



  
Cedar Rapids  
Community School District

# The HIGHLIGHTER

Cedar Rapids Community Schools  
Every Learner: Future Ready

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# Superintendent's Note

Welcome to the 2017-18 school year!

I enter this new school year alongside a team of exceptional educators and staff who are dedicated to providing our students with continued, rich academic experiences that have long been a tradition in our school district. As an alum of the district and father of students in our school system, I am proud of and confident in these opportunities. Beyond those traditions, this year we are also eagerly anticipating the commitment to a new and bold strategic plan designed to provide our students with personalized pathways, future-ready skills, and future-focused experiences. In so doing, we are poised to deliver on the promise of "Every Learner: Future Ready."

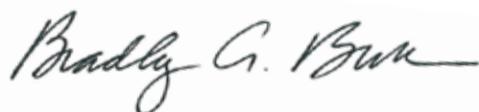
Our greatest desire is that each of our students is prepared academically and with workplace ready skills, have had an opportunity to explore one or more of their passions, and have a plan upon graduation for a successful pathway of their choosing. To deliver on that mission, we recognize the need to focus on innovation and diversity. We look forward to innovation in the form of strategically designed programming rich in real world experiences and which honor diversity of interests, passions, behaviors, learning styles, and academic goals. With a focus on innovation and diversity, we look forward to providing our learners with a rigorous and personalized academic experience with multiple pathways to success.

When we describe multiple pathways to success there are a number of pathways about which we are thinking. They include Advanced Placement courses, dual credit courses with Kirkwood Community College, skilled academies, and apprenticeships. For some of our students, their journey to success will include experiences with multiple pathways. Our roles as a District are to provide a variety of options and to be a support and guide to our families and students as they navigate the best path available for each child.

We believe each student's academic experience should be guided by their individual interests, goals, and passions. Through our magnet schools and Iowa BIG, in programming such as BlendEd and KITE, and in classrooms with personalized learning at schools such as Nixon and Viola Gibson, our students will experience an academic model which effectively leverages innovation and diversity. As a District, we look forward to offering academic experiences which prepare our students for the future and which also remind them that Cedar Rapids is a great place to live, work, play, and learn.

We believe that years from now, when we look back at this time in the Cedar Rapids Community School District's history, we will be able to say that we were forward-thinking in developing rigorous and innovative academic experiences for our students.

I'm three years into my reunion with the Cedar Rapids community and I can tell you that my family certainly sees Cedar Rapids as a great place to live, work, play, and learn. I'm excited about my own children learning and growing in the same district as yours and I'm deeply proud of the thoughtful work that has gone into developing the District's new vision of "Every Learner: Future Ready."



Dr. Brad Buck  
Superintendent



# A new year ushers in a new vision

This year marks the beginning of a new vision and strategic plan for the Cedar Rapids Community School District. We are excited about our updated mission “to ensure all learners experience a rigorous and personalized learning experience with an individualized plan and one which is fueled by a passion for their future.”

## This mission reflects our six core beliefs:

- ❖ We believe leadership is a collaborative action that empowers stakeholders to promote improvement.
- ❖ We believe innovative educational experiences foster creativity, promote personalized learning, and connect students’ passions to their future world.
- ❖ We believe equity of voices, resources, opportunities, and expectations is critical for the current and future success of every student.
- ❖ We believe students are empowered to take ownership when they engage as partners in their learning.
- ❖ We believe all community members are valued and thrive in a safe, diverse, engaging, and growth-oriented culture/climate while exhibiting respect for the well-being of self, others, and the learning environment.
- ❖ We believe all students deserve high quality instruction which provides academic, social, and emotional learning to prepare for a successful future.

## Our core beliefs are supported by five areas of focus:

**STORY** Develop and execute a robust marketing and community relations plan to reclaim and advance our story.

**WORKFORCE** Align workforce and workforce programs around vision and goals and build a high performance culture.

**FACILITIES** Re-imagine, re-envision, and re-invest in our facilities to create future ready learning and work environments.

**LEARNING** Define, align, and operationalize future ready outcomes, programs, and measures at each level.

**EQUITY** Embrace and value the diversity of all learners: students, staff, and families.

## Did you know CRCSD is the fourth largest employer in the city?

### Other Quick Facts:

Enrollment: 16,300

Size of District: 121 square miles

Governance Board: 7 elected members

Elementary Schools: 21 schools

Middle Schools: 6 schools

High Schools: 4 schools

Employees: 2,800

Registered Volunteers: 7,580

Annual General Fund Budget: \$276 million

\*Figures are approximate

## Stay Connected. Stay Engaged.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter (@crschools), Instagram, and YouTube.

Share your stories about CRCSD! Tag CRCSD in your posts about your positive experiences with our schools and use our hashtags: #CRCSDpride, #FutureReady, #WeAreCRCSD

Learn more about the Cedar Rapids Community School District at [www.cr.k12.ia.us](http://www.cr.k12.ia.us).

Contact CRCSD at 319-558-2000



# A Closer Look . . .



## @Story

In every district, there are teachers creating innovative and engaging lessons, staff members dedicated to students' safety and wellbeing, and students experiencing incredible successes—sometimes through great adversity. Who are the protagonists in our stories, what are the challenges, how are we—together!—overcoming those challenges, and what are the academic victories we can celebrate together? In the coming year, we'll be executing a robust marketing and community relations plan to answer these questions and reclaim and advance the District's narrative.

Communicating with our families and the community about progress towards our District's goals, challenges we face, and exciting approaches to meeting those challenges are all certainly part of the narrative. We'll also be utilizing social media to share with the community human interest stories through story concepts and video and photo series that highlight relationships between alumni and our community, staff and students, and our families and community leaders. If you have stories you'd like to share about a positive experience you've had in our District, send an email to [greatnews@cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:greatnews@cr.k12.ia.us).

## @Facilities

As you may recall, last year the District initiated a community-wide conversation regarding CRCSD facilities and also assembled a Facilities Planning Committee of approximately 100 members from all sectors of our community. Many committee members have expressed the importance of considering enrollment trends, usage of schools, and cost of upkeep to schools in determining the best course of action in the coming years.

"I started out being a little skeptical about the notion of the role that facilities play [in academic achievement] but then as I got to participate in the group meetings, in particular, and got to see what some of the other communities have to work with in their facilities, what really drove it home for me was the cost that we're incurring to maintain these older facilities that we have," said committee member Gary Becker. "And how long can we sustain that and also expect those facilities to perform in the future? I think we're at a bit of a crossroads in that regard."

We look forward to further engaging the committee in this important work. "It's always important for the community for one to be invited and then to feel welcome to offer their input in situations like this," said Karl Cassell. "It does help shape the policy of our District, and—more importantly—education of our children."

The committee is scheduled to provide an update on progress to the Board in December 2017.



## @Equity

One of the many strengths of our District is the multitude of offerings available to support each student's access to education. Every student deserves a personalized academic experience. Our magnet schools are shining examples of our vision in action: to make "Every Learner: Future Ready." This year, we are proud to introduce the Roosevelt Creative Corridor Business Academy!

The RCCBA provides three pathways of learning that incorporate key areas of business-related skills to students in grades 6-8:

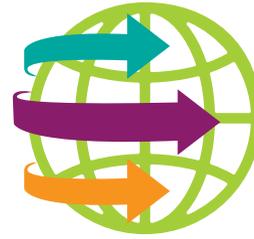
1. Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM);
2. Leadership and Entrepreneurship;
3. Global Systems (communicating and problem solving around global issues).

With connections to the Iowa Creative Corridor, students will be given opportunities to work with community business partners in the context of these three areas. Students' reactions to the options available to them this fall through the RCCBA are exciting!:

*"I learned that dreams really come true and, like, you can dream as big as you want and there's no limit to it."* – Alondra – Former 8th Grade Student of Roosevelt Options

*"I think it helps you as a student because you actually get to do it, like, hands-on. You live it instead of looking at other people doing it, like pictures or through a board. Instead of taking notes and stuff you actually get to do it."* – Lirim – Former 8th Grade Student of Roosevelt Options

*"It gets you out into the community. You see how your learning connects back to what you might be doing in the future."* – Maddison – Former 8th Grade Student of Roosevelt Options



# ROOSEVELT CREATIVE CORRIDOR BUSINESS ACADEMY

## Ensuring equal access to academic success

This summer, 600 laptops were delivered to the ELSC! We're excited about this important step the District is taking to more effectively make learning—and academic success—accessible to all of our students. These devices will be provided to students this fall who qualify for Accessible Instructional Materials on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and will primarily be used as a text reader and as a tool which offers voice-to-text capabilities. We look forward to utilizing these tools to improve reading comprehension with our qualified students.



# Success starts early with Early Learning Preschool

The District's Early Learning Preschool program consists of a 4-day week offering a 3-hour session in the morning (8:40-11:40 am) or a 3-hour session in the afternoon (12:40-3:40 pm) for three- and four-year-olds. Each class is led by a teacher licensed through the State of Iowa in Early Childhood Education, and each classroom is assisted by one or more paraprofessionals.



Our teachers use Creative Curriculum which is based on research in child development theory as the foundation of the teaching approaches, the learning environment, and the roles of the teaching staff and family. This blueprint aids staff in planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate program that is effective in helping children acquire social competence and the skills they need to succeed as learners.

The guiding philosophy of the Early Learning Preschool is that children learn best by doing, which requires active thinking and experimenting to see how things work. In this warm and supporting environment, the goal is to help children become independent and self-confident learners. To learn more about the Early Learning Preschool, call 319-558-2549.

## Engage with CRCSD as one of more than 7,500 volunteers

The rich tradition of volunteering in the Cedar Rapids Community Schools continues! During the 2016-2017 school year, 7,580 individuals contributed 131,690 hours to support learning. Education volunteers outnumbered staff by more than two to one!

School volunteers help students develop reading and math skills; serve as mentors through a buddy program; share insights about careers and special interests as a special speaker; lend a hand with field trips, class events, or enrichment projects; support activities of student groups in music, athletics, drama, journalism, debate, or academic competitions; support a school as a community partner.

To learn how you can make a difference as a school volunteer, call your neighborhood school or 319-558-2124.



## America Reads celebrates 21 years!

America Reads is a national challenge to improve literacy in elementary school age children. The America Reads: *Reading Is Contagious* literacy festival celebrates its 21st year on Oct. 19-20! Parents, other family members, young adults, community citizens, and business representatives are invited to visit a local elementary school to read stories to a classroom of children. For registration information, email [AMR@cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:AMR@cr.k12.ia.us).



# POINTS OF PRIDE

Core strengths of the Cedar Rapids Community School District are robust academic programs, an experienced and qualified faculty and staff, rich diversity in enrichment and extracurricular activities, and the sense of community our schools provide. Founded in 1855, we are the second largest school district in the State of Iowa and home to 31 schools. Our commitment to excellence is rooted in tradition and growing and improving in innovation. We are pleased to spotlight some of our accomplishments.

- ❖ District students consistently score above the state average on ACT College Readiness Indicators. Our five-year average composite score is 24.
- ❖ Historically, our high schools are the top Iowa schools on the Washington Post listing of “America’s Most Challenging High Schools” and the Iowa Advanced Placement Index.
- ❖ Our faculty includes 58 National Board Certified teachers, the most of any school district in Iowa.
- ❖ Iowa BIG provides students opportunities to engage in authentic business and community projects to earn core and elective academic credits. Iowa BIG is recognized as one of the more transformative education innovations in the country.
- ❖ We celebrate diversity! Over 60 languages are spoken in our schools and we provide English Language Learner programming for students at all levels.
- ❖ The Expanded Opportunities Program provides middle school students with high school credit.
- ❖ Over 166 athletic programs and diverse activities are offered in the middle or high schools. From archery to zumba, there is an opportunity for every student to showcase their talents.
- ❖ We collaborate with the Kirkwood Community College Regional Center to offer opportunities for high school students to earn college credit and to explore career options.
- ❖ The District continues to expand its magnet school offerings. The Johnson STEAM Academy is in its third year, the Kenwood Leadership Academy is in its second year, and Roosevelt Middle School becomes the Roosevelt Creative Corridor Business Academy this fall. Magnet school curriculum is project-based and integrates the subject areas through a theme allowing students to learn how the various disciplines interact in real contexts.
- ❖ Over 350 of our teachers have taken teacher leader roles through our Teacher Leader System.
- ❖ Student learning is enriched by more than 100 school and community collaborations with area businesses, non-profits, agencies, and local organizations.
- ❖ Student teams have brought home some 20 state titles in Academic Decathlon, a competition matching intellect in Art, Economics, Essay, Interview, Language Arts, Mathematics, Music, Science, Social Science, and Speech.
- ❖ We have received the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for 22 consecutive years.
- ❖ Our athletes regularly receive Division 1 scholarships.
- ❖ The District recognizes nearly 1200 students annually for distinguished academic achievements.
- ❖ When compared to all 11 public school districts in Linn County, the District has the lowest tax levy.
- ❖ All schools have a Wellness Council and 14 schools are official Blue Zones Schools. The Educational Leadership and Support Center is also a designed Blue Zones worksite.
- ❖ Our distinguished roll of graduates includes Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Sal Giunta and acclaimed international artist Grant Wood.



## Find Community FLIERS ONLINE



The District provides an online opportunity for community organizations to submit information about educationally-based programming and events.

Individuals or organizations wishing to post material to the District's "Virtual Backpack" submit items electronically. Approved materials appear online for families and staff to access.

Organizations will find a link to submit fliers for consideration on the District homepage at [www.cr.k12.ia.us](http://www.cr.k12.ia.us). Families can access the Virtual Backpack from their school's website.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

*It is the policy of the Cedar Rapids Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (employment only), marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status (students/program only) in its educational programs and its employment practices. This is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. District employees with questions or a grievance related to this policy should contact Linda Noggle, Executive Director of Human Resources/Talent Management at [lnoggle@cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:lnoggle@cr.k12.ia.us) or 319-558-2000. Students and others should contact Rod Dooley, Executive Director of Equity/Title IX Coordinator/504 Compliance Officer at [rdooley@cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:rdooley@cr.k12.ia.us) or 319-558-2000. The District mailing address is 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405-1015.*



*The Highlighter* is an annual publication of the Cedar Rapids Community School District. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Community Relations Office. Phone: 319-558-2124, fax: 319-558-2224, email: [communityrelations@cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:communityrelations@cr.k12.ia.us)

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