



The Path We Walk

Cherokee Central Schools

2021-2022 Annual Report



264 Ravensford Drive
Cherokee, NC 28719

This document provides a description of the educational programs and activities at Cherokee Central Schools for the school year 2021-2022. Cherokee Central Schools utilizes the annual report in various ways, including compliance (Bureau of Indian Education) and public relations.



CCS Vision

Empower our students; preserve our nation; ensure our future.

CCS Mission

Cherokee Central Schools, in partnership with its families and community, will develop lifelong learners by providing challenging educational experiences that empower students for cultural stewardship, civic responsibility, future readiness, and academic success in a safe and healthy learning environment.

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Cherokee Central Schools

School Board 2021-2022

Community	Position	Name
Yellowhill	Chairperson	Dr. Jennifer Thompson
Big Y	Co-Vice Chairperson	Tara Reed-Cooper
Birdtown	Co-Vice Chairperson	Melanie Lambert
Big Cove	Secretary	Kristina Hyatt
Painttown	Member	Regina Ledford Rosario
Wolfetown	Member	Roberta Toineeta
	EBCI Tribal Council Representative	Bo Crowe
	EBCI Tribal Council Alternate Representative	TW Saunooke



Dr. Jennifer Thompson, Melanie Lambert, Roberta Toineeta, Kristina Hyatt, Regina Ledford Rosario, Tara Reed-Cooper

Special Message Regarding School Year 2021-2022

Due to the rise of the Omicron variant in the community at the beginning of August, Cherokee Central Schools delayed the opening day of the new year for students by one week in order to better address the needs arising from the pandemic. Students reported on August 16, 2021, instead of August 9, 2021, for face-to-face instruction. Staff were able to complete COVID testing and/or get vaccines or boosters prior to students returning.

COVID protocols were revised for students and staff. During most of the fall semester, CCS dealt with complicated quarantine situations for students and staff. Spring semester saw fewer quarantines as the pandemic metrics improved.

Cherokee Central Schools maintained a mask mandate until after spring break. Each school's lunchroom re-opened after spring break, too.

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).

Governance and Leadership

Cherokee Central Schools is governed by a six member elected school board, along with a representative (or alternate) from the EBCI Tribal Council. Each member serves a four-year term, and terms are staggered.

Central office personnel consists of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and eleven 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, Career and Technical Education, ESTEAM, 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.

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. The expansion project allowed CCS to open three new buildings during 2021-2022. See Special Projects > Expansion.

Calendar

The school calendar originally provided for 180 instructional days for students, and it included teacher workdays.

As mentioned above, the student first day date was adjusted to accommodate for the COVID variant in the community. See Appendix > 2021-2022 Calendar.

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, and CCS received a one year waiver at that time from the BIE and DOE. The CCS school board voted to pursue a 5 year waiver on 16 August 2021, and a two year waiver was granted on 1 February 2022. 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 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.

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.

Additionally, the district was successful in applying for Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP) grant which allowed it to hire a CTE/STEAM Director and add new career pathways and programming to the curricula.

Enrollment

According to the Native American Student Information System (NASIS) on the last day of school (05/24/2022), Cherokee Central Schools had 1,402 students enrolled; 17 more students than on the last day of the previous school year.

Of the 1,402 students enrolled in 2021-2022, 93.15% were American Indian students, mostly enrolled members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian (EBCI). See Table I.

Table I. May 2022 Ending Enrollment - All Students, All Schools							
Hope Center Grade	Enrollment		Grade	Enrollment		Grade	Enrollment
PK	47		4	102		9	105

K	114		5	109		10	95
1	118		6	111		11	96
2	119		7	95		12	79
3	116		8	96		Total	1402

Academic Programs and Services

The Hope Center includes a FACE program, Infant toddler program, a Preschool program, and a PK program. In addition, the Hoper Center expanded the FACE program with approved funding through the BIE.

The Hope Center director oversees the PK program, which grew from three to four classrooms in 2021. Each year the Hope Center has a waiting list for its PK program, and CCS added additional classrooms when the new South Building was completed in September 2021.



PK students rode the first in the state electric school bus during a ceremony celebrating its addition to the Cherokee Boys' Club fleet.

The Hope Center provided several opportunities for children and their families this past year. Due to COVID, we were not able to gather as often as a large group but were able to have a couple of events this school year. We continued to provide activity & book pick-ups or deliveries early on in the year before we were able to gather. Some families were able to start coming to the center for services. All of our programs provided 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 Home-based FACE families, as well as our Infant Toddler

program families, and Preschool Special Education families. We even were allowed to host parent-involvement events for our PK Students that allowed our parents to come and participate with their students at school. The PK also went on 3 field trips this school year where parents were invited and encouraged to attend. 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 who may have been exposed to COVID and required to quarantine for any amount of time.



The Hope Center also provided developmental screenings for children enrolled in the childcare centers across the boundary. They were able to see children face-to-face that were enrolled in childcare centers by following COVID protocols set up by each center. They also continued to provide 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 as 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, Fine Motor & Sensory Concerns, and Autism.

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 also had some transition services to prepare them for their transition

to the Elementary School. This included our FACE Adult Educator providing school tours and Question & Answer sessions for any parent of our program that was interested.

The Home-Based section of our FACE program transitioned 8 - 3 year olds to the Center Based FACE PK Classroom on our campus. After completing several visits with their Parent Educator and becoming more familiar with our school, 8 families chose to enroll their 3 year old into our FACE classroom for the upcoming school year.

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

Table II. Hope Center Enrollment, 2021-2022			
Baby Face Program	Infant Toddler Program	Preschool Program	PK Program
22	10	50	47

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 279 students in grades K-12 during 2021-2022. Disability categories of the children served are found in Table III.

Table III. Disability Categories, 2021-2022.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• traumatic brain injury• autism• multiple disabilities• emotional disturbance• intellectually disabled• Specific learning disabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hearing impairment• orthopedic impairment• speech impairment• visual impairment• developmental delay• other health impairment.

Table IV. Ending Enrollment in Special Education, 2021-2022.

Preschool	K-5	6-8	9-12
	125	70	84

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.

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 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 continue to be eligible based on criteria to earn letter jackets by participating in Special Olympics. There were a total of two this year to earn their letter jackets.

Talented and Gifted (TaG) Program

The TaG program included 26 students in 2021-2022. The program serves students in grades 4-12 and is staffed with two teachers and a paraprofessional. Activities for students included a trip to the Biltmore House to see the Van Gogh Alive exhibit, which included an exceptional multisensory portion. They also went to various colleges and universities. During the summer months, many of the TaG students are participating in various programs throughout the state, including MedCat, Aspirnaut, Western Carolina University and various local opportunities.

CES TaG students participated in the regional SMART Tank competition. Both teams placed in the competition and received money to support their program. In addition, TaG students in grades 4-7 had the opportunity of attending Space Camp this summer in Alabama.

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

4-5	6-8	9-12
3	6	17

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 (e.g., Achieve 3000, Edmentum) to assist 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 along with an Immersion class. A Cherokee History was reinstated for the high school. In addition, the Cultural department provides paraprofessionals for third grade through its Title VI grant.

Cherokee Elementary and Cherokee Middle School students complete a Cherokee Language pretest at the beginning of the school year, a mid-term 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 2022. Enrollment for this program was 145 students. The classes offered were pottery making, drama, soapstone carving, native plants, sewing 18th century clothing, traditional food cooking, art, beadwork, designing gourds, corn shuck doll making and the making of pucker toe moccasins. The camp also provided classes in traditional singing, Cherokee dances, Kahoots in Cherokee, Bingo in Cherokee, traditional games, and as well as writing in the Cherokee Syllabary. Cherokee speakers provided in-class instruction for each class offered. Members from the Cherokee Community were brought in to present story telling to the Cultural Summer school students.

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 pottery making and field trips to culturally significant sites.



The Cultural Department provided staff with a workshop on traditional pottery.

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 2021-2022 due to the ongoing pandemic and need to accelerate learning.

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 an adapted version of the Common Core State Standards. All core areas have locally developed curriculum guides based on North Carolina's SCS. Cherokee language, culture, and history are integrated in all content areas. Blended Learning 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 musical theater. In a typical year, the students would choose a musical to perform for the public in the spring. The musical theater students presented *Once On This Island, Jr.*, in May 2022 for the community. These performances were widely anticipated since the pandemic had curtailed these opportunities for the previous two years.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Cherokee High School offers Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses (whole or in part) in several career and technical pathways, including Health Sciences, Business, Marketing, and Finance Education, Auto Mechanics, Agriculture, Technology, Broadcast Journalism, Graphic Design, Video Production, Engineering 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, 2021-2022

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring Career Decisions• Coding• 3D Printing• Virtual Reality (zSpace)• Introduction to Agriculture• Carpentry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computers• Exploring Personal Finance,• Graphics Design 1• Introduction to Healthcare• Broadcast Journalism• Robotics
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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 will continue as a Unified Champion School District by Special Olympics NC. Students have gained and improved skills that help them succeed, both in the classroom and outside. There are elements at each school; 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 high school may opt to take online courses including college courses, Advanced Placement courses, and North Carolina Virtual Public School courses.

At the beginning of 2021-2022, Cherokee Central Schools realized that in rare situations a student might need a virtual option for education. CCS offered the Cherokee Central Virtual Academy (CCVA) for those students who were medically fragile or had other extenuating circumstances. This service was provided through Edmentum.

Most students transitioned back to the regular face-to-face program by the start of the second semester.

STEM-related Programs and Activities

ESTEAM Camp

The CCS summer E-STEAM Camp was run for two weeks in June 2022. The camp is designed for elementary and middle school students. Students get the opportunity to expand their knowledge of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math through numerous activities such as building rockets, hot air balloons, and building cardboard boats. Students are also provided fun activities such as roller skating and pool trips.

Table VII. ESTEAM Camp, Number of Attendees, Summer 2022	
CES	CMS
70	21

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. CES was represented by the Elementary TaG program and their Sticker printing business, winning their category. CHS was represented by one student, winning the shirt design contest.

Makerspaces

STEM-E Conferences

Typically, CCS is the host campus for the student STEM-E 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, middle, and high. This year, however, both the fall and spring conferences were held virtually.

Session topics include Coding, Robotics, and Engineering.

Assessment and Accountability

Although the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) implemented its Standards, Assessment, Accountability System during 2019-2020, the Cherokee Central Schools school board requested a waiver from the BIE assessments. The waiver was initially granted for 2020-2021, but CCS applied for a five (5) year waiver in October 2021 and was granted a

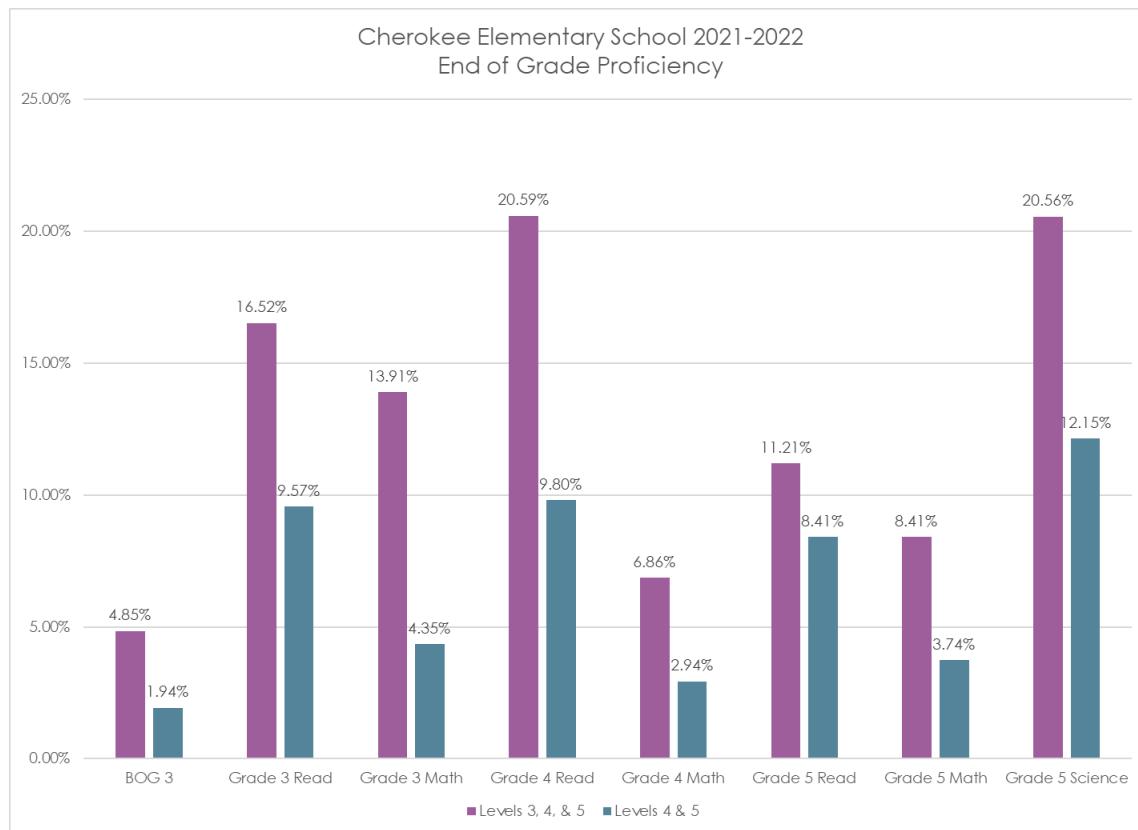
waiver for two years (2021-2022 and 2022-2023). CCS continued to administer the state assessments.

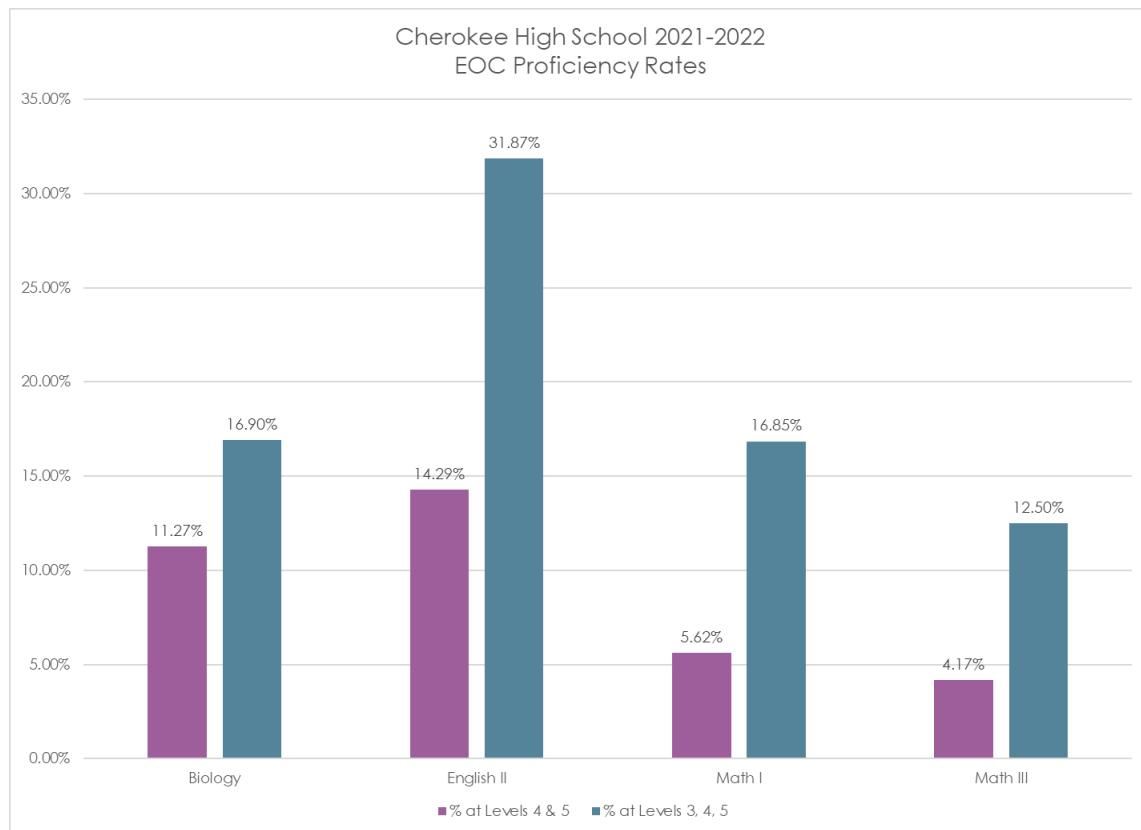
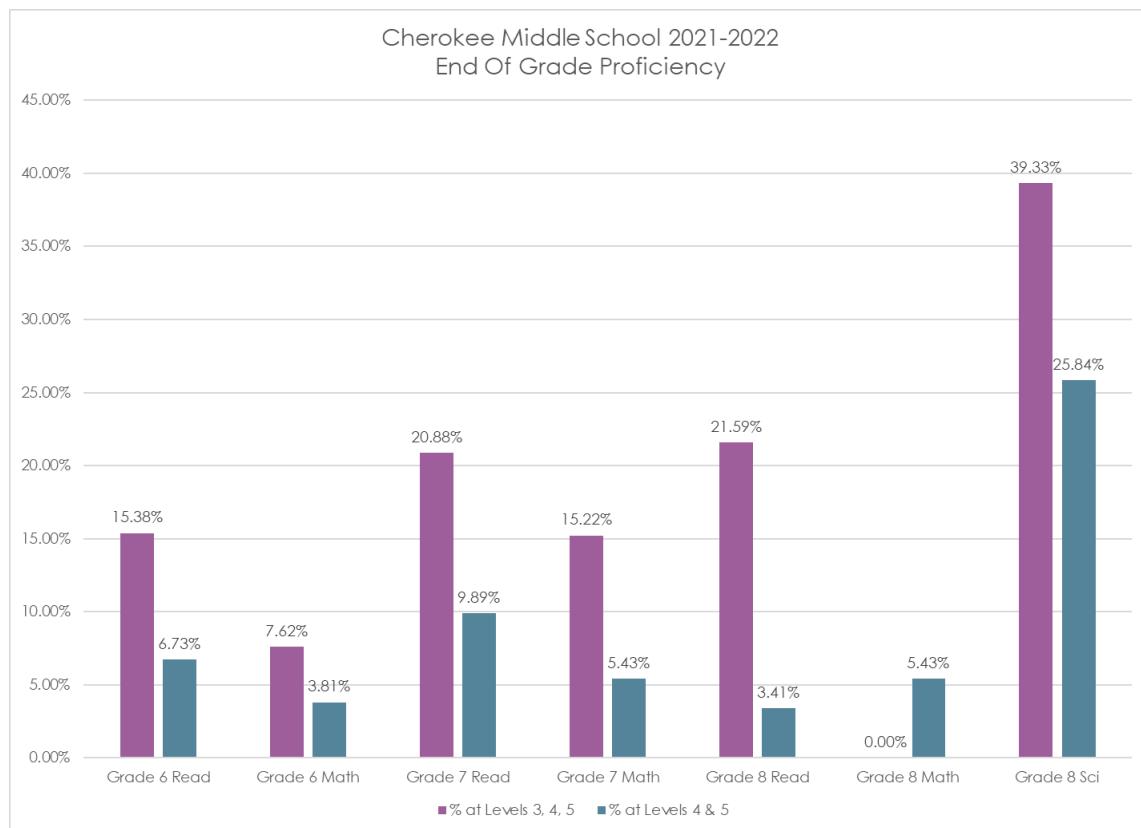
State Assessments

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.

Cherokee Elementary School and Cherokee Middle School are participating in NCDPI's Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) pilot program for new through-grade assessments.

Results from state assessments used for federal (BIE/DOE) accountability are found in the following charts.





Other Assessments

ACT Plus Writing

Cherokee High School provides the ACT Plus Writing at no cost to grade 11 (primarily) and some 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. Two students in grade 12 completed the assessment, and 13 students in grade 11 completed the assessment in 2021-2022.

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.

2021-2022	CES	CMS	CHS
Average Lexile Growth	112L	105L	63L
# of completed lessons	16,021	13,914	9,708
Avg. Activities per student	48	44	24
Average Activity Score	64.2%	64.2%	63%

Table VIII. Achieve 3000 data points for 2021-2022.

mCLASS

Cherokee Elementary School teachers complete mCLASS reading assessments for students in grades K-2 and for students with disabilities in grades 3-5. On the Beginning of Year (BOY) assessment, 8% of the Kindergarten students assessed were on or above grade level. At the End of Year (EOY) assessment, 31% of students were on or above grade level, which is a 23% increase from the BOY.

In grade 1, 11% of students were at or above grade level on the BOY, and by the EOY the number had increased 18% to 29% at or above grade level.

Grade 2 saw an 8% increase from BOY (18%) to EOY (26%) of students at or above grade level.

In grade 3, CES saw an increase of 14% from BOY (18%) to EOY (32%) of students at or above grade level.

Professional Development

Because of the delayed student start date, teachers were able to participate in additional professional learning during in-service days at the beginning of the year. Training topics varied depending upon the needs of the school and individual teachers. Some topics included curriculum guide and assessments, Literacy, mentoring, MTSS, team building, PLC, Managing Stress, digital resources, IEP training, and others. Schools focused on literacy, social and emotional learning, and blended learning strategies throughout the year.

The district's three instructional facilitators provided support to staff on MTSS and PLCs on an on-going basis.

Nine (9) members at Cherokee Elementary School participated in cohort 1 of the LETRS training. This training aligns with the training that teachers in North Carolina are receiving for literacy instruction.

For several years, the BIE has supported teachers wishing to pursue National Board certification through bonuses, registration and component fees, and salary supplements. This year, the BIE discontinued the program. Several CCS teachers were in the certification process or were interested in beginning the process. Using Title II funding, CCS was able to continue supporting these teachers with the National Board certification process.

The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) worked with CCS on a grant to fund a leadership development institute at its Ocracoke campus. This work should have been completed in the summer of 2020, but was postponed until June 2022 due to the pandemic. A team of 18 staff attended the leadership institute. The team was composed of teachers, principals, and directors, as well as the superintendent and assistant superintendent. The work focused on strengths, leadership styles, and the Critical Friends protocol for problem-solving.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

To assist the district with its implementation of MTSS, CCS utilized some of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for an MTSS Coordinator position. This position was filled during the fall semester, and the coordinator began working on implementing the work throughout each of the schools. By using scaffolds for students to meet high expectations, each school has implemented a variety of interventions available to all

students who require extra support. Academic Intervention Specialists have been hired to meet with small groups of students throughout the day to accelerate learning to help students meet grade level expectations.

CES implemented the Leveled Literacy Intervention Program for Grades K-5. This is a powerful, short-term intervention that provides daily, intensive, small-group instruction conducted by the CES Academic Intervention Specialists, which supplements classroom literacy teaching, using high-interest leveled books and fast-paced, systematically designed lessons.

CMS and CHS have designated academic supports throughout the day using Academic Intervention Specialists using supportive measures to assist with grade level expectations in both ELA and Math.

Although the MTSS Program is in its early stages at CCS, our administration and staff have been eager to establish the groundwork for implementing MTSS to its fullest potential.

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.

During the 2021-2022 school year, CCS hosted another quality assurance review team from Cognia (formerly AdvancED) as part of its 5-year accreditation renewal cycle. The team completed self-assessments, surveys, and data analysis as preparation for the visit. The visit was a success, and all standards were assessed at the Impacting or Improving level. The district obtained a 330.81 Index of Education Quality (IEQ) score. Cherokee Central Schools is accredited by Cognia for the next five years, and the district will be up for re-accreditation in 2026-2027.

For the district's Executive Summary and the accreditation report, visit the [CCS website](#).

Cherokee Elementary School (CES)



With a handful of exceptions, students returned to Cherokee Elementary School in August 2021 for in-person instruction. Students and staff wore masks inside the building until May 2022 as part of the district's protocol. Students ate breakfast and lunch in their classrooms to minimize mixing of student groups until May 2022 as well.

Cherokee Elementary School's core program includes reading, mathematics, science, social studies, health, physical education, art, Cherokee language, and music. In addition, the school continues to focus on social and emotional learning for students to address increased needs due to the continuing pandemic.

Teachers focus on continued implementation of personalized education through blended learning by incorporating appropriate technology and digital resources into their classrooms. Hands-on and inquiry-based activities are encouraged. One such project included butterfly kits so that students could observe the metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly. Students in 1st grade learned about the importance of soil. Students worked together to observe and compare soil samples from the seven communities.



Cherokee Elementary staff completed training on the MTSS process and added 4 new interventionists positions. The interventionists served a total of 160 Tier II students in grades K-5. These students worked with the interventionist in small groups for 30 minutes

each day. The intervention groups were very successful. MOY to EOY data shows an increase in lexile scores for these students.

The elementary school created a book walk for students, staff, and families to enjoy. The book walk is located in the elementary school courtyard. Students, teachers, and families enjoyed walking through the courtyard and reading a book. Each quarter we change out the book so students can enjoy walking and reading different books throughout the year.



In the fall, teachers held parent conferences where they could talk to the parents about their student's progress. The elementary school held student led conferences in March. The conferences gave students the opportunity to showcase their work and take ownership of their data. We were also able to bring back Kindergarten registration night. It was held in May. New families and students came to visit kindergarten classrooms and meet the kindergarten teachers.

Grade 4 students participated in the NCDPI IADA pilot project called NCPATS. This pilot is a through-grades assessment program that is similar to the North Carolina Check Ins (NCCI). If successful, these assessments will replace the End of Grade assessments for federal accountability.

CES had team building activities set up for staff. These meetings helped create a sense of community, bonding, and partnership with one another.



The elementary school hosted its Healthy Halloween event for students this year after a break due to the pandemic. This is an event that allows community organizations and businesses to support students and the school while celebrating Halloween in a healthier way than traditional trick or treating.

Cherokee Elementary School continued its partnership with Cherokee Indian Hospital to offer an Integrated Classroom, which is staffed by CES personnel and Hospital employees. The Integrated classroom is for students that need more support emotionally and behaviorally than what is traditional offered within a regular classroom setting.

CES student's were able to participate in "Anti-Bullying Week", which is designated to bring awareness to the issue of bullying. Each day was themed towards ways we can handle bullying and how we can help eliminate bullying.

This year, CES was able to conduct their annual award ceremonies for each grade block and graduation for 5th grade. Families were allowed to attend these events to help celebrate our student's successes.

In June, CES was able to offer STEAM Camp for students in grades K-5th.

Cherokee Middle School (CMS)

With a handful of exceptions, students returned to Cherokee Middle School in August 2021 for in-person instruction. Students and staff wore masks inside the building until May 2022 as part of the district's protocol. Students ate breakfast and lunch in their classrooms to minimize mixing of student groups until May 2022 as well.

Core courses for Cherokee Middle School include reading, mathematics, science, social studies, health and physical education, as well as several electives.

During the year, the grade 8 team implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and the team reports a change in atmosphere among the grade 8 students.

Cherokee Middle School's musical theater students, under the direction of Valerie Tissue, performed *Braves on Broadway* for the community in December 2021

To infuse more cultural activities into the everyday curriculum, each month was dedicated to a certain culture theme. This proved to be successful, as students really enjoyed getting to participate in Frybread Friday, learning to catch, clean, and cook fish over an open fire pit. They also engaged in the Eagle Kite Day. Students really enjoyed the activities.



All three grades achieved at least 1.5 years in growth for the school year. We saw major improvements in lexile scores each month as students utilized Achieve3000 and other reading resources.

The Fly Fishing program took off and Mr. Davis was able to get students out on the water during Spring Break to let them practice fly fishing using some of the flies they made during class.

Mr. Hawken's 7th Grade Earth & Environmental Science classes built popsicle stick bridges. The group who had the best bridge got to challenge Mr. Creasman to stand on it and see if it would break. Both bridges that we deemed a tie, met the challenge and withstood Mr. Creasman standing on them.



CMS Athletics

We saw staggering participation numbers across all MS sports for a 1A school; we had a JV football team of 33 players, we had 37 boys try out for MS Basketball, 24 girls try out for MS girls basketball, and the CMS wrestling team had 35 wrestlers this season.

Team highlights include our CMS wrestling team and boys basketball team each making it to the conference championship, and our Middle School girl's basketball program continued its dominance by enjoying an undefeated season and SMC championship. Did that sound singular? Let me re-phase; the MS girls basketball team enjoyed their third consecutive SMC championship and a third undefeated season. Feels like a dynasty! Showing much flexibility in her abilities as a coach, this team was led by the varsity SMC COY in CC, Ahli-Sha Stephens.

The Cherokee Middle School Softball team also had another amazing season, and with a steady stream of talented athletes moving up through the program there appears to be no sign of decline. As this program continues to thrive, not only will it continue its dominance, but it will also provide a critical role as it feeds a varsity program that is also on the rise.

Cherokee High School (CHS)

Similarly to CES and CMS, students returned to in-person instruction at the high school in August 2021. Students and staff wore masks inside the building until May 2022 as part of the district's protocol. Students ate breakfast and lunch in their classrooms to minimize mixing of student groups until May 2022 as well.



CHS students were treated to a baseball game while attending the AISES conference in September 2021.

This year students saw a return to many of the extracurricular activities that had been on hold earlier in the pandemic. CHS had been actively involved with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) in previous years, and we were able to send a group of students to the national conference in September. CHS was also able to open up our after school programming Monday - Thursday from 3:00 - 4:30 to provide extra support for students in academic subjects as well as opportunities for enhancement in areas of interest. CHS Seniors were able to participate in a day trip to an area amusement park to celebrate their upcoming graduation, and the CHS Travel Club was finally able to make their trek to Europe, a trip that had been postponed twice due to the pandemic.



May 2022: CHS Seniors enjoying a fun day at a theme park.



June 2022: Travel Club students enjoying London (left) and the Louvre in Paris (right).

CHS provides a well-rounded curriculum for high school students. In addition to the core courses in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts, CHS also provides several Career and Technical Education courses and pathways. The school also provides a JROTC program for students.

In addition to courses on the CHS campus, students may also choose from various virtual courses from the NC Virtual Public School and other digital learning partners. Students can also register for courses at various colleges and universities that have partnered with CHS.

The graduation rate for 2021-2022 is 73.03%.



May 26, 2002: CHS celebrates graduation in the Charles George Memorial Arena.

The dropout rate for 2021-2022 is 6.65% which is an increase from last year. Many students have struggled with returning to school after the shut-down and remote learning situations stemming from the pandemic.

CHS Athletics

The CHS athletics department supported summer workouts and summer camps for teams prior to the start of the year in August 2021, following established COVID protocols.

Going into the school year, athletics was finally afforded a return to normalcy with the loosening of COVID protocols and a conventional schedule of sporting seasons with a luxury of unlimited fan attendance. And did our kids perform!

For the first time in many, many years, we had a varsity volleyball team with a winning conference and overall record! The team qualified for the state playoffs for the first time in years and will return a strong core of players going into this season.

The varsity football team overcame several injuries to key players to finish with a winning record and huge wins over rivals Swain County and Robbinsville. The team was honored with several all-conference selections and the conference also recognized one of our own Braves to be honored as the 2021 Player of the Year in the SMC.

Continuing a seismic upswing in the running programs here at CCS, our Men's Cross Country team dominated the field for most of the season. The team finished not only as

Smoky Mountain Conference champions, but continued to carve a fiery path through the mountain courses within all of Western North Carolina; finishing as 1A Western Regional Champions! They ran in the State Championships in Kernersville, NC on a frigid Saturday morning in November, placing 8th overall. Coach Ahli-Sha Stephens was honored as the 2021 SMC Conference Coach of the Year and we had several All-Conference (Men and Women), Western Regional and All-WNC runners. The men's team will remain completely intact for this upcoming season and expectations are sky high.

We had a wrestler compete in the 1a state championships and four students competed in the state track & field championships.

The athletics department evaluated capital expenditures and has initiated a plan to incorporate several upgrades to the various programs, with further additions scheduled for the next several years.

In this phase, we upgraded our arena scorer's table - the new system has two video screens, two lighted sections and has the capability to display video features and stats in real time.

We also added two additions to our track programs with the addition of a new pole vault pit and high jump pit.

Two pitching machines were purchased for the baseball and softball programs.

Transitioning into this year we are currently seeking resources to finalize a netting system for the softball and baseball fields, new netting for our discus cage, and we are planning to go into contract with a vendor to clean, re-number and re-stripe the track. Additionally, we are looking at various vendors to do a complete upgrade to the scoreboards across our football, soccer, baseball and softball sports fields.

CHS offers and supports a variety of sports, including volleyball, cheerleading, soccer, football, wrestling, women's wrestling, men and women's basketball, cross country, indoor track and track & field, as well as men and women's golf.

Support Services

Community Affairs

The Community Affairs Division 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 (CJDCAC)

The CJDCAC host a plethora of events for the district from meetings to musical theater performances.

Laser Print Studio

The print studio filled 17 requests for engravings and 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.

Grants

Development facilitated 15 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 STEM-E and NASA grants. This year the department also provided support on a federal grant, NACTEP, which has a CTE/STEM focus.

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 earlier part of the 2021-2022 school year revolved around changes due to the pandemic, including quarantining students and staff.

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.

The district has numerous security measures in place on the campus, including perimeter fencing, automatic gate arms, internal/external cameras, and a shooter detection system.

The security camera network will expand to 220 security cameras with expansion buildings completed. Video retention is up to 30 days per camera.

Axis Body Worn cameras for security staff were purchased for future implementation.

Polaris GEMe4 full electric vehicles were purchased to aid in patrolling campus via a green alternative to gas fueled vehicles.

VAPE sensors extended to areas not covered in previous years.

Say Something anonymous tip line is active for all students and staff.

Rave Mobile Panic Button was used 76 times to report incidents, drills or information during the 2021-2022 school year.

Utilizing Google Suite, the Security Department is transitioning to fully digitizing visitor and incident documentation.

Other Programs

Inventory

One to One Plus Asset Management, had a total of 12,331 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 continued to play a vital role in Cherokee Central Schools' response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the school year 2021-2022. 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.

Custodial

When fully staffed, the Custodial department boasts 21 full-time and 1 part-time staff members. The director assigns staff members to various schools,

departments, and shifts, in order to clean and sanitize the campus buildings properly. Staff perform a deep clean each summer. The Custodial staff also give support and assistance to other departments as needed.

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. Custodial staff provided daily emergency cleaning of the classroom if a student becomes sick in the classroom. The Custodial staff also cleans after sporting events and after school events and also provide any support services that are needed at these events.

Facilities

The facilities department maintains over 489,000 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 215 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 consists of a director, administrative assistant, carpenter, HVAC, electrician, plumber, and grounds crew.

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. For SY 2021-22, Google Drive was implemented to more efficiently streamline this process. Directors and principals were issued date and time deadlines to make any suggestions/input/adjustments to the new SY budget. That was met with rousing success from all involved as they were pleased with the effectiveness and expediency of the input process. The actual time

involved in the review process was minimal due to those changes being made beforehand.

The director works with the CBC Finance Department to develop an overall budget for submission to the school board and tribe.

Current Up-to-Date Budget Reports are provided to the CCS School Board on a monthly basis.

For SY 2021-22, the CCS Finance Department participated in the Accreditation process to ensure that CCS not only met the standards required, but exceeded them. CCS was extremely successful in that endeavor and scored very highly in their pursuit of that goal.

Human Resources

Cherokee Central Schools employed 337 full time employees and 9 part time employees in 2021-2022.

Employee type	Number of positions/staff
Licensed Teachers	113
Teacher Assistants	61
Licensed Support Staff (counselors, social workers, media specialists, instructional facilitators, related services)	30
Licensed Administrators (principals, assistant principals, central office)	14
Instructors	28
Support Staff - non-licensed	91

Table VIII. Number of full time 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 2021-2022 school year.

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. Both Human Resources staff members are part of the National Native American Human Resources Association and are certified as Tribal Human Resource Professionals until April 21, 2024

Technology Department

The technology team imaged or re-imaged over 2500 desktops and laptops for all three schools and added the devices to the network to support our 1:1 Personalized Education initiative.

Upgraded the wireless network to accommodate more users and provide a stable connection throughout the three schools. Upgraded the current Cisco phone system with the latest software and server.

They provided troubleshooting assistance for tech work orders from staff, averaging 100 work tickets per month for the district. Additionally, the IT department services 500 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.

Table IX. Average Participation of Students		
	Breakfast	Lunch
Cherokee Central Schools	10904	12884

Because of continued pandemic concerns, the school lunchrooms were not used until May 2022. 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. The students had a Hot and Healthy meal at lunch everyday. The students were very Thankful for the meals.

Special Projects in 2021-2022

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 2020-2021, 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. However, the North Building, South Building, and the Gathering Place were completed in summer of 2021, and the district moved programs and offices into these buildings in September 2021.

Interior remodeling for the Cherokee Middle School began in spring/summer 2021. This remodeling phase saw additional office space for CMS administration along with the addition of a new culinary arts kitchen and classroom space for family and consumer science. Additional remodeling for the Cherokee High School began in September 2021 when the Central Office and Pathseekers moved out of R building into the new North Building. Shortly after remodeling began in the P and R building, water intrusion was discovered. The P and R remodeling portion of the expansion plan has been on hold while the district determines the extent of the damage and implements repairs.

Appendix

2021-2022 Calendar

Cherokee Central Schools 2021 – 2022 School Calendar

Date	Description
08/02/2021	First Day for Staff; Teacher Work Day (TWD)
08/3-08/06/2021	TWDs
08/16/2021	First Day for Students
08/26/2021	Holiday – Elders' Day
09/03/2021	Early Release
09/06/2021	Holiday – Labor Day
10/05/2021	Optional Teacher Work Day (OTWD)
10/06/2021	Optional Teacher Work Day (OTWD)
10/07/2021	Optional Teacher Work Day (OTWD)/Early Release
10/08/2021	Holiday - Indian Heritage Day
10/13/2021	End of Quarter 1 – 43 days
11/11/2021	Holiday – Veterans' Day
11/24/2021	Admin Leave Day
11/25/2021	Holiday – Thanksgiving
11/26/2021	Holiday - Tsali Day
12/17/2021	End Quarter 2
12/20 -21/2021	Admin Leave
12/22-23/2021	School Vacation Day; 12 month Admin Leave
12/24/2021	School Vacation Day; Christmas Day observed
12/27 – 12/30/2021	School Vacation Days; 12 month Admin Leave
12/31/2021	Holiday - New Year's Day observed
1/3 -1/4/2022	School Vacation Days; 12 month Admin Leave
1/5/2022	Optional Teacher Work Day (OTWD)
1/6/2022	Students Return
1/17/2022	Holiday – Martin Luther King Day
2/21/2022	Holiday – Presidents' Day
3/11/2022	End of Quarter 3 – 45 days
4/11 – 4/14/2022	Spring Break
4/15/2022	Holiday – Good Friday
5/24/2022	Early Release – End of Quarter 4 – 47 days
5/25 – 5/27/2022	Optional Teacher Work Days (OTWD)

Approved: 03/19/2021; Revised 9/7/2021; Revised 11/3/2021



TLTR

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