Center for the Advancement of Teaching or NCCAT) held hands-on workshops for teachers in grades 3-5 on the use of Circuit Scribe, Ozobots, and Lil Bits, and our K-2 teachers were trained on Bee bots.

These tools/gadgets are used in the Media center and are available for classroom check-out. Many teachers took the opportunity to check these items out and use them in their classrooms.

In January, we held a STEAM night for families, and all of our makerspace items were used during the event to showcase student collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

At the CMS, the use of Makerspace has really transformed both students and teachers thinking by presenting a challenging atmosphere amidst quality learning engagement. See Figure I, CMS Spotlight.

At CHS, a hands-on makerspace workshop was presented by Mike Sandridge from National Inventors Hall of Fame. Some of the highlights were discussing an "innovation" mindset, creating a moving toy and inventing a product to sell.

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Tools that were used and discussed were Padlet, Flipgrid, Screencastify, and an online stopwatch. Each person received a box with supplies from feathers to clay. The workshop focused on using the makerspace to encourage an inventor's mindset.

**CMS Spotlight**

"Makerspace... the word I dreaded hearing at conferences and workshops. The library will be destroyed, and the sanctity of reading reduced to projects that aren't relevant. These were my thoughts a few years ago on Makerspace. When we decided we would move to a makerspace school, I won't lie, I did cringe for a moment. Then I decided to try to open up and listen to what was happening in other schools, and how positive makerspace could be for our students in Cherokee. I am fine with being proved wrong, and if I do something I am going to do it 100%. So I worked on my mindset, and focused on how Makerspace could enrich our students' learning.

I was blown away by what I saw in the short time we implemented this program last year. I had student's that had never talked or interacted in my normal library lessons, engaged and finally excited about the library. One of the projects I worked on with two Cherokee language teachers was teaching two groups of students how to make a ribbon skirt. I started praying right away, because I hadn't touched a sewing machine since 7th grade.

Our Cherokee language instructors helped me and taught me, and together the students and I learned something together. I learned that I don't have to know everything to form relationships with our students. I treasure the time I spent forming relationships with students during the time we worked together on ribbon skirts. In 7th grade, our social studies teacher said students were actually excited about social studies, when I used the Google expeditions to travel to Machu Picchu and Stonehenge. In 8th grade we learned we could do book reports in a new and exciting way using the green screen.

We even had a math class come to the library and do a project about zombies that was based on their probability lesson that they had completed. Math classes in the library!!! I worked with 6th grade students on electrical circuits, and they may have been mostly excited that they were making loud noises, but they were still learning about how to make a circuit. Makerspace teaches our students to be problem solvers, and we need that in our world more than ever. I will dare say that problem solving, critical thinking, and relationship building is more important than getting test answers correct at the end of year. I am thankful for the experience last year, and glad I was proven wrong. Makerspace.... The word makes me think of happy students engaged in a new way of learning." ~Elizabeth Beamer, CMS Media Specialist

### SMART Tank

With generous funding from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, WRESA held the second annual SMART Tank, a regional competition modeled after the show Shark Tank. CCS fielded two teams in this regional competition and MS and the HS Lifeskills classes won in their individual categories.

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#### STEM E Conferences

Each year WRESA sponsors a student STEME conference. Cherokee Preservation Foundation funds the conference, and CCS is the host school. Each school in the region has a STEME club for students. Middle school and high school students attend the conferences in the fall and spring, and elementary school STEME clubs attend in the spring.

All Spring STEME Conferences were cancelled due to the pandemic shut-down.

## **Bridge**

CCS was exploring options to assist students who were below grade level prior the school closure in March 2020 for the pandemic. With the extended school closure due to COVID-19, students fell further behind.

In order to address these needs, CCS created a virtual summer program to 'bridge' student learning over the summer.

The Academic Bridge is designed to support students who may be struggling in reading and/or math basic skills. Students will focus on the specific skills needed to obtain a solid command of the standard course of study for the appropriate grade level.

At the high school level, the Academic Bridge is a credit recovery program.

The goal of the Bridge program is to ensure that all CES and CMS students are performing on grade level in the core areas of reading and math and that all CHS students have successfully obtained all necessary course credits for graduation.

See the [Virtual Summer Program](#) document for more information about the Bridge program.

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Table VII. Bridge Enrollment, Summer 2020

| CES | CMS | CHS |
|-----|-----|-----|
| 68  | 7   | 20* |

\*number of credits recovered

## Assessment and Accountability

### State Assessments

Assessments include North Carolina's End-of-Grade (EOG), End-of-Course (EOC), NCEXTEND1 (alternate assessment), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) post-assessments. The EOG, EOC, and NCEXTEND1 results are used for federal accountability purposes.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, federal accountability requirements were waived, so state EOG, EOC, and NCEXTEND1 assessments were not administered in spring 2020.

However, the Beginning of Grade 3 assessment (similar to EOG) was given in August to students in grade 3, and some EOC and CTE assessments were administered at the end of the fall 2019 semester.

Figures II and II provide some assessment data from the first (Fall) semester. This data is presented with the caveat that without spring testing (when most students are assessed), the figures provide an incomplete and skewed view of student performance.

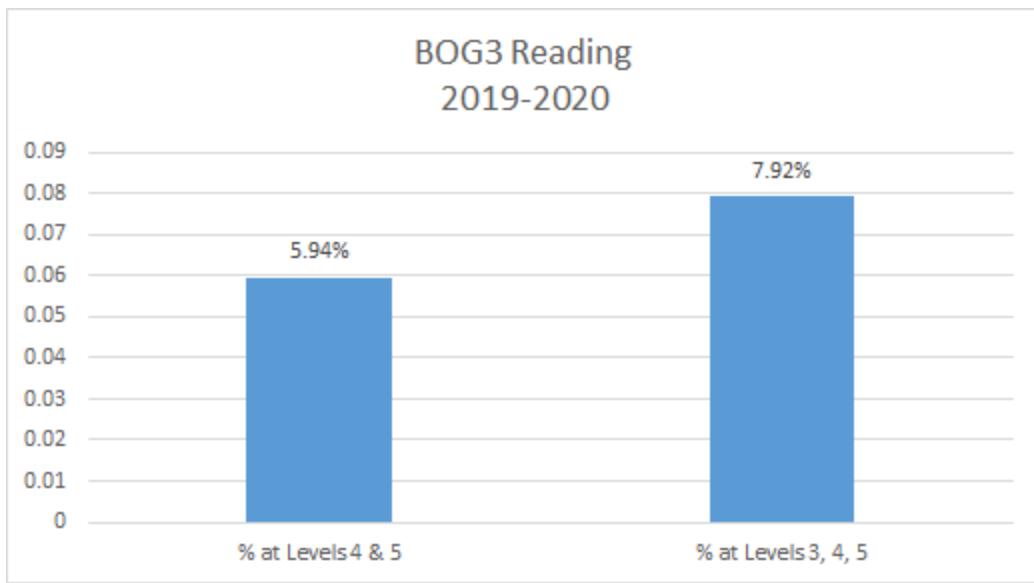


Figure II. Beginning of Grade 3 Reading assessment.

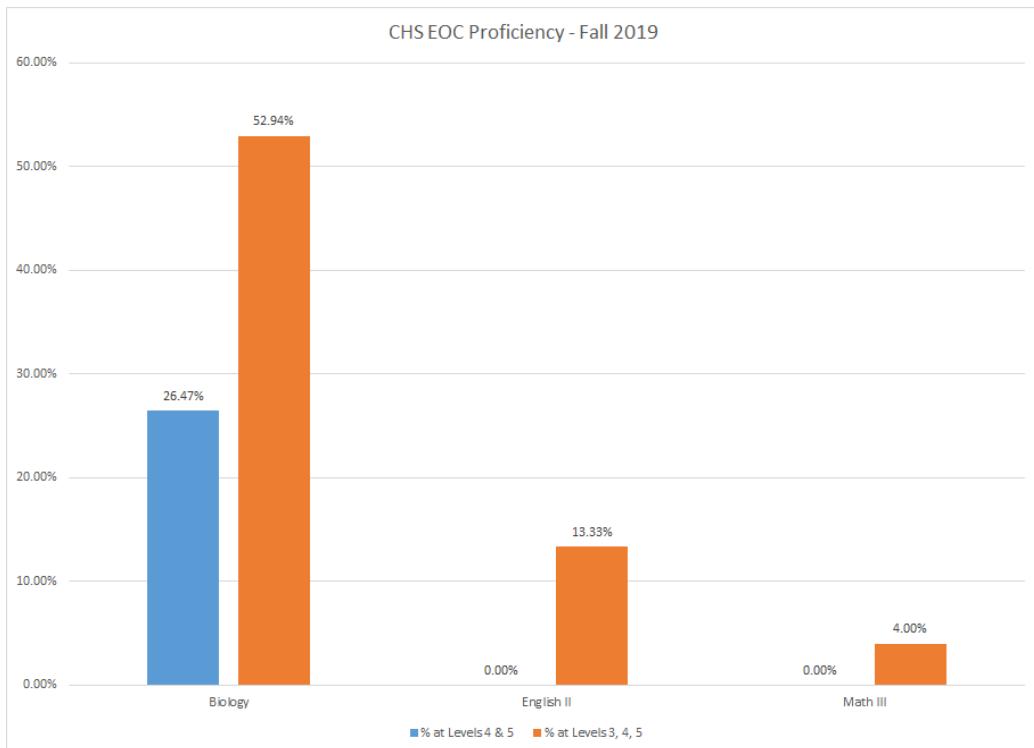


Figure III. Fall 2019 End-of-Course Assessment.

NOTE: The English II EOC was a new assessment in 2019-2020.

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#### NC Check-ins (NCCI)

For the first time, CCS implemented the NC Check-in assessments to students in grades 3-8 and Math I. The NCCIs are designed as interim assessments that are aligned to the state standards. The NCCIs provide teachers and students with actionable data about student performance on specific standards. The NCCIs also provide students with experiences on various test item types and test item rigor similar to what they will find on the state assessments.

Although available in reading and math, CCS chose to administer only the math assessments. Achieve 3000 Reading provided the interim data necessary for reading, but CCS lacked a math interim assessment since the BIE no longer provided NWEA MAP assessments.

#### Other Assessments

Cherokee Central Schools reviews data from Achieve 3000 (K-12) Levelset which is administered three times per year (BOY, MOY, and EOY). Unfortunately, the EOY Levelset was not completed because of the COVID-19 school closure.

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

Typically, Cherokee High School administered the ACT Plus Writing assessment to grade 11 students each spring. Due to the pandemic school closure, the ACT assessment was not administered.

## Professional Development

The school calendar provided staff development days. Teachers were provided professional development in a variety of ways. The district utilized both in-house and outside consultants.

Much of our professional development during 2019-2020 was homegrown and delivered by our instructional facilitators (IF). The IFs continued with training around the district's Personalized Education initiative, including digital citizenship. In addition, the IFs developed and delivered training on backwards design principles, based on ASCD's *Understanding by Design* work. This work with our secondary teachers strengthened the curriculum in all areas. This work is ongoing as teachers will continue to build out their units.

The instructional facilitators also supported the Human Resources department new hire training by offering 1.5 days of training on our Personalized Education initiative (Blended Learning).

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

A trainer from The Science House (NCSU) helped teachers in grades K-2 with science curriculum through workshops, curriculum development, lesson planning, and model lessons. The Science House Training was provided to teachers in K-2 to help make improvements in curriculum and enhance lessons so teachers would be equipped with the skills needed to help students obtain a better understanding of science and increase their scientific knowledge. Teachers also signed up to check out science equipment from The Science House. This material was delivered to the school to be used with students as they worked on experiments. Teachers also worked with The Science House specialists to finalize quarterly plans and implement the curriculum with rigor and fidelity. This was achieved with classroom modeling and observation.

Our 1st grade and 2nd-grade teachers also worked with Sally Dickson, NC 4-H Youth Development. They had incubators in their rooms and hatch chicken eggs with their students.

CCS is committed to building the capacity of its instructional coaches and others. To that end, CCS sent the Instructional Facilitators and members of IT Department to NCTIES, a technology education conference sponsored by the North Carolina chapter of ISTE.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) continue to meet at each school. The instructional facilitators often lead the PLC meetings, though the district is looking to build capacity among teachers for facilitating the PLC work.

Cherokee Central Schools also hosts CREW, a one-day conference that is planned and facilitated by a collaborative of the eight (8) westernmost school districts in North Carolina. Presenters are master teachers from each district, regional and national level presenters, and many consultants from the NC Department of Public Instruction. All CCS staff participate in the conference.

In order to support the transition to Personalized Education with a focus on Blended Learning, CCS offered staff members the opportunity to complete Google Certified Educator - Level 1 and Level 2 training. Successful teachers earned a stipend for their certification.

National Board Certified Teachers

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The BIE has supported CCS teachers while working through the certification process with its partnership with the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. In 2019-2020, one more teacher completed the certification process, bringing the total number of teachers earning National Board certification in this program to six (6). Several other teachers are in the process of completing the process. Additionally, two other teachers came to CCS already holding National Board certification. At present, CCS has a total of eight (8) National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT).

## **MTSS, Multi-tiered System of Support**

The district MTSS team continued planning for implementation of MTSS based on the NC model and process. Efforts to begin implementation at the school level were interrupted by the pandemic closure.

## **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, which they achieved. CCS successfully hosted another Quality Assurance Review team in the school year 2016-2017 for reaccreditation. Cherokee Central Schools maintains a continuous improvement process, and the district will be ready for re-accreditation in 2021-2022.

# **Cherokee Elementary School (CES)**

The 2019-2020 overall attendance rate (ADR) for CES is 94.96%. Enrollment continued to increase throughout the school year.

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 worked on projects for the Tech Fair and the annual Arts Show. In addition, students can opt to participate in the Traditional singing group or Traditional dance group.

Because of the pandemic and related school closure at the end of the school year, CES students were unable to participate in the usual end-of-year field trips such as the aquarium, Dollywood, and Darnell Farms.

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Students create the school yearbook and make it available for purchase each school year.

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

Students were able to join in a variety of after school clubs this year, including STEME. CES fielded a Science Olympiad team for the third time this year.

In addition, students were able to receive tutoring after school. The After School program implemented a few Homework Diner nights for parents and students to complete homework and school projects together. Teachers were available to support parents as they worked with their children. The program was successful, and the department plans to expand it for next school year.

Cherokee Elementary School continued its partnership with Cherokee Indian Hospital to offer an Integrated Classroom, staffed by CES personnel and employees from Cherokee Indian Hospital. CES places students in the Integrated Classroom who need more support emotionally and behaviorally than what is found in a typical classroom.

CES provides a full-time school nurse and nursing assistant for students. In addition to typical care, the nurse's office also screens students for vision-related issues.

CES students designate a week as an 'Anti-Bullying' week. Through theme days (e.g., mismatched sock day, favorite team day), students bring awareness to the issue of bullying.

In November, CES celebrated Native American Heritage month with a variety of activities. Students participated in traditional dress days, door decorating contests, traditional food tastings, and Rock Your Mocs.

Cherokee Elementary School implemented a Trauma Resilient Schools grant funded through the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The grant partnered the school with consultants from the University of Montana. The consultants hosted Focus Groups at Cherokee Elementary with Elders, School Leadership Team, Community Members, and students. They used the data gathered from our Focus Groups to provide direction on relevant Trauma practices to be used in our classrooms.

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The University of Montana consultants also surveyed staff to develop a more comprehensive picture of staff practices, knowledge, thoughts, and ideas as related to Trauma and its impact on students and staff. A report was developed with specific recommendations for Cherokee Elementary School. The school had plans for on-site visits when everything had to be canceled because of the pandemic.

## Cherokee Middle School (CMS)

The 2019-2020 attendance rate (ADR) for Cherokee Middle School was 93.14%.

In addition to the middle school curriculum, Cherokee Middle School offers some high school courses, such as Earth & Environmental Science and Math I, to students who are prepared for more challenging course work.

An Integrated Classroom with a mental health focus was continued this school year. The classroom provides additional support for students who are struggling behaviorally.

The school provided incentives for students based on discipline, attendance, and Honor Roll.

CMS hosted a parent appreciation luncheon in the fall.

### CMS Athletics

CMS Athletics program continues to grow as more students get involved and more opportunities are offered. CMS currently has nine (9) sports; volleyball, cross county, JV football, cheerleading, basketball, track, wrestling, softball, and baseball to offer to students. Many student athletes participate in multiple sports throughout the year. In the future we look to add additional sports for the students at the MS to participate in. Spring sports were interrupted by the pandemic.

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# Cherokee High School (CHS)

The attendance rate (ADR) for Cherokee High School in 2019-2020 was 92.32%.

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 HOSA (Future Health Professionals), Travel Club, Math Club, Students Against Destructive Decisions, Recycling Club, Horror Film Club, Video Game Club, Student Council, and Coding Club.

In the fall students attended college fairs and career fairs hosted by Southwestern Community College. The school also scheduled other campus visits (e.g., Western Carolina University).

Talented and Gifted (TaG), Honors Biology, and Health Science students visited the Bodies Museum in Atlanta to enrich their curriculum studies.

Several students enrolled in Cherokee Arts and Crafts courses traveled to the University of North Carolina Asheville to demonstrate traditional Cherokee art and craft techniques.

The Chamber Singers completed the *Si Otsedoha* tour, performing in various venues across the state and in Washington, D.C. The students performed with The North Carolina Symphony from Raleigh, The Charlotte Symphony, and they toured with a reduced orchestra from the principal members of the Winston-Salem Orchestra. The Chamber Singers performed the tour at the NC State School Board meeting in Greensboro, at the State Capitol in Raleigh, at the Black Mountain College Museum in Asheville, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC.

CHS Performing Arts students revived The Lion King, Jr. production. This was the district's first production and this year's seniors were the students who performed in the original production.

Cherokee High School cohort graduation rate for 2019-2020 sits at 83.54%. The drop out rate is 4.66% (BIE method). Note: If the NCDPI calculation method is used, the dropout rate is 3.57%.

## CHS Athletics

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In 2019-20, Cherokee Central High fielded a total of eighteen (18) varsity teams; football, basketball (m +w), softball, baseball, wrestling, soccer (m + w), track (m + w), cheer, volleyball, cross-country (m +w), golf (m + w) and indoor track (m +w), and five (5) junior varsity teams; (football, basketball (m +w), cheer, and volleyball. These teams were dispersed amongst twelve (12) different sports. Within those sports, the school reached a participation number of roughly 266 athletes.

We currently have a total of thirty-one (31) coaches staffed for our junior varsity and varsity teams. The success of prior years in many of the sports has created increased interest levels and higher participation rates.

The disruption of the Covid 19 pandemic in 2019-20 caused the elimination of 33% of our sports year, with the spring sports seasons of track, softball, baseball and soccer ultimately being canceled.

# Support Services

## Community Affairs

Community Affairs covers a broad range of activities and responsibilities. Included in the department is the Chief Joyce Dugan Cultural Arts Center, Development, Public Relations, and Security.

### [Chief Joyce Dugan Cultural Arts Center](#)

The CAC hosts a variety of events at its venues, ranging from Graduation Project presentations to school/community meetings to musical theater. The CAC spaces also support STEME conferences and events for students, as well as professional development opportunities, such as CREW, for faculty and staff.

### [Development](#)

### [Laser Print Studio](#)

The print studio averaged XXX requests for printing services from posters to business cards, to notepads and coffee mugs. The department customized a variety of products with the laser engraver. These products supported various school programs and activities. For example, the department engraved medals and plaques for awards ceremonies sponsored by the schools.

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Each year the department uses proceeds from the Laser Print Studio to make a donation to a local charity or organization. In 2019, the department provided \$500.00 to Cherokee Children's Home.

### Grants

Development facilitated 11 grants including the Personalized Education through Blended Learning and ESTEAM – Phase II grant funded by the Cherokee Preservation Foundation. The department wrote or supported several grants submitted to the Harrah's Scholarship Fund. Additionally, the department coordinates and tracks the STEME and NASA grants.

### Public Relations

The PR department sent XXX messages for a total of XXX phone calls during 2019-2020. The PR department also posted XXX messages/stories on the [district's Facebook page](#).

### Security

The security staff consists of 12 security guards in addition to the Head of Security. Training for security guards is ongoing. The department piloted a vape detection system for possible deployment in several key areas in both the middle school and high school.

Security oversaw the installation of a Shooter Detection System funded by the tribe. The installation also consisted of demonstrations of the system.

### Other programs

### Inventory

The department continued to train staff from each school and department in the inventory system. These staff members add new items to inventory when purchases are made. In addition, these staff remove obsolete or broken items from inventory when they are replaced.

### Special Note

The Department of Community Affairs played a vital role in Cherokee Central Schools' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Director maintained up-to-date information from the tribe, CDC, state, and BIE and participated in local Joint Incident Command (JIC) briefings.

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Departmental activities included

- Security of the campus during the closure
- Daily communications to the community via Facebook and ConnectED
- Assisting with Food Distribution to the community
- Implementing safety recommendations (e.g., temp checks, protocols)
- Creating and distributing signage
- Creating and distributing masks for teachers.

## **Custodial**

When fully staffed, the Custodial department boasts 20 full-time and 3 part-time staff members. The director assigns staff members to various school, departments, and shifts, in order to clean and sanitize the campus buildings properly. Staff perform a deep clean each summer.

Department members participate in training sessions on OSHA regulations as well as training sessions hosted by vendors. The department also participated in training with Kelsan during the CREW conference in Fall 2019.

Upon the retirement of the current director, a new director was on-boarded just prior to the onset of the pandemic. The director prepared and implemented plans for cleaning and sanitizing the buildings per CDC protocols. In addition, the department ordered appropriate supplies to support the new protocols.

## **Facilities**

The facilities department maintains over 473,000 square feet of buildings and 14 acres of grounds. The facilities department works closely with the administration to plan future needs involving replacements and repairs. 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.

Facilities staff averaged 201 completed work requests each month. These daily work orders are in addition to the preventative maintenance schedule. Monthly utility services include Duke Power, Cherokee Water and Sewer, PSNC Energy, and Orkin Pest Control.

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Facility Management provides a safe and comfortable environment for students and staff. The maintenance staff is knowledgeable and equipped to deal with unforeseen emergencies, such as equipment failure.

The department worked during school closures to maintain our campus - buildings and grounds.

## Finance

The Finance department works with Cherokee Boys' Club (CBC), the fiscal agent for CCS, to execute and maintain budget alignment, accounts payable, and payroll processes appropriately.

The Finance director meets with each principal and director, beginning mid-year to develop a budget for the next school year. Principals and directors must conduct needs assessments and set goals for their schools or departments prior to attending the budget meeting. The director works with CBC Finance department to develop an overall budget for submission to the school board and tribe.

The finance department supported Cherokee Central Schools during the school closure by maintaining payroll, researching cost savings to support unanticipated expenditures, and assisting on the ground with the food distribution program.

## Human Resources

Cherokee Central Schools employed 330 full time employees and 17 part time employees in 2019-2020.

| Employee type  | Number of positions/staff |
|--|---------------------------|
| Licensed Teachers  | 126                       |
| Teacher Assistants   | 61                        |
| Licensed Support Staff (counselors, social workers, media specialists, instructional facilitators, related services) | 25                        |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Licensed Administrators (principals, assistant principals, central office)</b> | 12 |
| <b>Instructors</b>  | 15 |
| <b>Support Staff - non-licensed</b>   | 98 |

Table VIII. Number of positions by type at CCS.

One of the major functions of CCS Human Resources department is to on-board new hires and provide new hire training. The HR department provided two weeks of new hire training prior to the 2019-2020 school year.

In addition, the Human Resources staff collects continuing education units (CEUs) for licensed staff and assists in the license renewal process.

The HR director coordinated, scheduled, and trained on Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) throughout the year, as annual training is mandated.

## Technology Department

The technology team imaged or re-imaged over 2000 desktops and laptops for all three schools and added the devices to the network to support our 1:1 Personalized Education initiative.

They provided troubleshooting assistance for tech work orders from staff, averaging 150 work tickets per month for the district. Additionally, the IT department services 220 staff computers.

The IT department assisted with the Freshmen First, Seniors Second event by distributing over half of the high school laptops just prior to the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.

To supplement funding for new devices, the IT Director submitted a proposal to the Harris Scholarship Fund. This funding allowed the department to replace 13 iMacs in the Mac Lab and add 5 additional iPads to each Kindergarten and Grade 1 classroom.

The department hosted the STEME conferences on three days in the fall; the three spring conferences were cancelled. Additionally, the IT department provided support for CREW 2019 (Collaborative Regional Education Workshops).

The Technology department supported each of the schools during state End of Grade, End of Course, and CTE Post assessments. In addition, the IT department supported students, teachers, and counselors involved in WIDA ACCESS testing.

Members of the Technology department enhanced their skills through various conferences (e.g., NCTIES, NCET), workshops (e.g., Google), and Tribal Wise.

The department participated in the Healthy Halloween Event for Cherokee Elementary School.

All security updates were completed and the department limited outside access to the CCS network after the tribe's IT system was attacked by ransomware.

The department also provided IT support for the installation of the Shooter Detection System.

## 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 IX. Approximate Participation of Students**

|                                   | Breakfast | Lunch |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <b>Cherokee Elementary School</b> | 295       | 494   |
| <b>Cherokee Middle School</b>     | 79        | 192   |
| <b>Cherokee High School</b>       | 101       | 255   |

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 Director is a member of the SHAC (Student Health Advisory Committee), which is comprised of students, school staff, and representatives from various community and tribal programs.

The Child Nutrition Director also works with Food Corps. The Food Corps provides taste tests of various fruits and vegetables for Cherokee Elementary

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School. In addition, the Food Corps program provides learning opportunities for elementary students in the campus garden.

#### Special Recognition

When the school district was forced to close down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CCS School Nutrition Department stepped in to provide food and contact with CCS students and family. The department provided breakfast and hot lunches to CCS children. Because of the USDA waiver, our School Nutrition department was also able to feed any child under 18 in our community.

Parents were thankful for the opportunity to have meals for their children. Many parents picked up meals in the drive-thru that CCS established. For families with no transportation, CCS delivered the meals.

The Department was also recognized by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services who commended Tammy Parris, CCS School Nutrition Director, for expending 100% of federal entitlement funds for the school year.



School Nutrition staff prepare breakfast and lunch for CCS students and other children during the spring 2020 school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic.

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# Special Projects in 2019-2020

## Policy Manual

The Cherokee Central Schools Board adopted a new policy manual during its July 22, 2019 meeting. The policy manual is based on the North Carolina School Board Association manual and adapted where necessary to align with tribal law.

### Expansion

The district's \$22M campus expansion project began in the summer of 2019. The school board approved Vannoy Construction as the Construction-Manager-At Risk for the project. In addition, the tribe has provided the school system with a project manager from the tribe's construction department to assist with overseeing the expansion plan. In early summer 2020, on-site work began with ...