

*The Braves*

# Cherokee Central Schools

July 2021

## Annual Report 2020-2021



### Purpose

This document provides a description of the educational programs and activities at Cherokee Central Schools for the school year 2020-2021. 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 2020-2021**

### **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

### 2020-2021

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 2020 - 2021**

Although the staff of Cherokee Central Schools prepared to open for in-person instruction in August 2020, the community situation in regard to the pandemic necessitated that the district begin the year in remote-only status (Plan C). Initially, the first day for students was to be August 3, 2020, but with the number of COVID-19 cases rising, the board delayed the student start date until August 19, 2020.

The district leadership developed plans to return students to the building as quickly as possible, but following all safety measures. Plan B was a hybrid schedule that allowed parents to choose to keep their children on remote-only status while the other students attended in-person instruction two days per week in cohort groups. The remaining days consisted of remote learning activities. Plan A was a five day, in-person schedule.

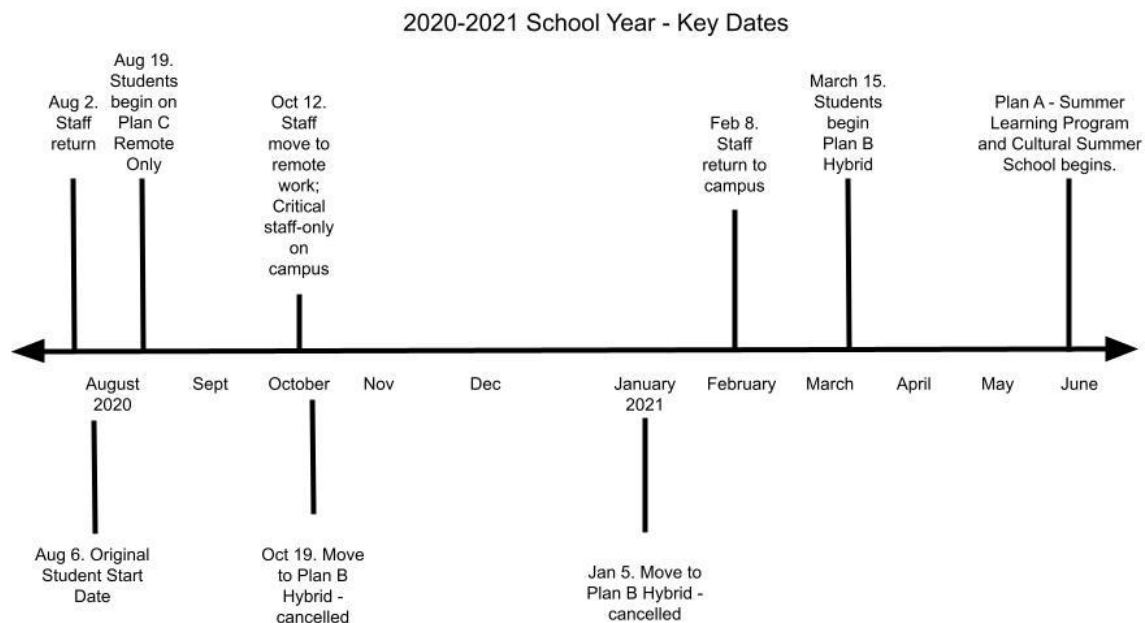
The school board decided three times throughout the year to move from Plan C Remote only to Plan B Hybrid, but each time the decision was made, the community's COVID-19 metrics showed increasing cases. Finally, on March 15, 2021, Cherokee Central Schools transitioned to Plan B Hybrid and remained on that schedule until the end of the year.

While on Plan C Remote-only status, teachers and staff provided both virtual instruction and learning packets. Working with our IT department and community/regional partners, CCS provided students without internet access, but who had cell service, with hotspot so that they could join their classes virtually. Unfortunately, some students lived in geographically challenging areas of the Qualla Boundary where hotspots could not pick up a cell signal.

Because community metrics were more positive by the end of the school year, the district ran full summer programs (Cultural Summer School and Summer Learning Programs). The programs met five (5) days per week, but continued with all safety measures (i.e. masks, temperature checks, etc.).

While the district was on Plan C Remote-Only status, the district continued to provide Child Nutrition services to our students. Utilizing Cherokee Boys' Club school buses, the CN staff provided breakfast and a hot lunch to every student who needed them. Even after transitioning to Plan B Hybrid, the district

provided meals to students on their remote days as well as to those who remained fully virtual.



# 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 for 180 instructional days for students, and it included teacher workdays. CCS finished the year with 179 instructional days, approximately 75% of them were remote-only days.

In order to align with the tribe, for much of the first semester, most staff worked from home with only critical staff remaining on campus. Fortunately, staff were able to return to campus on February 8, 2021.

## 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) implemented its Standards, Assessments, and Accountability System in 20-21. The CCS school board voted to pursue a waiver on 5 October 2020, and a one year waiver was granted on 14 January 2021. The waiver allowed Cherokee Central Schools to continue to teach the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and administered their End of Grade and End of Course assessments.

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

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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.

Note: Because the district was on remote-only status in December and state End of Course (EOC) assessments must be administered in-person, Cherokee High School pushed the fall EOCs to March 2021. End of Grade and spring EOCs were administered in May 2021.

## 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 (05/28/2021), Cherokee Central Schools had 1,385 students enrolled; 33 more students than the previous school year.

Of the 1,385 students enrolled in 2020-2021, 92.53% were American Indian students, mostly enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian (EBCI). See Table I.

<b>Table I. May 2021 Ending Enrollment - All Students, All Schools</b>							
Grade	Enrollment		Grade	Enrollment		Grade	Enrollment
PK	38		4	111		9	107
K	113		5	109		10	103
1	127		6	93		11	87
2	119		7	92		12	80
3	101		8	105		Total	1385

At one point in the 2020-2021 school year, CCS had an enrollment of over 1400 students.

## Academic Programs and Services

### Hope Center

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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 opportunities for children and their families this past year.

Due to COVID, we were not able to gather as a large group but often provided activity & book pick-ups or deliveries. Some families were able to participate in a drive-thru event to pick up materials such as, developmentally appropriate activities, books or games for their families, and materials they could use to complete activities together at home. These were held for our Baby Face families, as well as our Infant Toddler program families, and Preschool Special Education families. We did similar events for our PK Students who were involved in remote learning most of the year. The PK packets included Learning activities for each quarter as well as books and materials they needed to complete the activities. If families were unable to drive-thru and pick up materials they were mailed to them. PK teachers, Interventionists, & Parent Educators also provided Remote Learning opportunities through virtual measures including but not limited to virtual therapy, online group/class meetings, and just one-on-one virtual meetings with the parents and/or children.

The Hope Center also provided developmental screenings for children enrolled in the childcare centers across the boundary. They were still able to see children face-to-face that were enrolled in childcare centers by following COVID protocols set up by each center. They also provided therapy for some families on campus on a one-on-one basis to mitigate exposure. The Hope Center still provided developmental, speech/language, hearing, and vision screenings for the PK classrooms. The Hope Center received many referrals from childcare centers and Pediatrician's offices once things started to open back up and also started the process of evaluating those children for possible educational needs. This included evaluations for Speech/Language deficits, Developmental Delays, and Autism.



*PK students use hands-on activities to study butterflies.*

In addition, transition services were provided for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). Children enrolled in the Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) had transition services to transition them into the Preschool Special Education program with the Hope Center before their 3rd birthday. The children with IEPs going into Kindergarten had some transition services to prepare them for their transition to the Elementary School.

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

<b>Table II. Hope Center Enrollment, 2020-2021</b>			
Baby Face Program	Infant Toddler Program	Preschool Program	PK Program
36	12	55	40

## 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 grades K-12 during 2020-2021. Disability categories of the children served are found in Table III.

<b>Table III. Disability Categories, 2020-2021.</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>

**Table IV. Ending Enrollment in Special Education, 2020-2021.**

<b>Preschool</b>	<b>K-5</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>9-12</b>
55	127	69	75

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 that require intensive services. 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 school year services during the summer months to support student learning and reduce the educational loss during the summer months. To provide students additional support, students with disabilities attended a summer learning program to enhance their skills with enrichment activities.



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Typically, there are family nights scheduled for parents and families of students with disabilities in the fall to address transitioning from one school to another. We usually meet to get to know their new special education and classroom teachers, discuss the changes in schedules and the expectations for the new school year. Unfortunately, the programs and training for parents and families that were scheduled were cancelled due to COVID-19, although to maintain communication with parents and families, virtual meetings occurred periodically to share student progress, update IEP goals and Remote Learning Contingency Plans, conduct virtual evaluations and provide support for those in need.

The Special Education department provides a special education teacher and teaching assistant for each grade level, K-12. The department also consists of one psychologist, 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 non-violent crisis intervention 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, however competition was virtual. The middle school and high school teams both won money to support their program.

During the 2020-2021 school year, students with disabilities became eligible based on criteria to earn letter jackets by participating in Special Olympics. There were a total of five in the first group to receive their letter jackets, with one of them prior to COVID traveling to Canada to represent North Carolina in the Special Olympics.

#### Talented and Gifted (TaG) Program

The TaG program included thirty-two (24) students in 2020-2021. The program serves students in grades 4-12 and is staffed with two teachers and a paraprofessional. Activities for students included virtual field trips to a university and county/local libraries and colleges/university tours. Students also participated in robotics, research, and community service projects.

CES and CMS TaG students participated in the regional SMART Tank competition. Both teams placed in the competition and received money to support their program.

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**Table V. Ending Enrollment in Talented and Gifted (TaG) Program, 2020-2021**

<b>4-5</b>	<b>6-8</b>	<b>9-12</b>
3	8	13

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

EL teams develop plans for students who are identified as English Learners in order to provide a path towards English proficiency. 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. Two (2) students were identified as English Learners at Cherokee Elementary School in 2020-2021. Cherokee Middle School had one (1) student identified as an English Learner, and Cherokee High School identified three (3) EL students in 2020-2021.

### **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 along with an Immersion class. Beginning this year, Cherokee History is offered again. In addition, the Cultural department provides paraprofessionals for grade 3 classrooms.

Cherokee Elementary and Cherokee Middle School students complete a Cherokee Language pretest at the beginning of the school year, a mid-term

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test, as well as a post test at the end of the school year. In high school, a post test consisting of one-half written phonetics and one-half verbal is given. The successful goal is to have 80 percent of the students pass the test.

The Cultural department offered a two week, full day, in-person Cultural Summer Program during June 2021. Enrollment for this program was 125 students. The classes offered were pottery making, drama, soapstone carving, plants, sewing 18th century clothing, traditional food cooking, art, beadwork, designing gourds, and corn shuck doll making. The camp also provided classes in traditional singing, Cherokee dances, Kahoots in Cherokee, Bingo in Cherokee, and as well as writing in the Cherokee Syllabary.



*Administrators visited several culturally significant locations including Judaculla Rock in Jackson County.*

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.

The Cultural Department also offered professional development to teachers. The Cultural Department offered staff the opportunity to participate in a traditional skirt-making workshop, pottery making, doll making, beadwork,



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and Cherokee Language classes. The department sponsored traditional dress days for students and staff throughout the year. During the pandemic, virtual Cherokee Language classes were offered to staff.

#### 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. Typically, the school calendar includes release time for Sacred Path activities. Unfortunately, these afternoons were not scheduled during 2020-2021 due to the ongoing pandemic.

## 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 North Carolina adapted Common Core State Standards. All core areas have locally

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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, but due to the pandemic the schools’ were not able to schedule any performances.

Students have the opportunity to participate in Performing Arts. In a typical year, the students would choose a musical to perform for the public in the spring. Unfortunately, the pandemic meant that students were not able to hold community performances.

#### Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Cherokee High School offers Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in several career and technical pathways, 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, 2020-2021	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploring Career Decisions</li><li>• Coding</li><li>• 3D Printing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Computers</li><li>• Exploring Personal Finance,</li><li>• Graphics Design 1</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual Reality (zSpace)</li> <li>• Introduction to Agriculture</li> <li>• Carpentry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Healthcare</li> <li>• Broadcast Journalism</li> <li>• Robotics</li> </ul>
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## Physical Education (P.E.) and Health

Each school offers Physical Education and Healthy Living courses. One Health and P.E. course is a graduation requirement.

## Special Olympics

The district is 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, Dual Enrollment, and Remote Learning

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

In 2020-2021, all students participated in remote learning. Remote learning is defined as learning that takes place outside of the traditional school setting and traditional school schedule and uses various media and formats, such as but not limited to: video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or Learning Management Systems (LMS).

In general, remote learning involves synchronous virtual classes through Google Meet and asynchronous work through Google Classroom. Some students were unable to participate in virtual classes because of their lack of internet connection. Cherokee Central Schools provided many families with hotspots so that their children could join the virtual sessions. In some areas of the community, however, cell service is unavailable, so hotspots were not workable.

The tribe provided internet service at local community buildings and other locations. In addition, many children accessed their virtual classes while at the Cherokee Youth Center.

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

One positive outcome of the pandemic is that it required teachers who were not integrating technology into their classrooms to do just that. Even for those who embraced technology, the pandemic required that they apply their technology skills in new ways.

While certainly not ideal, the Remote-only and Plan B Hybrid statuses furthered the district's blended learning initiative.

## **STEM-Related Programs and Activities**

### ESTEAM Camp

The CCS summer ESTEAM Camp was combined with the Summer Learning Program during June and July 2021. For more information, see the [Summer Learning Program](#) section.

### SMART Tank

With generous funding from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, WRESA held the third annual SMART Tank, a regional competition modeled after the show Shark Tank. A Cherokee Elementary School team won \$350.00 for their project REBOAT, and a Cherokee Middle School team won \$150.00 for their project entitled, Bunches of Scrunchies.

### Makerspaces

CCS continued to make Makerspaces available to teachers and students once the district transitioned to Plan B Hybrid during the spring.

### STEME Conferences

Typically, CCS is the host campus for the student STEME conferences that are sponsored by WRESA (Western Regional Education Service Alliance) and funded by the Cherokee Preservation Foundation. WRESA provides conferences in the fall and spring. Conferences are offered for each grade span - elementary,

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middle, and high. This year, however, both the fall and spring conferences were held virtually.

Session topics include STEM Gems (Careers), Spectroscopy, Trash to Treasure, What Satellites See, Lego Serious Play, Turtles, Strawbees Maker Muse, Exploring the Night Skies, Stream Salamander Communities, Plants in Space, Mix and Match (business/entrepreneurship), Space Apps Challenge, Science Around the House, Physics is Phun, Owl Pellets Dissection, STEM and Snakes, among others.

## **Summer Learning Programs (SLP)**

Because CCS provided remote instruction for 75% of the 2020-2021 school year, in early February 2021 administrators began planning for a robust summer learning program to address learning needs and accelerate learning. The programs were designed based on the research for effective summer programs.

In pre-pandemic years, CCS would offer a two-week ESTEAM Camp along with its Cultural Summer School. During summer 2021, CCS began with a two-week Cultural Summer School program, then followed up with a four-week Summer Learning Program for elementary and middle school students. High school students participated in a separate four-week Summer Learning Program.

For CES and CMS students, the SLP focused on reading and math instruction during the morning. Afternoons were reserved for enrichment activities that focused mainly on STEAM activities.

CES provided teachers with training on Zearn Math and mCLASS to support math and reading instruction. Teachers provided STEAM and virtual reality activities during the afternoons. Spheros, Bee Bots, Circuit Scribe, Code and Go Mouse Activity Set, Makey Makey Kit, Maze Racers, VR Goggles, and Squishy Circuits were available for checkout during summer school.

CMS focused on reading and math during the morning and provided pre/post assessments with Achieve 3000 and Edmentum. During the afternoon enrichment time, CMS students were engaged in boat-building activities, fly-tying, and fly-fishing.

Cherokee High School provided three types of programs for students. One type focused on credit recovery to help students graduate on time. The second area served rising grade 9 students who needed supplemental instruction in reading and math. Finally, students interested in advance studies enrolled in college courses for the summer term.

Table VII. Summer Learning Program, Number of Attendees, Summer 2021		
CES	CMS	CHS
148 enrolled- daily # average 120	55	75 (avg daily attendance-47)

CES summer learning program data: The mCLASS summer intervention program was used to instruct and gather data from summer school participants. Due to the fluidity of our students and student absenteeism during summer school, it was difficult to assess all students. We were able to complete assessments on students who were present the first week of school and who were present during the last week of school. Looking at this data, we found that 53% of our kindergarten students had solid improvement in rhyming, syllables, letter sounds, and letter names. Due to attendance, 47% of kindergarteners had incomplete data. 80% of our 1st grade students had solid improvement in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, letter sounds, and decoding. Due to attendance, 20% of 1st graders had incomplete data. 90% of second grade students had solid improvement in nonsense word fluency. Due to attendance, 10% of students had incomplete data. Unfortunately, attendance was inconsistent in 3rd grade so only 20% of 3rd grade students had both a pre and post test. Of the 20% that had data, 100% of them had solid improvement in letter sounds, decoding, and word reading fluency. 13 of the 4th grade students completed the mCLASS fluency assessment and 100% of the students met expected growth.





*Pictured above: Cherokee Elementary students enjoying STEAM activities and working on reading and math during summer school.*

Cherokee Middle School had 55 students total to show up. The average attendance was 42 students. Out of those 55 students 3 students only attended for the first two week session. Therefore, they were not present to take a test at the end of the second two week session. Out of the 52 other students who attended both sessions, 50% (26) who showed no growth but remained at the same Lexile. 12% (6) decreased in lexile, 21% (11) grew at least 100 points, and 17% (9) grew more than 100 points in Lexile. CMS Staff used Achieve3000 to show the students progress in reading for the Summer Program.

The Middle School staff also instructed Math during the Summer Learning Program using student projects as the culminating assessment activity. Students who attended learned to effectively use fractions to measure for their boats and art projects. All students while completing the project also used other mathematical fundamentals such as adding, subtracting, multiplication,

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and division. The energy and engagement levels were really high as teachers challenged students to “think outside the box literally and figuratively as they learned about buoyancy.

Cherokee High School offered a four week intensive summer program with three target areas: course/credit recovery to promote on-time graduation, academic support in math and reading for rising 9th graders, and college courses for students seeking enrichment and enhanced studies.

Courses were recovered for credit: 169.

Rising ninth grade students were served in English and math. Thirty-two students received English/reading instruction. We administered a pre-test to all thirty-two students, but thirteen students did not take the post test because they missed the final days of the program. Of the nineteen students taking both the pre- and post test, twelve students showed an average growth of 56%. In math, fifteen students took both the pre- and post test. On average, pre-test accuracy was 36%, and post test accuracy was 49%.

Six students enrolled in and completed a total of seven college courses at Southwestern Community College or Appalachian State University. Grades earned: 6 As and 1 B.

Funding for the Summer Learning Program was provided through the district’s operational budget, Cherokee Preservation Foundation grant, and federal COVID-19 funding (GEER, CARES, CRSSA, etc.).

## **Assessment and Accountability**

Although the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) implemented its Standards, Assessment, Accountability System during the year, the Cherokee Central Schools school board requested a waiver from the BIE assessments. The waiver was granted for one year. CCS continued to administer the state assessments.

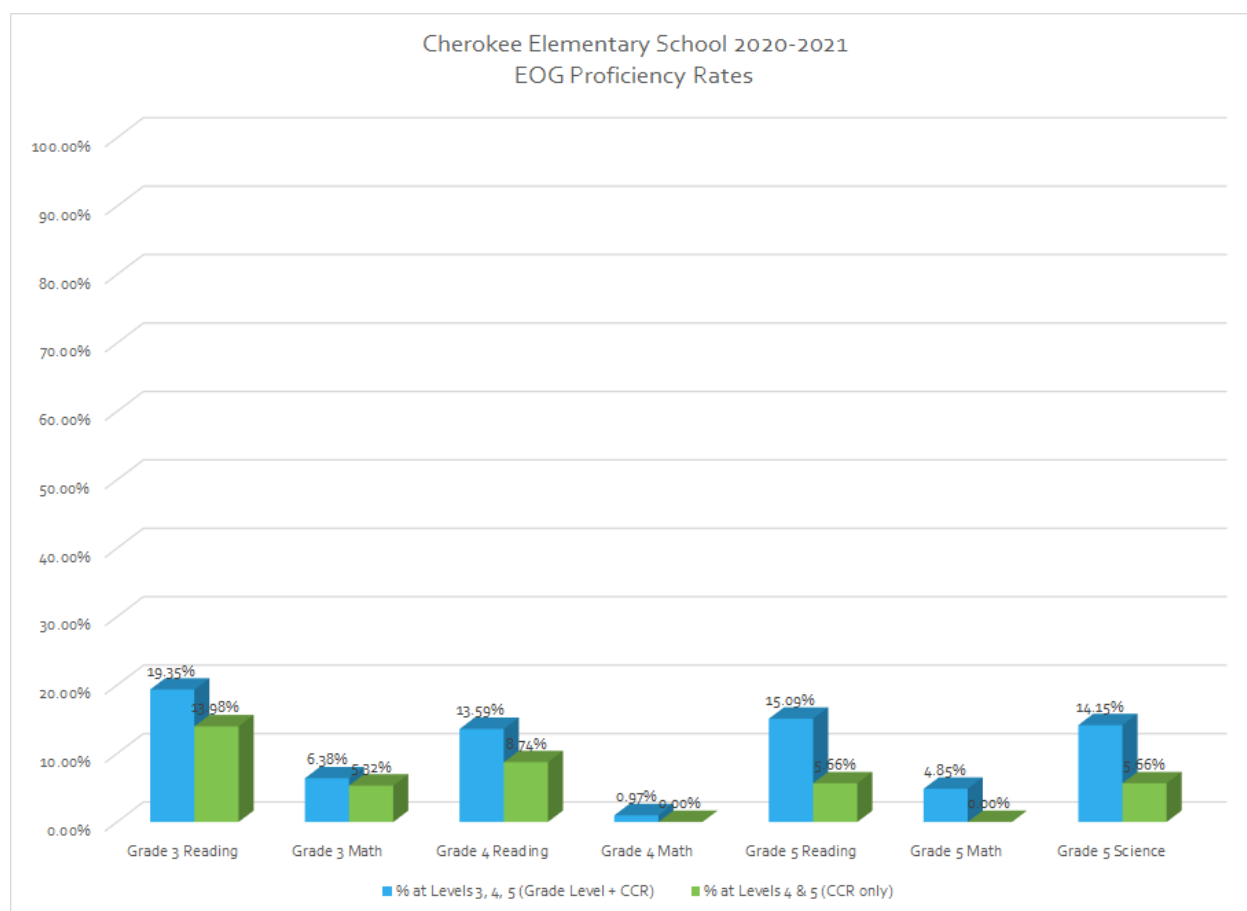
### **State Assessments**

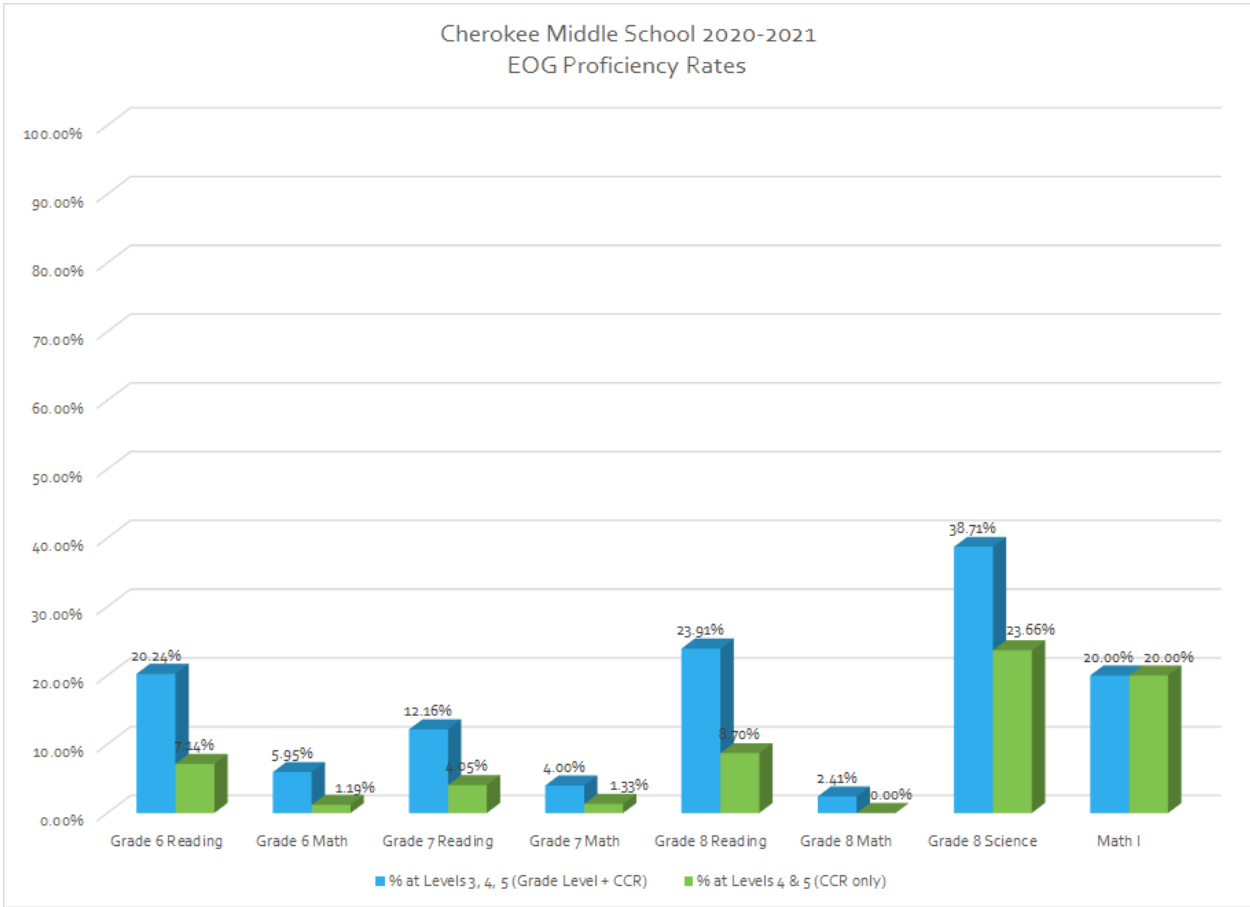
Assessments include North Carolina’s End-of-Grade (EOG), End-of-Course (EOC), NCEXTEND1 (alternate assessment), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) post-assessments. The EOG, EOC, and NCEXTEND1 results are used for federal accountability purposes.

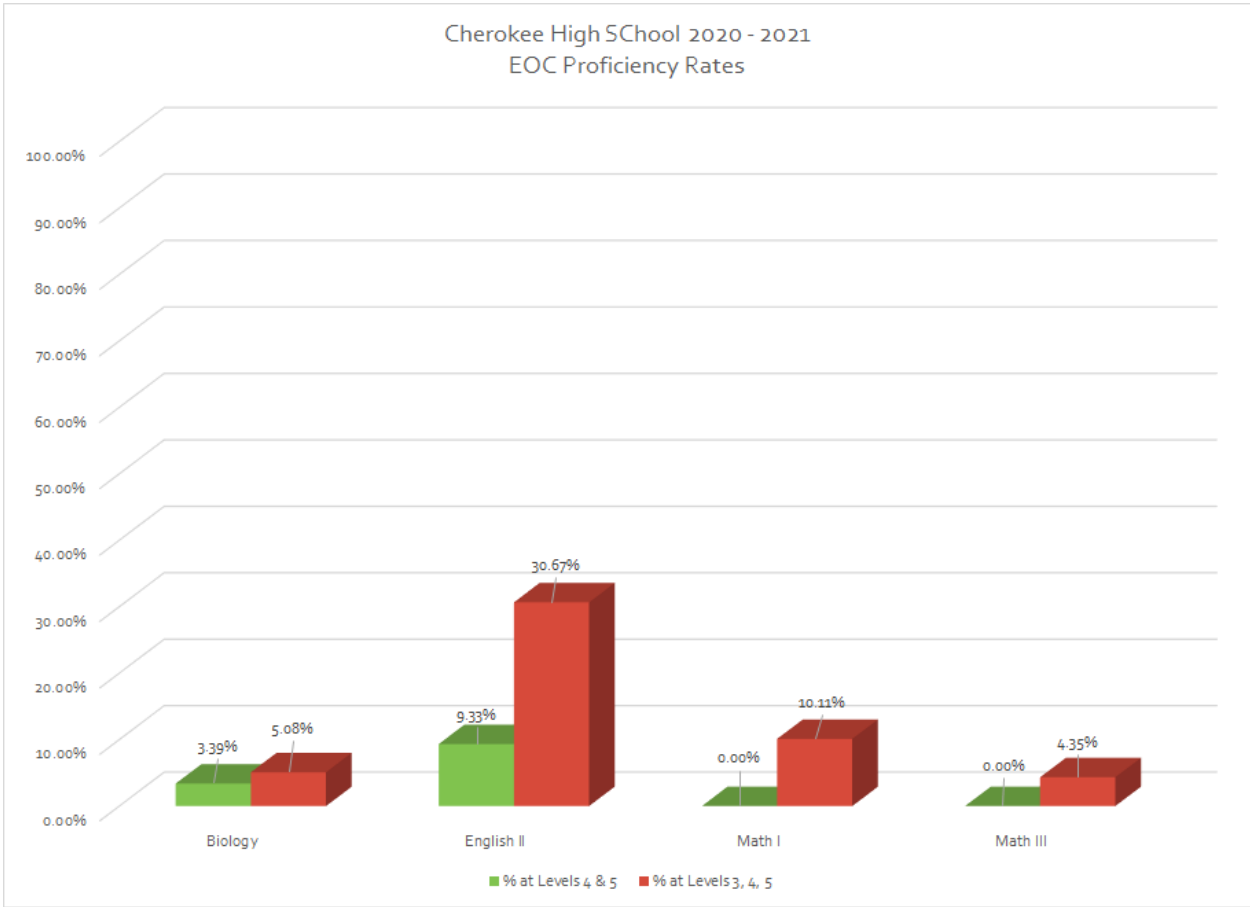


Because state assessments could not be administered remotely, Cherokee High School delayed administering its fall assessments until the spring. Normally, the assessments would have been given in December 2019 at the end of the semester. The Beginning of Grade 3 (BOG3) assessment was not administered in August because of the district's remote status. Spring assessments were administered as scheduled in May 2021.

The state implemented new reading assessments in 2020-2021 for grades 4 - 8 delaying the scores and reports until August 2021. Results from the statewide assessments are found in the following charts.







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## Other Assessments

### ACT Plus Writing

Cherokee High School provides the ACT Plus Writing at no cost to grade 11 (primarily) and grade 12 students through the ACT's District Testing Program. The number of students taking the ACT in 2020-2021 was low due to the pandemic. Three students in grade 12 completed the assessment, and 11 students in grade 11 completed it.

### Achieve 3000

Students complete Achieve 3000 Reading Levelset assessments three times per year. Because of the district's remote status for much of the year, administration of the Levelset was difficult to complete. The table below indicates the average lexile growth and other data points in Achieve 3000.

2020-2021	CES	CMS	CHS
Average Lexile Growth	73L	112L	17L
# of student Log ins	13,153	6.504	4515
# of Activities	0.75	.44	.35
Average First-try Scores	59%	72%	71%

*Table. Achieve 3000 data points for 2020-2021.*

### mCLASS

Teachers complete mCLASS reading assessments for students in grades K-2 and for students with disabilities in grades 3-5. Due to remote status during 2020-2021, the beginning of year and middle of year the percentage of completed assessments was very low. Students returned to in-person learning mid-March. 82% of the students completed the end of year mCLASS assessments. Of the 82% of students who completed the end of year text

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reading and comprehension mCLASS assessment, 80% fell far below proficiency, 7% fell below proficient, 7% were considered proficient, and 6% were considered above proficient. Due to remote learning, mCLASS progress monitoring was not completed this year.

## **Professional Development**

Because the district wanted to provide the most instructional time possible for students, the only professional development days that were included in the calendar were during the days prior to the first student day. Because the student start date was delayed, teachers were provided an additional week for training and planning.

Although designated for professional development were not calendared, the district offered a variety of professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. During July and November, the district provided stipends to teachers for completing courses provided by The Friday Institute at North Carolina State University. Topics ranged from Remote Teaching Strategies, Reading Foundations, Teaching Math to Young Children, Social and Emotional Learning, as well as Google Certified Educator courses.

The district's three Instructional Facilitators provided workshops to staff on remote teaching strategies at the beginning of the year. In addition, they also supported Human Resources by providing training to new hires prior to the beginning of the new year. This training included Blended Learning, lesson design, and remote learning strategies.

Professional Learning Communities continued to meet, albeit often remotely. The District Administrator PLC furthered its work on Hattie's Effective Strategies. It also began an in depth study of Cognia standards and self-assessment in preparation for its district accreditation quality engagement review in 2021-2022.

## **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)**

During fall 2020, the district revised and expanded its MTSS handbook. The handbook was then shared with the district administration PLC to review.

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Administrators began preliminary steps to share the information to school MTSS teams.

## **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 with Cognia in 2021-2022.

In preparation for the spring 2022 Cognia review, three staff members participated in an engagement review of other districts. Their knowledge and experiences were shared with the district administration PLC.

# Cherokee Elementary School (CES)

The 2020-2021 school year was a challenging year for students and staff. Our school board opted for remote learning beginning in August and continuing until March 15th, 2021. During remote learning, teachers used Google Classroom and Google Meet to teach students effective social emotional skills, reading, and math. Cherokee Language and Activity teachers also provided instruction during the remote learning time. Additionally, teachers adapted their daily schedules to hold open office hours during the evening time for families to receive more support.

The school provided laptops to all students in grades 1st- 5th and iPads to students in kindergarten. Students who did not have home internet but lived in an area where cellular service was available, were provided with wifi hotspots. Students that did not have access to any wifi were given weekly work via packets.

On March 15th, 2021, students returned to school on a hybrid schedule. Students were grouped according to their communities to attend in-person

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learning two days a week. When not on campus, students received asynchronous learning two days a week. Fridays were devoted to planning instruction, working remotely with individual students, and grading completed work.

In the 2020-2021 school year, Cherokee Elementary School implemented a SEL program called Second Step. This program helps students to build personal skills in areas of well being. Every morning, all students would participate in the Second Step lesson as part of their class morning meeting. Teachers worked diligently to successfully implement this program, even while being in a remote learning setting. Our school counselors also provided time each day for students to meet synchronously with a student support group. Students were encouraged to reach out to the school counselors via email or Google Form when needed. These processes continued when students returned to campus and continued to be successful.

When students returned to in-person learning in March, teachers were able to provide students with individualized and small group instruction. This helped to address learning gaps and boost mastery of skills. Students and staff adjusted quite well with the new safety procedures set in place and continued to make learning engaging.



*Cherokee Elementary Teachers teaching their class during remote learning*

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# Cherokee Middle School (CMS)

During the 2020-2021 school year, Cherokee Middle School looked different than the normal year due to the Pandemic. Cherokee Middle School relied on some remote learning and some face-to-face instruction to meet the learning needs of students. Due to the school's one-to-one plan students were able to receive a computer to use both at school and home during remote learning. Each grade developed a remote learning schedule that worked for them. Elective teachers were utilized for extra support in the remote classroom by helping the students complete assignments and also make contact via phone, or email.

When students returned they were on a four day schedule and an A/B Schedule. Students responded well to this schedule and really enjoyed being back at school. During the 2020-2021 school year, staff began with professional development in Trauma-Informed Practices in the classroom. When students came back this training really enhanced the SEL program we implemented to help students develop social and emotional skills. It really helped to accentuate our mission of teaching the whole child.

The Integrated Classroom program also continued to work with students who were struggling to remain in class due to behavioral issues. During the 2020-2021 school year the program contained 3 students. At the end of the school year, Cherokee Middle School promoted 104 8th grade students to the 9th grade. Some other students earned High School Credit while at the Middle School.





*Staff distribute laptops and learning materials for remote learning.*

## **CMS Athletics**

Cherokee Middle School Athletics continues to build. The 2020-2021 season was definitely a little different due to COVID-19. However, student-athletes looked to sports as a sense of normalcy. The students at Cherokee Middle School are very talented, both artistically, academically, and in athletics. The sports that were offered during the 2020-2021 school year were volleyball, basketball, cross country, football, baseball, softball, and track.

During the 2020-2021 school year the lady's basketball team won the Smoky Mountain Conference Championship. In addition to the basketball championship, the Cherokee Middle School softball team won its first Championship. Coaches of the Middle School team are training student-athletes in more than just sports; they are training them in character, teamwork, and sportsmanship. We are proud of the middle school athletic program. In the future we plan to increase the number of sports that are offered during the school year.

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# Cherokee High School (CHS)

Cherokee High School has been a 1-to-1 school for several years, which eased our shift to remote learning for a majority of SY 20-21. Our teachers worked beyond expectation and through many hardships to deliver instruction to our students. Their approaches generally involved online instruction via Google Meet and Google Classroom, but teachers adapted for those students who did not have consistent internet access.

Most extra-curricular activities were suspended because of the pandemic, but CHS did have students participate in virtual competitions and events. We had students compete in HOSA (future health professionals) events, earn their Certified Nursing Assistant certification, and earn medical assisting and business administration certificates from Southwestern Community College.

Once we returned to face-to-face instruction in March 2021, CHS offered intensive support for all students, both academically and socially-emotionally, through the daily advisory period. We also offered after school tutoring and enrichments, Monday - Thursday, from 3:00-4:30, with snacks and transportation provided.

The graduation rate is 87.95%, and with a class size of 76, the class of 2021 tied for the largest class to graduate from CHS. The class collectively earned 70 college courses while in high school and boasted the most honors graduates (27) with the most National Honor Society graduates (29).

The drop out rate for 2020-2021 is 1.5% which is a decrease from 4.66% in 2019-2020. [Note: The North Carolina calculation method results in a 1.31% dropout rate.]

## **CHS Athletics**

CHS Athletics operated during SY20-21 under stringent Covid protocol, shifting seasons, and reduced schedules.

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Student-athletes were screened daily, wore masks during practice and competition (with cross country and track as exceptions), sanitized consistently, and used equipment that was sanitized often. Fan attendance was limited, and they were also screened when they entered the gym or stadium.

In spite of the restrictions, CHS competed in the following sports for girls: volleyball, cross country, basketball, cheerleading, golf, soccer, softball, wrestling, and track & field. And the following for boys: cross country, basketball, soccer, football, cheerleading, golf, wrestling, baseball, and track & field. The first competition was in mid-November, and the final competition was near the end of June.

CHS had athletes compete in regional and state tournaments in the following sports: cross country, girls golf, girls & boys wrestling, and girls & boys track & field.

# 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

Development

Laser Print Studio

The print studio averaged 85 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.

Each year the department uses proceeds from the Laser Print Studio to make a donation to a local charity or organization.

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#### Grants

Development facilitated 17 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.

CCS received DOI GEER, DOE CARES, DOE CRSSA, and ARPA funding this year. The Community Affairs department managed all of these grants which included purchasing and tracking inventory.

#### Public Relations

The public relations function of the Office of Community Development facilitates ongoing communication with our families, community, and staff. The department maintains the district's [Facebook page](#). Many of the communication pieces from the 2020-2021 school year revolved around changes due to the pandemic, including meal deliveries, student work pickup/dropoff, and learning transition plans.

In addition to our Facebook page, Cherokee Central Schools utilizes the ConnectED program which provides us with another communication tool. The system allows us to call and text each student's family and our staff.

#### Security

The security staff consists of 10 security guards in addition to the Head of Security. Training for security guards is ongoing.

Security provided a demonstration of the Shooter Detection System for CCS and tribal emergency staff, as well as Harrah's Cherokee Casino.

The Security department also installed gate arms at all of the campus entrances in order to provide better security for students and staff.

The security camera network has expanded to 210 security cameras (not including expansion) and the video retention is up to 30 days per camera.

We are currently implementing VAPE sensors throughout MS/HS buildings.

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Say Something anonymous tip line is active for our MS/HS students and staff.

Rave Mobile Panic Button was also implemented in 2020-2021.

#### Other Programs

##### Inventory

One to One Plus Asset Management, has had a total of 10,256 entries, active/inactive assets. This includes some assets that migrated from our Dell Kace inventory system. Each school and department within CCS, use One to One Plus to track each asset from the moment the asset arrives on campus to the end of life and the removal of the asset from campus.

As each asset is placed into One to One Plus, it will have a status of active, in use or inactive, which may mean the asset is marked for disposal, recycling or repurposing. These status allow CCS to monitor the lifespan of an asset and then how CCS properly removed the asset from the system and ultimately of CCS' premises.

Furniture, kitchen appliances, sanitation machines, security cameras, mobile cabinetry and other items with monetary value over \$100 and have a number of years of use, are inputted into One to One Plus.

#### Special Note

The Department of Community Affairs played a vital role in Cherokee Central Schools' response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the school year 2020-2021. In addition to managing the COVID-related funding described above, the Director maintained up-to-date information from the tribe, CDC, state, and BIE and participated in local Joint Incident Command (JIC) briefings. Members of the department also supported our food delivery program, and they worked to improve the safety of our campus.

## **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,

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departments, and shifts, in order to clean and sanitize the campus buildings properly. Staff perform a deep clean each summer.

The custodial staff provided normal and deep cleaning for the district. In addition, the department provided staff with extra cleaning and sanitizing products and hand sanitizer.

## **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 oversee 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 191 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.

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.

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The budget process was truncated this year in order to meet the EBCI tribal finance departments earlier deadline.

The finance department members were considered critical staff and remained on campus when faculty and staff were working remotely. The department supported Cherokee Central Schools 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 333 full time employees and 17 part time employees in 2020-2021.

Employee type	Number of positions/staff
Licensed Teachers	123
Teacher Assistants	61
Licensed Support Staff (counselors, social workers, media specialists, instructional facilitators, related services)	20
Licensed Administrators (principals, assistant principals, central office)	12
Instructors	16
Support Staff – non-licensed	101

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 a week of new hire training prior to the 2020-2021 school year.



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Another major function of the Human Resources department is to conduct background checks on all new hires and personnel who are in close contact with all students. These are performed according to the BIE federal standards.

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.



*Tina Swimmer assists with distributing lunchboxes to staff at the beginning of the school year.*

## 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 100 work tickets per month for the district. Additionally, the IT department services 531 staff computers.

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.

## 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. Because of the pandemic, the School Nutrition Program operated as one site last year. Here are the numbers for one month.

**Table IX. Approximate Participation of Students**

	Breakfast	Lunch
<b>Cherokee Central Schools</b>	15996	15996

The School Nutrition Department provided breakfast and a hot lunch to CCS students and other children in the community daily. Working with Cherokee Boys’ Club Bus Service, the department provided meals to-go for students during our remote-only (Plan C) months. When the district transitioned to Plan B Hybrid in March, the School Nutrition department maintained meal delivery to remote students and provided meals to students on campus.

To limit large gatherings of students and support social distancing and cohorting, the School Nutrition department transported all meals to the classroom. The dining halls were closed.

### 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

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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.

# Special Projects in 2020-2021

## 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 the construction of a North building, a South building (to complete the ring), and a new Gathering Place. The old Gathering Place was disassembled to make room for the South building. Because the district was in Plan C Remote-Only status for much of the year, the construction on the new buildings moved more quickly than anticipated. Some delays in materials occurred because of manufacturing and shipping delays due to the 2020 shutdown.

Interior remodeling of one building began in spring/summer 2021. Other remodeling projects will follow later in 2021.