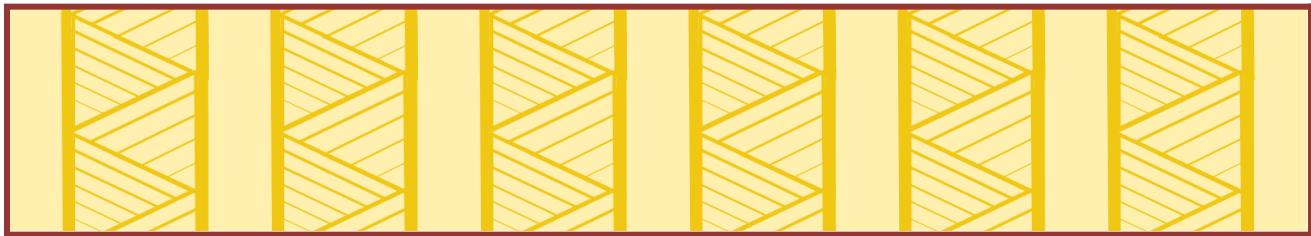


Cherokee Central Schools

2024-2025 Annual Report



The Path We Walk

Physical Address:

264 Ravensford Drive

Cherokee, NC 28719

Purpose

This document provides a description of the educational programs and activities at Cherokee Central Schools for the school year 2024-2025. Cherokee Central Schools utilizes the annual report in various ways, including compliance (Bureau of Indian Education) and public relations.

Cherokee Central Schools

Every Brave, Every Day



Summer Leadership Team Slogan for the 2024-2025 school year "Every Brave, Every Day."

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.

School Website

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

Cherokee Central Schools

School Board 2024-2025

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	Micah Swimmer
Wolfetown	Member	Roberta Toineeta
	EBCI Tribal Council Representative	Michael Stamper



Superintendent Consie Girty, Kristina Hyatt, Roberta Toineeta, Dr. Jennifer Thompson, Melanie Lambert, Tara Reed-Cooper, Micah Swimmer

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 Boundary 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, associate superintendent, and fourteen directors. The central office administrators facilitate programs in special education, talented and gifted, data and testing, curriculum and instruction, staff development, Cherokee language and culture, human resources, finances, facilities, custodial, child nutrition services, information technology, PK/preschool programs, Career and Technical Education, ESTEAM, security, and community affairs.

A principal leads each of the schools and is assisted by two assistant principals. Principals at each school have formed and rely on a school leadership team. Each school is responsible for working with stakeholders to create a School Improvement Plan to provide continuous improvement and leadership in creating a positive school culture.

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 177 instructional days for students, and it included teacher workdays. See Appendix > 2024-2025 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 22-23, 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.

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 the previous year. The school was also awarded the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAHMSA) grant that provided the school with four positions that include an MTSS Coordinator, an Attendance Coordinator and two Mental Health Support Specialists. Other minor grants that support students and teachers include the Data Literacy Grant partnership with National Library of Medicine (NLM) and the United Southern and Eastern Tribes (USET) as well as the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant that includes Birth to 5, Elementary, and Secondary grant money to support student literacy which got extended for two years and will end in 2025-2026.

Enrollment

According to the Native American Student Information System (NASIS) on the last day of school (05/23/2025), Cherokee Central Schools had 1,407 students enrolled, which is four more students than last year.

Please see Table 1 for the breakdown by grade of the students on the last day. There is a lot of influx and mobility that occurs throughout the year, with 1465 students enrolled at some point during the 24-25 school year, which is a lot less than the student mobility of the 23-24 school year, which saw 1504 enrolled at some point. The American Indian or Alaskan Native percentage of students enrolled increased this year to 94.59%

Table I. May 23, 2025 Ending Enrollment - All Students, All Schools							
Grade	Enrollment		Grade	Enrollment		Grade	Enrollment
PK	58		4	119		9	112
K	80		5	116		10	101
1	96		6	112		11	86
2	105		7	106		12	101
3	112		8	103		Total	1407

Academic Programs and Services

The HOPE Center and Pre-K:

The HOPE Center includes: a home-based FACE (Family and Child Education) program, infant-toddler services, preschool special education services, a center-based FACE classroom, three Pre-K classrooms, and a FACE Adult Education classroom.

The HOPE Center director oversees the Pre-K classrooms (three classrooms of 4 year old students, and one FACE classroom with 3 and 4 year old students). The HOPE

Center has a waiting list for the Pre-K program. The HOPE Center director also serves as the FACE Coordinator, and the Preschool Special Education Coordinator.

This year the HOPE Center/ FACE staff planned and held monthly FACE Family Circle Nights each month beginning in August. These meetings included a meal for families, guest speakers, cultural activities, and a time for family fellowship. Pre-K classroom staff also planned monthly family activities, which allowed parents to come into the classrooms during the school day and participate in an activity with their child. The FACE Adult Education classroom was open and available for parents working on education/career goals. FACE Parent Enrichment staff also worked with families of children ages 0-5 on child development, language and culture, and family goals.

The 24/25 school year was a very exciting one for our Pre-K students! We started the school year with newly installed raised garden beds for each Pre-K classroom. Each classroom customized their raised beds with plantings of their choosing. In September our students participated in school bus safety training provided by the Cherokee Boys Club. In November, the CHS HOSA class held a Teddy Bear Clinic with our Pre-K students. Our classrooms traveled to Darnell Farms in October and May to learn about farming. We were also able to invite several guest speakers to each classroom throughout the school year to share knowledge of Cherokee language and culture with our youngest students. We capped off the academic year by participating in an embryology project in partnership with the EBCI Cooperative Extension Office-each of our Pre-K classrooms incubated and hatched baby chicks. It was a very meaningful learning experience for all our students.

Our 50 Pre-K graduates also participated in a Graduate Walk in May with our CHS Seniors-many of our 2025 Seniors were Pre-K students during the 2011-2012 school year. Our youngest and oldest students share a very special connection!



The HOPE Center also provided developmental screenings for children enrolled in childcare centers and homes across the Qualla Boundary. In addition to screening children, the therapists provided services in the community to students with IFSPs and IEPs, and also served students on campus at the HOPE Center for families who chose to bring students to CCS for services. HOPE Center staff and other providers also provided speech/language and developmental screenings, hearing screenings, vision screenings, and dental screenings for all students enrolled in Pre-K/FACE classrooms. The HOPE Center received 55 referrals from childcare centers, pediatricians, and parents during the 24/25 school year. After receiving the referrals, HOPE Center therapists started the process of meeting with parents, and then evaluating (with parental permission) children for possible educational needs. This included evaluations for speech/language deficits, developmental delays, fine motor/sensory concerns, and autism. For the 24/25 school year, 95 children ages 0-2.5 were screened. 17 children were enrolled in early intervention services during the 24/25 school year. Also, 168 students ages 2 1/2 - 5 were screened. 27 of those students qualified for special education services.

In addition, transition services were provided for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). Parents of children enrolled in the Children's Developmental Services Agency (CDSA) with IFSPs had transition meetings with HOPE Center staff six months before their child's 3rd birthday. Students with IEPs entering kindergarten for the 25/26 school year also had transition meetings held in April to facilitate the transition from preschool to kindergarten. These meetings were made up of teams that included: HOPE Center staff, Kindergarten staff, SPED staff, and parents. All students transitioning to Kindergarten were offered classroom tours for students and parents, facilitated by HOPE Center and CES staff.

The Home-Based FACE Program completed Family Transition Plans for 8 families at the end of the school year, and those students will attend Cherokee Pre-K for the 25/26 school year.

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

Table II. Hope Center Enrollment, 2024-2025			
FACE Program	Infant Toddler Program	Preschool Program (SPED)	Pre-K Program
44 (Family Enrichment)	17	46	58
16 (FACE Classroom)			

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 288 students in grades K-12, with 37 of them receiving services in speech, language only during 2023-2024. Disability categories of the children served are found in Table III.

Table III. Disability Categories, 2024-2025.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• traumatic brain injury• autism• multiple disabilities• emotional disabled• intellectually disabled• specific learning disabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hearing impairment• speech impairment• visual impairment• developmental delay• other health impairment
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Table IV. Ending Enrollment in Special Education, 2024-2025.

Preschool	K-5	6-12
46	170	156

Cherokee Central Schools provide individualized services for students eligible for special education. Services include the continuum of services ranging from inclusion, to resource services, as well as services for those with more severe cognitive delays that require intensive services in a self contained classroom. The

Department and IEP teams make every effort to ensure that students with different abilities have access and are provided instruction with their non-disabled peers and served in the least restrictive environment.

Services for special education students are dependent on the needs of each student. Some students require inclusion support in the general education classroom, for others, their services may be provided in the special education teacher's classroom during a portion of the day, while others need more intensive support and for longer periods of time. There are students who just need a safe space to calm down and are able to return to the general education classroom quickly. To support students who have severe emotional and behavioral needs, the Special Education department provides an alternative learning program, Pathseekers, for students in middle and high school who need intensive behavior support. The program consists of two teachers, a paraprofessional, a skill builder and a social worker.

The district also provides related services in the areas of occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language services, deaf and hard of hearing 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 can access the curriculum and succeed.

The Department works closely with the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children (TEACCH) to implement their methods as delivered and supported by the UNC School of Medicine at UNC Chapel Hill and participate in training provided by the regional centers throughout North Carolina. Due to student needs, we are also working with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst to support our efforts. Staff attend workshops and conferences to stay updated and abreast of any changes to special education law and guidelines to remain compliant.

The department, based on a student's need for additional services, provides extended school year services during the summer to support student learning and reduce the educational loss.

Monthly, our Parent Liaison hosts Student with Unique Needs (S.U.N.) meetings designed to educate parents and family members on a number of topics related to special education, as well as help them connect to community resources. To support parents, we bring in community partners and local agencies to inform parents and families on how to access the services during the school year and once they graduate.

The Special Education department provides a special education teacher and teaching assistant for each grade level, K-12. The department also consists of one school psychologist, a transition specialist, an employment educator, a behavioral health lead, a parent liaison, a special education NASIS document manager, several related services team members, and an administrative assistant, in addition to the director.

Each year, staff members receive Autism training, CPI training or are re-certified in non-violent crisis intervention to learn decision making skills, de-escalate techniques and are able to directly intervene in a crisis situation. We also provide this training to bus drivers, cafeteria staff, resource officers, and other staff who may need it. Oftentimes, we bring in the Autism Society, Vocational Rehabilitation and Westbridge Vocational who provide our staff, parents, and students with a variety of services.

We continue to increase community partnerships that provide our students with opportunities to work off campus. During this time, the employment educator goes with the students to support them while they learn valuable job skills. Allowing them to work while in school, sometimes resulting in permanent positions once they graduate. Students have been able to go to the Cherokee Animal Clinic, The Cherokee Boys Club, in addition to other locations on the Boundary, in addition to participating in transit training.

Inspired by a love of agriculture, special education students gained life skills by growing plants using hydroponics. They grew tomatoes, kale, lettuce and herbs. Students used language skills, gained social skills and were able to eat what they grew.

Our students participate in various field trips to enhance the learning process and create real life skills. This year, students fished, visited local areas and came together for lunch that the SRO officers provided as a way to get to know them.



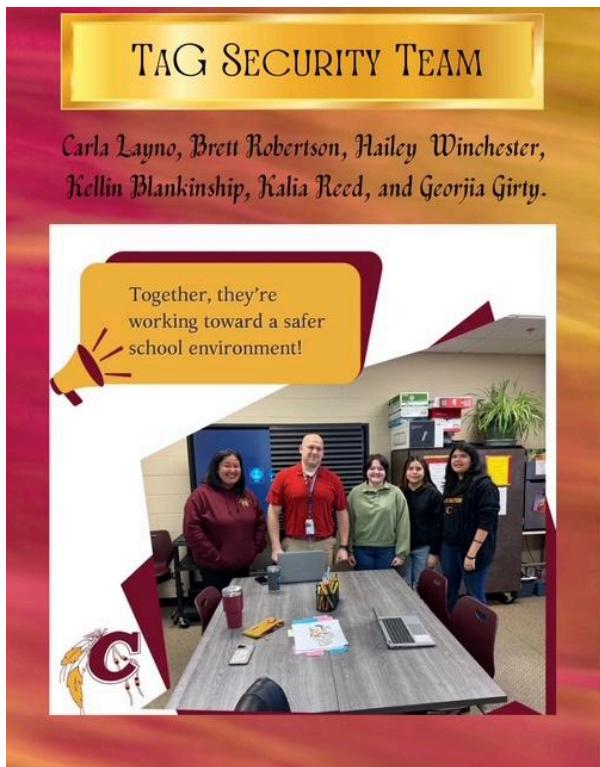
Talented and Gifted (TaG) Program

The TaG program currently serves 60 students, with two teachers and one paraprofessional. Students were served using both a push-in and pull-out approach. Students benefited from enrichment activities including a study on convection currents, school safety, careers, while some participated in Smart Tank and in school productions.

Students represented their fellow students, school and community proudly by placing third in Smart Tank and won \$200.00, while another group of students worked with the school security team to share concerns and met with them to make their school environment safer.

**Table V. Ending Enrollment in Talented and Gifted (TaG) Program,
2024-2025**

4-5	6-8	9-12
17	23	20



English Learners (EL)

We have less than <1% of our students that qualify district wide for services with 3 being from CES, 3 from CMS, and 6 from CHS. Students showed improvement as having a full time EL Coordinator has been very helpful.

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 and a Cherokee History Class. 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 2025. The average enrollment for the two week program was 107 students and about 150 signed up. The classes offered were pottery making, storytelling and writing, soapstone carving, native plants, sewing 18th century clothing, traditional food cooking, art, beadwork, designing gourds, corn shuck doll making, paper basketry, round-reed mats w/ Cherokee dyes and the making of pucker toe moccasins. The camp theme was Cherokee Women: Keepers of Tradition and different community members came in daily to talk to the 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 and Level III.

The Cultural Department also offered professional development to teachers. The Cultural Department offered staff the opportunity to participate in bus trips to the communities (required for new teachers). During the Cultural Day of Caring teachers engaged in activities with other teachers during the sacred path time.



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.

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 *Jungle Book* and the *The Addams Family*, in May 2024 for the community.

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, Auto Mechanics, Business, Agriculture, Technology, Broadcast Journalism, Graphic Design, Python Programming, Drone Technology, JROTC, Wood Shop 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. This year Cherokee High School established a new SkillsUSA chapter and a Competitive Drones team.

This year saw an increase in the number of credentials obtained by Cherokee High School students. The overall number of credentials obtained was 24. Included in these credentials was our first Entrepreneurship Small Business credential recipient. This coincided with the largest number of CTE concentrators in a graduating class at 24 students. Many of these students were also concentrators in multiple pathways.

Cherokee Middle School also offers a variety of Career and Technical Education courses. In addition to these courses, Cherokee Middle School launched its E-Sports After-school club, which met on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Table VI. Middle School Career and Technical Education Courses, 2024-2025

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring Career Decisions• Introduction to Agriculture• Carpentry• Broadcast Journalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Computers• Exploring Personal Finance,• Graphics Design 1• Introduction to Healthcare• 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

E-STEAM Camp

The CCS summer E-STEAM Camp ran for two weeks in June of 2024. The CES camp is designed for elementary students in grades rising 2nd through rising fifth grade. The camp provides them with an exciting opportunity to engage in interactive and enriching activities. STEAM activities allowed children to learn, grow, and explore new modes of thinking and doing. STEAM camp helps boost academic performance and build confidence, creativity, and resiliency. The students participated in hands-on projects, creative expression, cultural activities, outdoor exploration, farming, and enjoyed multiple field trips.



The CMS camp is designed for CMS students that have a passion, or curiosity for STEAM related topics and activities, combined with an interest in how these activities can lead to potential career opportunities. Students enjoyed several field trips to local businesses, greenhouses, cultural sites, combined with hands-on activities to help them discover potential interests in the STEAM fields.

Table VII. ESTEAM Camp, Number of Attendees, Summer 2025.

CES	CMS
85	28



Mobile Unit

Cherokee Preservation Foundation also supported The Science House to do lessons at Cherokee Central Schools and model the use of science equipment and engaging lessons. Pre and post-evaluations were conducted and 2 opportunities in each school. The lessons were Water Purification, DNA Dilemma, Vaping, Heart Rate and Hydrology (2 days) and they all aligned with content standards.



Jason Carter from The Science House conducting a session in a Biology classroom

STEM-E Conferences

For the second year the fall and spring STEM-E conferences were held virtually and were 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.

Assessment and Accountability

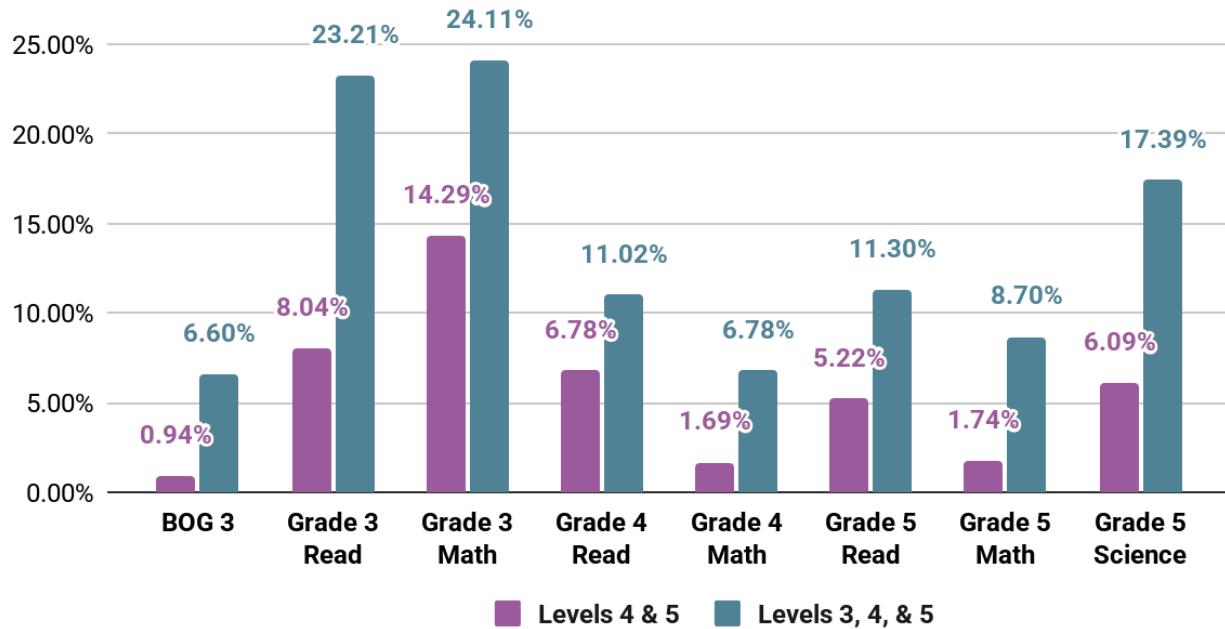
Although the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) implemented its Standards, Assessment, Accountability System during 2019-2020, the Cherokee Central Schools school board requested a waiver from the BIE assessments. CCS has operated under the waiver every year so far and continued to do so for the 2024-2025 School year. CCS has 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 and are a part of the school's federal determination.

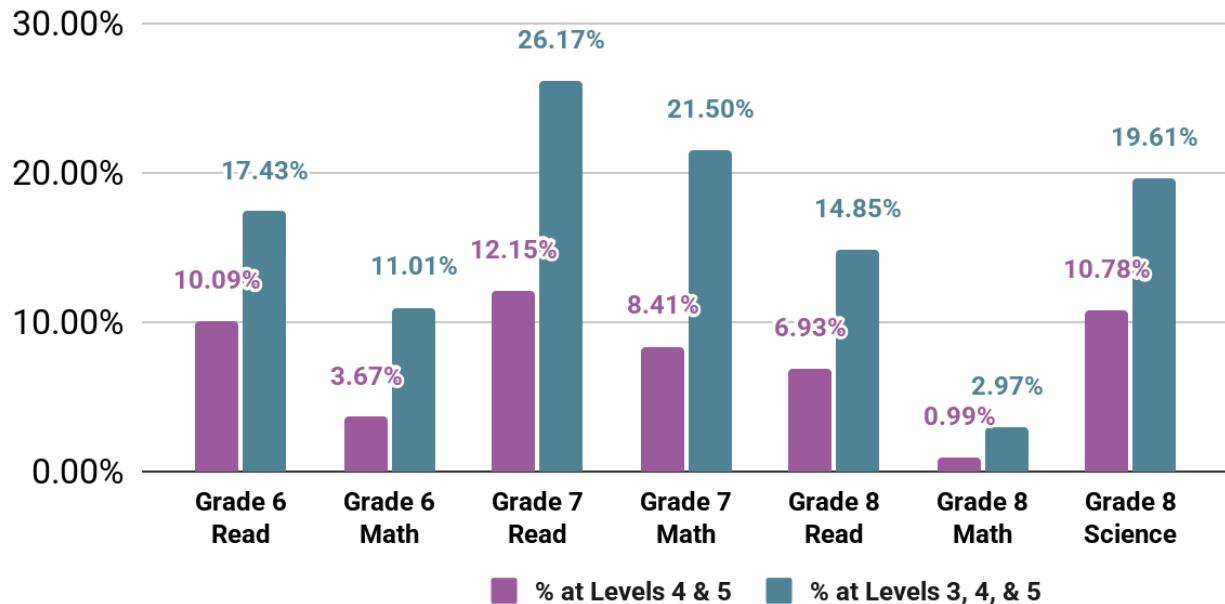
Results from state assessments used for federal (BIE/DOE) accountability are found in the following charts.

Cherokee Elementary School 2024-2025 End of Grade Proficiency

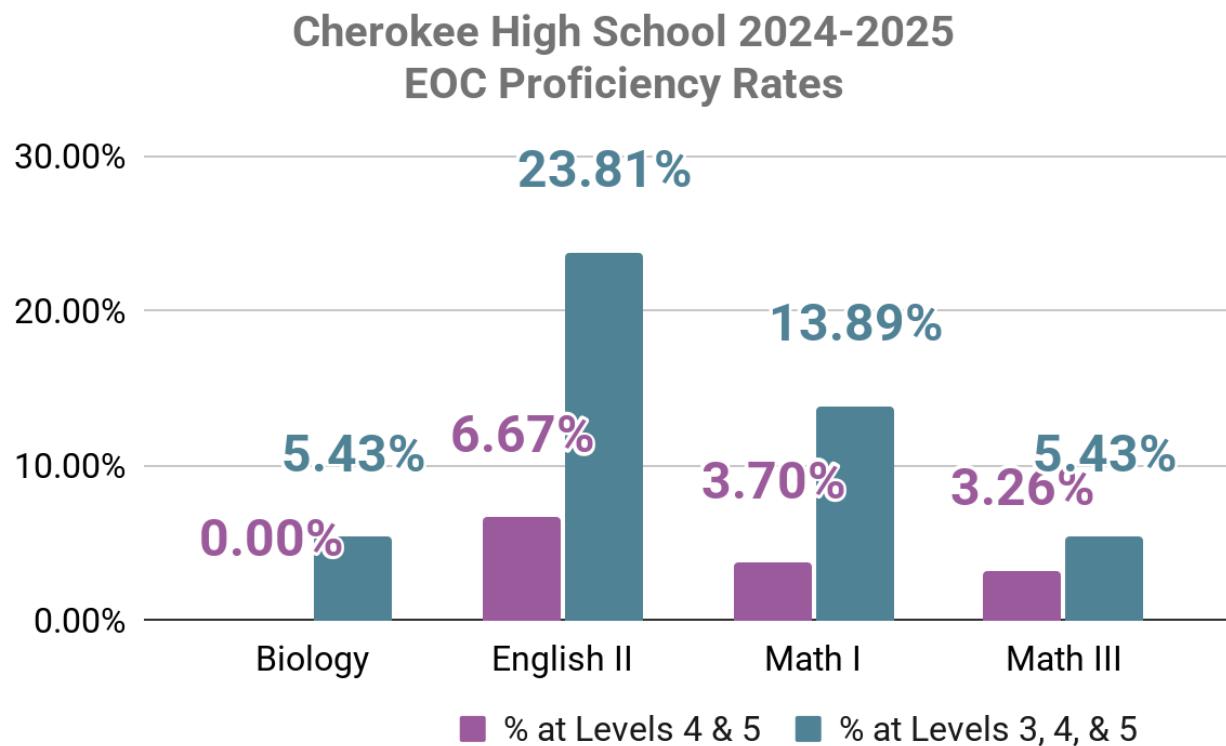


Cherokee Elementary School saw positive gains 3rd grade reading and math from the previous year with large gains coming from 3rd grade math. The 5th grade science curriculum has changed state wide and so test scores were renormed.

Cherokee Middle School 2024-2025 End Of Grade Proficiency



Cherokee Middle School saw cohort gains for almost all subjects and grades, and gains in from 6th, 7th, & 8th grade reading scores as well as 7th grade math scores. The 8th grade science curriculum has changed state wide and so test scores were renormed this year with some delays in score results.



Cherokee High School minor gains from the previous year in all subjects on the End of Course assessments. The Biology science curriculum was changed state wide and so test scores were renormed this year with some delays in score results.

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 2024-2025 assessment has doubled over the last two years to 43 students taking the assessment. However, the number meeting the College Reportable Benchmark decreased significantly.

Achieve 3000

Students showed great engagement and Lexile growth in Achieve300 this year. The table below indicates the average Lexile growth and other data points in Achieve 3000.

2024-2025	CES	CMS	CHS
Average Lexile Growth	95	98	143
# of completed lessons	13,361	12,592	12,491
Avg. Activities per student	40	38	31
Average Activity Score	53	72	77
% of students on track for College and Career Readiness	31	17	37

Table VIII. Achieve 3000 data points for 2024-2025

The Achieve 3000 monthly news article featured Cherokee Central Schools and their work with best practices regarding Achieve 3000, effective strategies, and PLC teams. Teachers looked at data, identified a strategy to address learning and continued the process.

mCLASS

Cherokee Elementary School teachers complete mCLASS reading assessments for students in grades K-5 and for students with disabilities in grades K-5.

On the Beginning of Year (BOY) assessment, 18% of the Kindergarten students assessed were on or above grade level. At the End of Year (EOY) assessment, 48% of students were on or above grade level.

In grade 1, 13% of students were at or above grade level on the BOY, and by the EOY the number had increased to 26% at or above grade level.

Grade 2 saw a 6% increase from BOY (31%) to EOY (37%) of students at or above grade level.

Professional Development

Professional Development (PD) is a critical component of the continuous improvement process. Cherokee Central Schools continues to adapt and grow to enhance the learning environment. Training topics varied depending upon the needs of each school and individual teachers. Schools focused on literacy, social and emotional learning, culturally responsive instruction and blended learning strategies throughout the year. Some topics included curriculum pacing guide development, forms of assessment, literacy, mentoring, providing tiered instructional support, team building, data-driven instruction, managing stress, using digital resources, IEP training, and others. School leadership uses data gathered from classroom snapshots to determine professional development areas of need. Teachers also have input on their PD needs using an end of year survey.

Data from the teacher working conditions survey indicated the need for training on culturally responsive instruction. Therefore, each school participates in learning sessions on culturally relevant teaching strategies quarterly. In addition to instructional strategies, sessions related to the Cherokee language and culture were also provided. We offer in-depth training to teachers during the summer months that include Foundations of Native Education, Community-Based Education (CBE), and CBE Instructional Approaches. Teachers complete online courses asynchronously and a 3-day in-person training. This training includes brainstorming curriculum units with community knowledge keepers, integrating Cherokee Language, and a field trip experience to sacred sites in the school community.

CCS continues to support teachers in participating in out-of-house professional development and advanced certifications. Using Title II funding, CCS was able to continue supporting these teachers with the National Board certification process.

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)

Students returned to Cherokee Elementary School in August 2024 for in-person instruction. All students in grades 1–5 began each day with a healthy breakfast in the school cafeteria. Due to space limitations, kindergartners ate breakfast in their classrooms. Grade-level lunch blocks were carefully scheduled to ensure cafeteria capacity was not exceeded.

In September, our 5th graders participated in Kuwohi Connection Day on Kuwohi Mountain. They learned about the importance of Kuwohi and participated in traditional dances.

In October, our area was significantly impacted by Hurricane Helene, which disrupted school operations and left many families without power and internet. In response, our school community came together to collect and distribute essential items to support others throughout Western North Carolina who were affected by the storm.



To foster a positive school climate, Cherokee Elementary hosted several staff morale-building activities throughout the year. These included an I-ya decorating contest, a staff Halloween costume contest, the “12 Days of Christmas” spirit dress-up, and a Thanksgiving luncheon with strong family participation. In May, staff enjoyed a catered lunch provided by Granny’s Kitchen.



The elementary school hosted its Healthy Halloween event for students this year. This is an annual 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 is proud to have one Assistant Principal and five National Board Certified teachers. Additionally, 15 teachers and two Assistant Principals completed the two-year LETRS training, which focuses on the Science of Reading and provides educators with a deep understanding of literacy and language development. Teachers in grades K-2 also received training in Heggerty and Fundations to strengthen foundational reading instruction.



Our core curriculum includes reading, mathematics, science, social studies, health, physical education, art, music, and Cherokee language. We continue to prioritize social-emotional learning to meet the evolving needs of our students. One highlight was a visit from therapy dogs for our second graders, which was so successful that a continued partnership is planned for next year.

A key school-wide initiative was the integration of Cherokee language into daily instruction. Each grade level had a dedicated Cherokee language instructor who co-taught and led lessons. This consistent exposure resulted in a noticeable increase in students' use of the language throughout the school.



Technology-supported blended learning remains a focus, with teachers incorporating digital tools to personalize instruction. We put an emphasis on training teachers in Heggerty and Fundations in K-2. These programs teach students the foundational skills needed to be successful readers.

This year marked the fourth year of MTSS implementation at CES. Our two interventionists worked diligently to support both students and teachers, serving 89 Tier III students in grades 1–5. These students participated in small-group instruction several times a week. Mid-Year (MOY) to End-of-Year (EOY) data showed growth in Lexile levels for these students, demonstrating the effectiveness of these interventions.

The 5th grade EC class created a Cherokee language book featuring key people and events in Cherokee history. They presented their work in a virtual book talk with a classroom in Virginia, discussing Cherokee culture and values.

Before returning to school, CCS hosted a back to school bash for all students Pre-K -12th grade. Students and their families were able to meet their teachers, explore their classrooms, and have an evening filled with activities, vendors, and fun.

In the fall, teachers held parent conferences to discuss academic progress, followed by student-led conferences in January that encouraged students to reflect on and take ownership of their learning. Kindergarten registration night was held on May 1, 2025, allowing new families to meet teachers and explore classrooms.

Our Physical Education department hosted Field Day on May 1st, giving students a chance to engage in outdoor games and friendly competition.

This year, students had the opportunity to attend after school clubs. Numerous clubs were offered during 1st and 2nd semester and we had over 170 students attend.

Council members visited CES during Read Across America Week. They read books to our students and the students had the opportunity to ask questions.

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 who need more support emotionally and behaviorally than what is traditionally offered within a regular classroom setting.

CES students were able to participate in spirit weeks throughout the year that were Anti-Bullying, Christmas, and Dr. Seuss themed. CES also hosted two Book Fairs; one in the fall and the other in the spring.

In March, CES presented its third annual musical, *Disney's Aladdin*, with nearly 100 students participating. There were two performances for staff and students and one for the community—all of which received outstanding support and attendance.

To end the year, CES was able to celebrate their student's successes by holding 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. CES was also able to offer STEAM Camp for students in grades 1-4th.

Cherokee Middle School (CMS)

Core courses for Cherokee Middle School include reading, mathematics, science, social studies, health, physical education, and Cherokee Language, as well as several electives. Students are asked to take a different elective each 9 weeks in order to introduce them to new classes. Band and Performing Arts are year long classes. Cherokee Middle School is blessed with having some of the most talented students. Projects that they work on during the school year really do show off their talents.



8th grade social studies ship project.



7th and 8th grade fly tying elective.

During the year, Cherokee Middle School students responded well to teacher efforts to implement Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports in all three grades. Incentive trips are planned at the end of each 9 weeks.

Cherokee Middle School's musical theater students performed *Braves on Broadway* for the community in December 2024 and *Grease* in May to close out the school year.

Teachers at Cherokee Middle School, continue to infuse culture in their classrooms through the use of vocabulary, word walls, and each month there is a schoolwide cultural event that correlates with the cultural theme each month. Teachers are required to share any lesson plans that incorporate Cherokee culture into CMS Shared Drive. We are asking our staff to use as much Cherokee language in the classroom as possible.

All three grades averaged at least 1.5 or more years in growth for the school year in mathematics based on previous and current EOG quantile scores. 6th and 8th grade ELA saw over a year's growth in EOG Lexile scores. We saw major improvements in Lexile scores each month as students utilized Achieve3000 and other reading resources.

Cherokee Middle School saw the benefits of having a Mental Health Team in place; consisting of the School Guidance Counselor, School Social Worker, and the addition of a K-12 Mental Health Behavior Support Specialist and Student Support Specialist. Students received the additional support of the team on campus, rather than having to seek the same support from outside organizations in times past. We also have in place an Alternative Classroom. The Alternative Classroom is designed for students that need an alternative setting or have some discipline issues that need to be addressed.

Cherokee Middle School started Co-Teaching this past year in all 3 grade levels for math and 6th grade ELA and felt it was a great success. We are continuing to do this during the 2025-2026 school year and hope to expand to all 3 grade levels for ELA the following year.

With the help of the CTE Department Director at Cherokee Central Schools, Cherokee Middle School was able to begin implementing several high school electives such as Health Occupation, Band, Animal and Plant Science, Drones, Digital Art, and Carpentry. These courses are designed to introduce students to new classes.

MTSS is continuing to give support to struggling students in math, reading and behavior issues. We have 2 teachers assigned to MTSS and they have been a tremendous help in working with our Tier 2 and Tier 3 kids. They have also helped identify students who may be in need of an IEP.

CMS Athletics

In the 2024-25 school year, Cherokee Middle School reclaimed the 2025 Conference Championship Cup, surpassing Hayesville by accumulating the most points across all sports: Volleyball, Cross Country, Basketball, Wrestling, Track & Field, Baseball, and Softball. This accomplishment is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our athletes and coaches.

In particular, our Volleyball team had an outstanding season, finishing undefeated and securing the top spot in the conference. Our Girls' Cross Country and Girls' Basketball teams also clinched first-place finishes, showcasing the depth of talent and teamwork within our school. As we look forward to the upcoming school year, we are excited to announce that Soccer will become a conference sport, expanding opportunities for our athletes to compete and excel. Additionally our conference will be growing with the addition of Rosman, bringing our total number of schools to eight: Andrews, Cherokee, Hayesville, Hiwassee Dam, Murphy, Robbinsville, Rosman and Swain. This expansion will bring new challenges and opportunities for our teams.



Cherokee High School (CHS)

Cherokee High School's Class of 2025 graduated 100 students, marking the largest graduating class in our school's history. The Graduation Rate was 76% and Dropout

Rate of 3% (9th grade - 12th grade). Earning a CHS diploma represents four years of focused effort across academic, cultural, technical, and personal development domains. CHS graduates successfully completed core academic requirements in math, English, history, and science, as well as culturally relevant courses including Cherokee I & II, Cherokee History, Cherokee Immersion, Woodcarving, and Cherokee Arts & Crafts. Students engaged in career and technical education (CTE) across a variety of fields, such as health science, JROTC, agriculture, family and consumer sciences, drone technology, Python coding, auto tech, and graphic design. Physical education offerings included health and PE, strength and conditioning, and adaptive PE. Students also had opportunities to explore their creative talents through musical theater, visual and performing arts, marching and concert band, dance, and ceramics.

Through dual enrollment partnerships with Southwestern Community College, Western Carolina University, and Appalachian State University, 25 graduates earned a total of 35 college-level credits while attending CHS. Advanced academic opportunities were further supported through honors-level courses, Advanced Placement (AP) options, North Carolina Virtual Public School, North Carolina School of Science and Math, Edgenuity, and Edmentum. College and career readiness were built into the CHS experience through daily advisory focused on goal-setting, literacy enrichment, social-emotional learning, and team building. Events like the Real Life Expo and CTE Career Fair helped students explore future possibilities within the Tribe and region, while the Counseling Department organized college visits and career exposure experiences. This year also marked the pilot implementation of our Graduation Portfolios initiative, which had a remarkable 98% completion rate and served as a capstone experience for seniors to reflect on their growth and future goals.

CHS remains committed to supporting the whole student. Our full-time mental health therapist, school social worker, student support groups, and dedicated counseling team provided wraparound services to ensure students were emotionally and socially prepared for postsecondary life. Students with unique learning or behavioral needs had access to the Creative Learning Center (our dropout prevention program), the Alternative Classroom (a setting used as an alternative to long-term suspension), and the Pathseekers Program (for students with IEPs and behavior plans).

Student achievement and involvement remain central to the Brave experience. Among this year's graduates, seven students signed to play collegiate athletics, one earned the prestigious Morehead-Cain Scholarship, and two earned professional certifications through SCC. Four students were part of the Talented and Gifted Program, 32 were

inducted into the National Honor Society, and 35 graduated with academic honors, including 18 with honors, 7 with high honors, and 10 with highest honors. Twenty-two students completed at least one CTE pathway, and seven completed two. Many graduates participated in student government, athletics, performing arts, service projects, and cultural activities throughout their time at CHS.

Student travel and cultural exchange enriched learning through experiences such as the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference in Spokane, Washington; the Spanish Club's travel to Switzerland and Italy; and the CTE Career, Academics, and Culture Club's trip to Oahu, Hawaii to explore economics, education, and culture. Graduates from the Class of 2025 are pursuing a wide range of postsecondary paths, including college enrollment, military service, entry into the workforce, apprenticeships, and gap year opportunities. Students were accepted to over 30 institutions, including UNC Chapel Hill, NC State University, the University of Michigan, SCAD, the University of Kansas, Haskell Indian Nations University, and the United States Marine Corps, among many others.



Senior Class of 2025 in cap and gowns

CHS Athletics

CHS proudly offers and supports a wide range of athletic programs, including volleyball, cheerleading, men's and women's soccer, football, wrestling (men's and women's), men's and women's basketball, cross country, indoor and outdoor track & field, men's and women's golf, baseball, and softball.

What a Year for Our Braves and Lady Braves!

It was a remarkable year across our athletic programs, highlighted by historic achievements and individual excellence. Six student-athletes committed to continue their athletic careers at the collegiate level.



Jessie Catolster-Hernandez (Senior), surrounded by teammates, signing to Wrestle Collegiately

By the Numbers:

- 2 State Championships
- 3 Regional Championships
- 10 SMC Championships (Individual & Team)
- 6 All-Region Individual Honors
- 3 SMC Players of the Year
- 1 SMC Volleyball Specialist of the Year

- 1 SMC Field Athlete of the Year
- 3 SMC Coaches of the Year
- 22 SMC All-Conference Individual Honors



2024-25 1A NCHSAA Women's Basketball State Champions

Program Highlights:

- **Volleyball:** Completed an undefeated regular season, secured back-to-back conference titles, and reached the NCHSAA Regional Championship for the first time in program history.
- **Women's Golf:** Achieved back-to-back conference championships.
- **Women's Basketball:** Captured both the regular season and conference titles, and earned their second consecutive **State Championship**.
- **Softball:** Advanced to the third round of the NCHSAA Playoffs—another first in program history. The team also won the CHS Principal's Highest Team GPA award for the 2024-25 school year!



2024-25 1A NCHSAA Girls Discus State Champion, Joscelyn Stamper & Coach Winchester

Several teams made deep postseason runs with notable appearances at the regional and state levels. We celebrate not only the victories but also the resilience, growth, and sportsmanship shown by all our student-athletes.

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 (CAC), Development, Public Relations, CCS Afterschool.

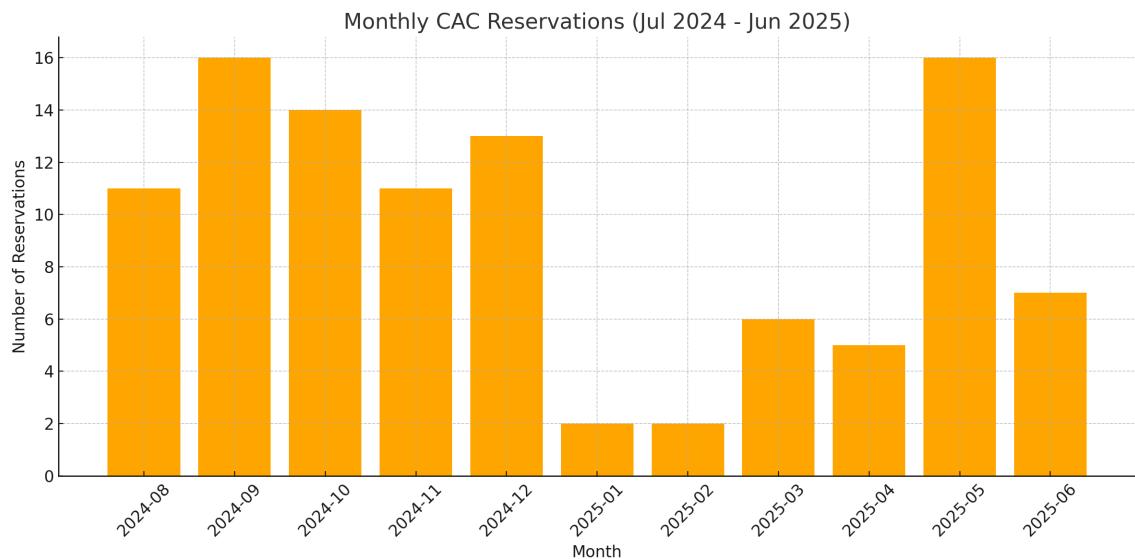
CAC Usage Annual Report (July 2024 – June 2025)

1. Overview

This report summarizes usage of the Cultural Arts Center (CAC) from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. It includes insights on monthly reservation patterns, departmental usage, event types, and space allocation.

2. Monthly Reservation Trends

The following chart illustrates the month-by-month reservation activity, highlighting seasonal usage patterns.



3. Usage by Location

Location	Number of Reservations
CAC Theater	62
Green Room	29
CAC Gallery/Lobby	10
Gather Place	1

****Key Insight**:** The CAC Theater was the most utilized space. However, some locations had designated alternative uses.

****Clarification**:** The CAC Gallery/Lobby and the Gathering Place were not available for general reservation throughout the year, as they were used full-time as alternative classroom spaces. Additionally, the Green Room has been relocated and is now housed within the Elementary School. Future reservations will reflect this update.

4. CAC Upgrades and Future Goals

As part of a long-term vision to enhance the usability of the Cultural Arts Center, a major upgrade to the theater's sound system began during the week of July 4, 2025. The previous system, which dated back to the 1990s and early 2000s, was outdated and limited in its capabilities.

The current upgrade will significantly improve the overall audio quality and ensure consistent sound delivery to every seat in the theater. It is also designed to be more user-friendly, enabling staff and students to operate the sound system for basic events without requiring a full-time sound technician.

Looking ahead to the 2025–2026 school year, the goal is to make the CAC more accessible and flexible. By simplifying core operations and making the space more

self-service oriented, more departments and programs will be empowered to utilize the CAC. This will not only improve scheduling efficiency but also allow students and staff to gain valuable experience with event technology.

CAC Print Studio

This year, the CA Print Studio has been instrumental in supporting our community's needs by fulfilling 99.2% which is 132 of the 133 requested jobs, accounting for more than 22,500 items. Our studio has been dedicated to providing high-quality print services, contributing to various aspects of educational and community activities. Below are examples of the diverse range of jobs completed:

1. Classroom Posters:

- Created vibrant and educational posters to enhance the learning environment in classrooms.

2. Cultural Material:

- Produced culturally significant materials to promote and preserve our heritage.

3. Envelopes:

- Printed custom envelopes for various administrative purposes.

4. Flyers:

- Designed and printed flyers for events, announcements, and community outreach.

5. Cumulative Folder:

- Printed custom folders for various administrative offices reclaiming a print job that was farmed out the previous year.

6. Athletic Awards:

- Provided printed awards for athletic achievements, recognizing the hard work and dedication of our students.

7. Athletic Specialty Awards:

- Created specialized awards for outstanding athletic performance and milestones.

8. Academic Awards for CHS and CMS:

- Produced academic awards for both Cherokee High School (CHS) and Cherokee Middle School (CMS), celebrating scholastic excellence.

Grants

Over the past year, the Cherokee Central Schools (CCS) Grants Team has written, managed, supported, and provided reporting for a total of 30 grants. The Community Affairs Department oversees the majority of these grants and collaborates closely with departments across CCS to ensure that all awarded funds are used responsibly and effectively for the benefit of our students and community.

This year, the department welcomed a Grants Coordinator, a key addition that has significantly strengthened our grants infrastructure. With this role in place, we have developed streamlined grant management procedures—including improved grant writing workflows, enhanced purchase processing, and strengthened compliance with funding guidelines.

The Grants Coordinator has partnered with CCS administration and staff to submit six new grant applications this year, with additional proposals in development for the coming months.

The use of federal and private grant funding remains vital to the long-term sustainability of CCS. We continue to prioritize efforts to:

- Build strong relationships with grantors;
- Participate in ongoing grant writing and management training opportunities; and
- Develop internal capacity to manage both existing and future funding effectively.

Through these efforts, CCS is committed to maximizing every opportunity to support and enrich the educational experience of our students.

Public Relations

Top Content Formats & Facebook Engagement Summary

Reporting Period: July 2024 – June 30, 2025

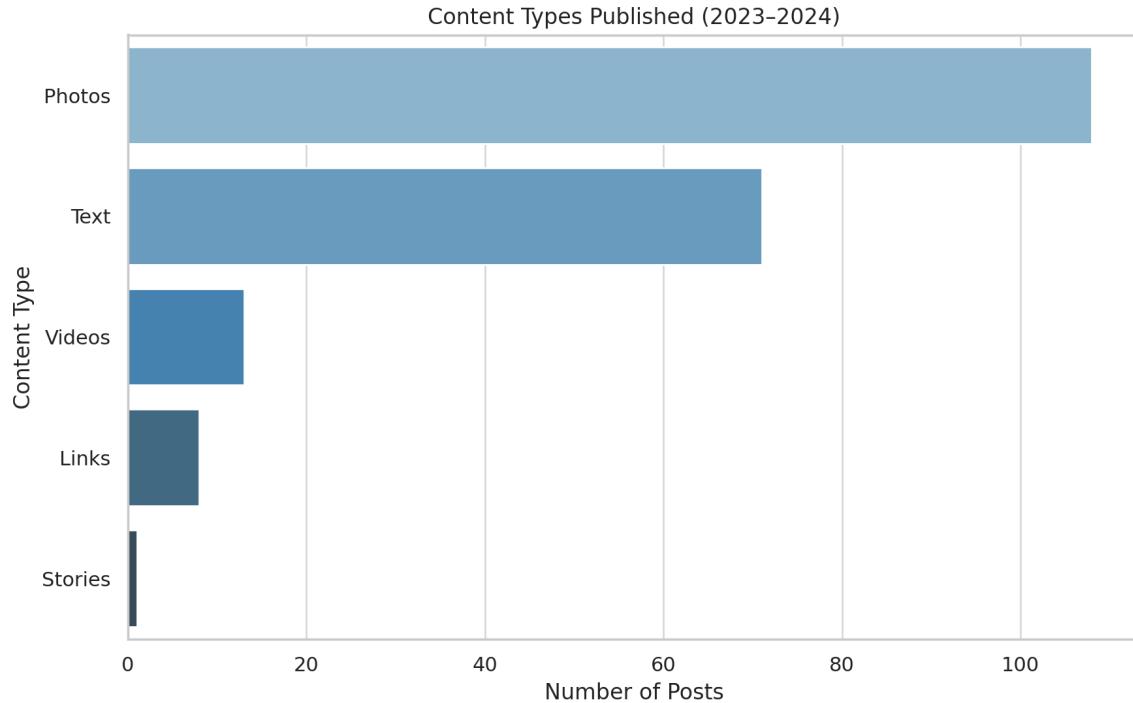
Content Publishing Overview

During the reporting period, the Community Affairs team published up to 200 pieces of content across various formats. While this reflects a slight 9.0% decrease compared to the previous year, it's important to note that strategic shifts in format and messaging yielded significantly stronger engagement outcomes.

Content Types Published:

- Photos: 108

- Text Posts: 71
- Videos: 13
- Links: 8
- Stories: 1



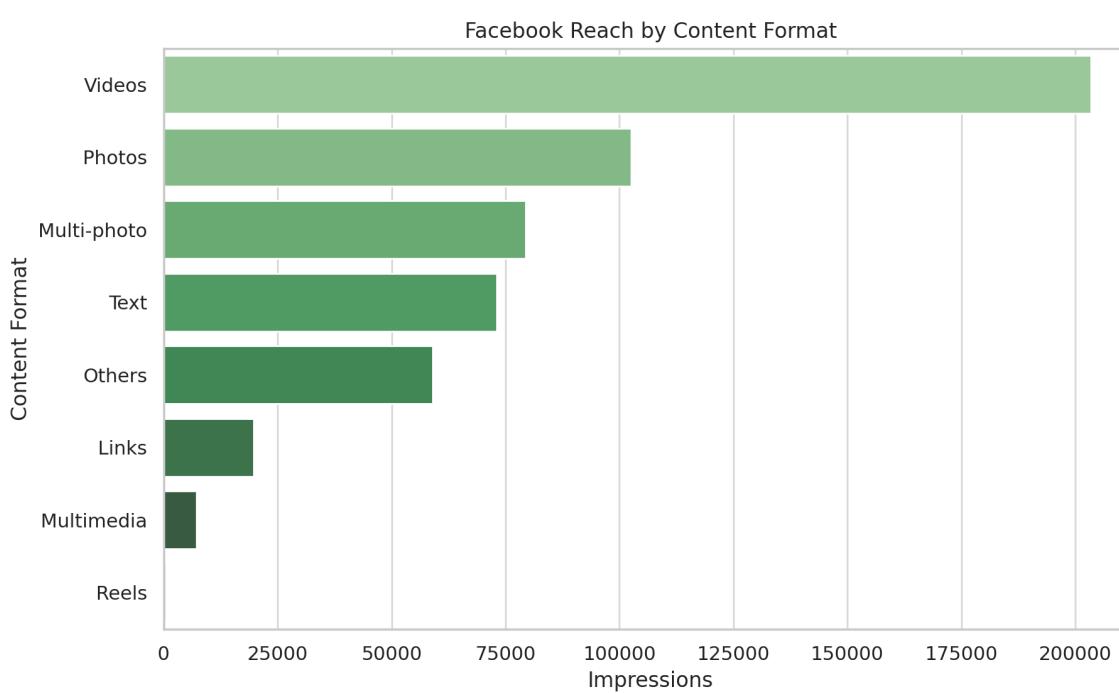
Facebook Reach Performance

Facebook emerged as a high-impact platform, delivering substantial engagement across multiple content types. Total reach increased by 46.7% compared to the prior year, validating our focus on multimedia-driven storytelling and visual content strategies.

Engagement by Content Type:

- Videos: 203,485 impressions
- Photos: 102,556 impressions
- Multi-photo Posts: 79,427 impressions
- Text Posts: 73,069 impressions
- Other Content: 58,953 impressions
- Links: 19,655 impressions
- Multimedia Posts: 7,165 impressions
- Reels: 479 views

Insight: Videos led all formats in reach, underscoring the importance of motion content in our social engagement strategy.

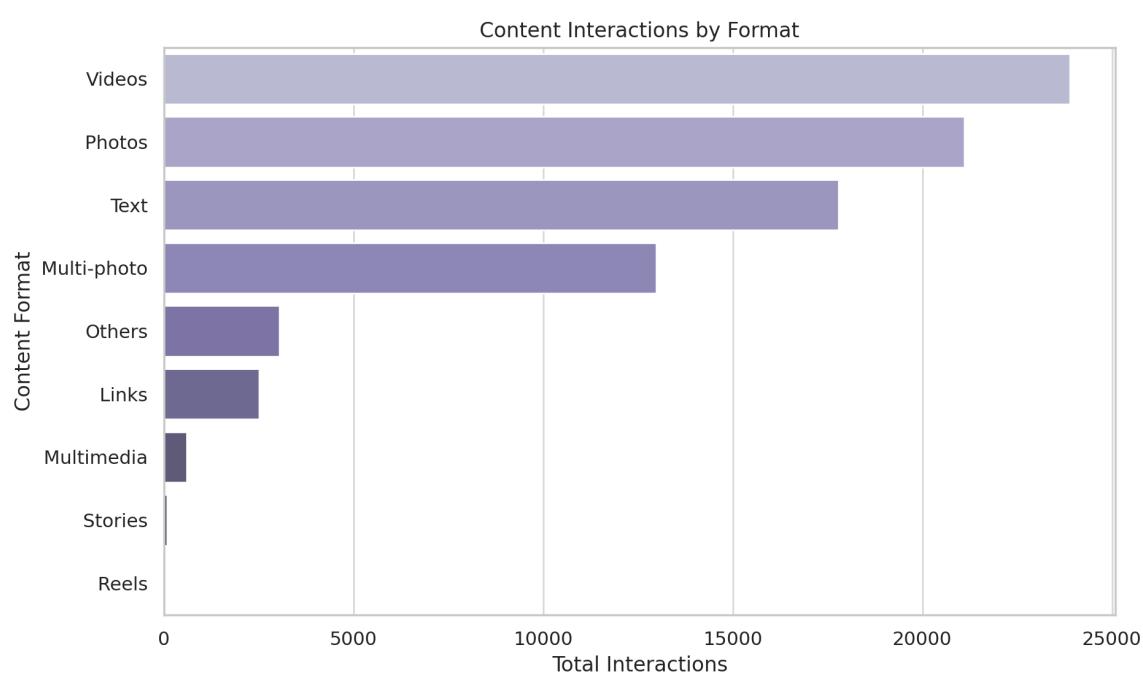


Overall Content Interaction Growth

Beyond reach, user engagement with our content also saw an impressive 37.4% increase, demonstrating improved audience resonance and content alignment with community interests.

Total Interactions by Format:

- Videos: 23,893
- Photos: 21,110
- Text Posts: 17,788
- Multi-photo Posts: 12,975
- Other Content Types: 3,035
- Links: 2,509
- Multimedia: 600
- Stories: 86
- Reels: 13



This year's strategic emphasis on video and photo content has directly contributed to a 46.7% increase in Facebook reach and a 37.4% rise in total user interactions. These results highlight Facebook as a cornerstone of our digital communications strategy and justify continued investment in:

- Multimedia content production (especially video)
- Boosted post campaigns for high-performing formats
- Staff training for video and photo storytelling

We recommend maintaining current publishing levels with a greater focus on video-first campaigns and seasonal storytelling to sustain and grow this engagement trajectory.

Goals for the 2025–2026 School Year

Building on the momentum from this year's successful digital engagement, Community Affairs is implementing several upgrades aimed at streamlining content production and amplifying the voices of students, staff, and the community.

Key Goals and Initiatives:

- Upgrade of Outdated Equipment:

Significant investments have been made to replace aging content production tools. These upgrades will enable faster turnaround times, higher-quality visuals, and greater efficiency for both scheduled and real-time storytelling efforts.

- Launch of a Dedicated Podcast Studio:

A fully equipped podcast studio will launch in the upcoming school year. This space will serve as a platform to feature:

- Students sharing academic and extracurricular stories
- Staff discussing educational initiatives, programs, and classroom highlights
- Community members offering insight into local culture, mentorship, and school partnerships

- Streamlined Content Workflows:

With improved equipment and dedicated creative spaces, we anticipate more consistent content output, reduced editing bottlenecks, and enhanced storytelling quality across all platforms.

- Growth on Emerging Platforms:

While our primary engagement has centered on Facebook, we maintained a small but steady presence on Instagram and YouTube. With the new upgrades in place, we plan to expand our activity on these platforms and explore the potential addition of other emerging channels to diversify our outreach.

These improvements reflect our commitment to transparency, innovation, and authentic communication. They also align with our broader mission to highlight the achievements, culture, and daily life of Cherokee Central Schools through modern digital tools.

Security

The security staff consists of thirteen security associates—eight full-time and four part-time when fully staffed. This team includes a supervisor and the director of security. Training for security personnel is ongoing, with a focus this school year on de-escalation techniques and CPR/first aid certification.

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

The security camera network will expand to 260 cameras, with some models housing four sensors each. These multi-sensor cameras reduce blind spots and enhance multi-channel monitoring capabilities. Video retention will be upgraded to 90 days per channel.

Axis Body-Worn Cameras are being deployed and made available to all security associates. Retention for these devices will be upgraded to 60 days. With the recent upgrade to our video management system (VMS), these cameras have been fully integrated, allowing for efficient tracking and investigation of stored footage.

Opengate weapons detection systems were purchased to deter and detect potential mass-casualty weapons that could be brought into school buildings.

Other key updates include the purchase of Polaris GEM e4 fully electric vehicles to support campus patrols with an environmentally friendly alternative to gas-powered vehicles. Utilizing the GEM e4 saves approximately \$2,000 annually in fuel costs.

All three school entrances are now equipped with security booths/houses to enhance monitoring of traffic, students, staff, and visitors. These are paired with Rohn communication towers, which expand surveillance coverage, improve radio communication, and provide enhanced lighting for entrances and parking lots.

The Say Something anonymous tip line is active for all middle and high school students and staff. This year, representatives successfully expanded coverage to include CES. CCS received 137 tips, of which 18 were categorized as life-safety issues.

The Guardian Shooter Detection System is fully deployed across campus, providing immediate alerts to SROs and administrators in the event of an active assailant.

The Rave Mobile Panic Button was used 183 times during the 2023–2024 school year to report incidents, drills, or important information. This tool provided immediate alerts to staff when needed.

The Security Department also maintains close working relationships with Tribal Emergency Management.

Other Programs

Inventory

The district uses One to One Plus Asset Management, which currently tracks 16,233 active and inactive assets. Each school and department within CCS uses this system to document assets from arrival on campus through their lifecycle to end-of-life removal.

Each school and department designates a staff member responsible for maintaining accurate asset data. These individuals play a critical role in audits and accountability.

Assets in the system are categorized with a status of active, in use, or inactive. Inactive status may indicate the asset is marked for disposal, recycling, or repurposing. This tracking process allows CCS to monitor asset lifespans and ensure proper removal from the system and ultimately from CCS premises.

Items such as furniture, kitchen appliances, sanitation machines, security cameras, mobile cabinetry, and other assets valued over \$100 with multiple years of useful life are also entered into One to One Plus.

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.

In an effort to enhance the efficiency of the department, autonomous floor cleaning machines have been tested throughout campus. One machine is currently in the purchasing process and implementation as soon as next school year.

Facilities

The facilities department maintains over 507,550 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 between 225-250 completed work requests each month which is the same as last year. These daily work orders are in addition to the preventative maintenance schedule. Monthly utility services include Duke Power, Cherokee Water and Sewer, PSNC Energy, Orkin Pest Control, Verizon, and Frontier.

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, and always ready to help wherever and whenever needed.

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. During 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.

The CCS Finance Department is working with the CBC to incorporate the finance system MUNIS to develop a more efficient, effective and expedient means of relaying and responding to financial inquiries and requests.

Human Resources

Cherokee Central Schools school year 2023 - 2024 employed 395 full time employees which is a decrease of 14 individuals from 409 last year.

Employee type	Number of positions/staff
Licensed Teachers	136
Teacher Assistants	60
Licensed Support Staff (counselors, social workers, media specialists, instructional facilitators, related services)	12
Licensed Administrators (principals, assistant principals, central office)	17
Instructors	18
Support Staff – non-licensed	152

Table VIII. Number of full-time positions by type at CCS.

The Human Resources department plays a crucial role in Cherokee Central School by managing its most valuable asset: Its employees. Its primary purpose is to oversee recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes to ensure CCS attracts and retains skilled talent.

All staff receive Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) training annually, as mandated by Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). This training aids in identifying situations in which our students may need additional assistance.

Background checks are also required of all employees, including volunteers, interns, and coaches. It is critical for the safety of all students that all employees are vetted extensively. These checks are performed in accordance with BIE federal standards and CCS policies.

Continuing education units (CEUs) are tracked for licensed staff to assist in the license renewal process. Assisting in this renewal process ensures all licenses remain up to date and helps retain our teachers.

The Human Resources staff is committed to creating an efficient, motivated, and satisfied workforce that contributes to Cherokee Central School's overall success.

Technology Department

The technology department of Cherokee Central Schools plays a pivotal role in supporting educational initiatives and ensuring the smooth operation of technical infrastructure across three schools.

The Technology team successfully imaged or re-imaged over 2000 desktops and laptops across all three schools. These devices were seamlessly integrated into the network to bolster our 1:1 Personalized Education initiative.

To meet the increasing demand for connectivity, the wireless network undergoes continuous upgrades. Thus, accommodating more users and ensuring a stable connection throughout the schools. By optimizing network infrastructure, we have enhanced the learning environment and facilitated seamless access to digital resources.

A structured device refresh cycle was implemented to ensure that both staff and students have access to the latest technology. This proactive approach supports evolving educational needs and ensures that technology remains a reliable tool for teaching and learning.

The IT department provided essential troubleshooting assistance for tech work orders from staff, managing an average of 100 work tickets per month across the district. Additionally, comprehensive support services were extended to 566 staff computers, ensuring operational efficiency and minimizing disruptions to educational activities.

The Technology department played a critical role in supporting each school during state assessments, including End of Grade, End of Course, and CTE Post assessments. This support ensured that technological resources were effectively deployed to facilitate smooth and reliable testing environments. Furthermore, the IT department provided assistance to students, teachers, and counselors involved in WIDA ACCESS testing, contributing to the successful administration of language proficiency assessments.

School Nutrition Services

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

Table IX. Average Participation of Students, SY 2024-2025.

	Breakfast	Lunch
Cherokee Central Schools	81590	164899

The students had a Hot and Healthy meal at lunch everyday. The students were very thankful for the meals. The students had new food items on the menu this year. There are more students who continue to use the dining halls.

Special Project: Campus Recladding in 2024-2025

When CCS began remodeling P & R buildings in September 2021, water intrusion was discovered in R building (formerly the Central Office and Pathseekers). The district and EBCI Project Management worked to determine the extent of the water damage. The water intrusion occurred throughout campus, and EBCI Tribal Council approved a resolution to assist with funding the water remediation project in May 2023. Recladding work began on R building, including the press box, in the fall 2024. With the exception of Hurricane Helene in October 2024 (rain delays - 6 days), the project remained on track with just typical construction delays. The renovation work on P and R buildings also resumed with a targeted completion date of August 2025. Additionally, site work began for a prefabricated engineered metal building (PEMB) to be erected in the parking lot area outside of R building. This building will help to provide room for classes during the recladding project and provide additional classroom and program space after the recladding project is completed. During the recladding project, CCS is monitoring the air quality throughout the campus through periodical air quality testing.

Appendix



CHEROKEE CENTRAL SCHOOLS
P.O. Box 134
86 Elk Crossing lane
Cherokee, NC 28719
Phone: (828) 554-5000
*Cherokee Central Schools is committed to:
Empowering Our Students; Preserving Our Nation;
Ensuring Our Future*



2024-2025 CCS Calendar

Date	Description
8/1-2/2024	OW (Optional Workday)
8/5-9/2024	RW (Required Workday)
8/12/2024	Students return
8/22/2024	Elder's Day
9/2/2024	Labor Day
9/16/2024	No school; Vertical PLC/Culture of Caring/Sacred Path
10/1/2024	Early Release - Parade
10/2/2024	Heritage Day
10/3-4/2024	Fall Break; OW
10/15/2024	End of Quarter 1 (41 days)
11/11/2024	Veteran's Day
11/27-29/2024	Admin Leave/Thanksgiving/Tsali Day
12/20/2024	End of Quarter 2 (44 Days) – Early Release
12/23-31/2024	School Vacation Day/Admin Leave/Christmas
1/1-2/2025	New Year's Day/School Vacation Day/Admin Leave
1/3/2025	OW
1/6/2025	Students Return
1/20/2025	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
2/17/2025	Presidents' Day
3/10/2025	No school; Vertical PLC/Culture of Caring/Sacred Path
3/13/2025	End of Quarter 3 (46 Days)
3/14/2025	OW
4/14-18/2025	Spring Break/Good Friday
4/21/2025	Easter Monday/Admin Leave
5/23/2025	Last Day of School (46 days) – Early Release
5/26/2025	Memorial Day
5/27-28/2025	OW

Adopted: 2/20/2024

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Tribal Grant Schools

School Board: Dr. Jennifer Thompson-Chairperson; Tara Reed-Cooper Co-Vice Chairperson; Melanie Lambert Co-Vice Chairperson; Kristina Hyatt-Secretary; Roberta Toineeta; Micah Swimmer, and Michael Stamper - EBCI Tribal Council Representative
CCS Administration: Consuelo Girty, Superintendent; Dr. Beverly Payne, Associate Superintendent; Dr. Jo Ray, Human Resources Director; and Howard K. Wahnetah, Finance Director



TLTR

Cherokee Central Schools

P. O. Box 134

264 Ravensford Drive

Cherokee, NC 28719