



# The Knight Times

## North Cedar Community School District

March 2021 Issue

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### Superintendent Dohmen's Message

#### Small, Rural Iowa Schools

Declining enrollment is present throughout the state of Iowa, especially in rural areas. North Cedar continues to plan ahead and make decisions to keep and strengthen education for all our students. As superintendent, I spend much of my time in this area of planning. Whether it is a day to day procedural policy or a 10 year facility plan. The number one question people ask me is what can I do to help our small, rural school district? Being involved is always my first answer. As the years go on I also think that rural Iowans need to understand State and Local level policy and how they impact their rural Iowa schools. So over the next couple of months, I plan to dig a little deeper into these policies. Remember, enrollment is the major driving factor for all Iowan schools. Today I'll start with a short summary on the report, Breaking the Fall: Cushioning the Impact of Rural Declining Enrollment, and the state-level funding policies that impact our schools.



Persistent declining enrollment can cause significant challenges for schools and districts. When the enrollment decline is chronic, it generates serious financial distress because of the loss of per-pupil state revenue. This financial hemorrhage usually results in deep cuts in programs, staff, and resources. Small rural schools are especially vulnerable to these problems, since they have proportionally less leeway in finding cost-saving areas. Eventually, declining enrollment can lead to their closure in spite of their value to rural communities and students.

This report highlights the role that state educational policies have in either magnifying the challenges of declining enrollment, or conversely, mitigating them. The report contains 20 policy recommendations (today, I plan to share 7 of these policies dealing primarily with funding), primarily focused on state funding formulas.

Though there is no silver bullet that will "fix" all problems associated with declining enrollment, these recommended state and local policies can accomplish two goals: (1) Buy time and give communities and economies time to rebound and/or adjust to population and revenue loss; and (2) Ensure that all students in communities with declining enrollment are offered an excellent education.

## Message from Principal Horman

Ms. Sarah, from the Cedar County Conservation Office, helped preschool make bird feeders. They spread Crisco on a pine cone and then rolled them in birdseed. The children hung them on a tree in the school playground hoping to help some hungry birds from the cold. They also made one to take and hang at home.



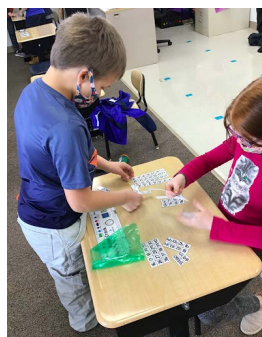
The preschoolers in Mrs. Jensen's class had fun with candy hearts and a variety of STEM activities. They made a heart balance using a cup and popsicle stick and put candy hearts on each end to make it balance. The next activity had preschoolers stacking candy hearts as high as they could go before falling over. When the tower fell, the students had to count how high they got. Each time, trying to get a little bit higher. Our final activity was the class favorite. Students had to see how many candy hearts it would take to sink a plastic heart in a container of water.



Mrs. Rouse's first graders had fun making a 100 link chain and celebrating the 100th day of school. The students also enjoyed reading Valentines the class exchanged. The students also were able to go snowshoeing with Ms. Sarah.



Mechanicsville Elementary second graders celebrated the 100th day of school completing various math challenges around the room.



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## Message from Principal Bendixen

### Academics

During January, we ran KnightTime OverTime for three consecutive Wednesday afternoons. Students that had D's or F's remained at school after the 1:00 dismissal to work on raising those grades. Overall, we feel that KTOT was a success. We ended 1st semester with a total of 27 F's in the grade-book. Only two of those F's were earned by students attending on-site. Four were earned by students in Kirkwood classes and the remaining 21 by our virtual students. Seven of the virtual students that failed one/more courses have returned to on-site learning. Ms. Hosch, School Counselor, has worked closely with each of these students to develop a plan for successfully integrating back into the school setting and recovering credits. The next round of Parent-Teacher conferences is scheduled for March 2 and 4. We will once again use Parent-Teacher Connect for scheduling and all conferences will be virtual.

### Professional Development

As we move toward Spring, we are shifting our focus to reflecting on this school year and beginning to think ahead to next year. Each of our building leadership teams will meet during February-March professional development time. The PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports) team met in February and had a productive conversation about the challenges we've faced adjusting everything we normally do in order to be COVID-safe. The team decided they need some new members that could generate ideas for moving forward. We have recruited two creative and tech savvy teachers to join the team. The MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) team also met in February. We reflected on the success of KnightTime and KnightTime OverTime, made plans for second semester KTOT, and are considering some new ideas for next year. The SBG (Standards Based Grading) and social teams are scheduled to meet in March.

### Behavior

Below are two examples of Check-in Check-out (CICO) graphs that the Tier 2-3 team reviews on a bi-weekly basis to determine next steps for students that are receiving this type of support through our PBIS program.

Student #1 has been on a Tier 3 Behavior Plan since last school year. The Tier 3 plan includes goals specific to his/her behaviors. We use a CICO form to track his/her progress on a daily basis. The goal is to earn 80% of total points possible each day. As you can see by the chart below, the scores are very inconsistent. We are in the process of reviewing the Tier 3 plan with AEA guidance on making adjustments in an effort to improve and stabilize these scores.



Student #2 has been on a CICO plan since October of this school year. His/her daily goal is 80% of total points possible. As you can see, he/she consistently earns above 80% and can be phased off his/her plan.



### Activities

It's hard to believe that winter sports are already over, and soon it will be warm enough to start track practice (at least, we hope it will be warm!). The Junior Class sponsors met to discuss preliminary plans for Prom 2021 and have determined that with careful planning we can host a safe event. The next step is for the class sponsors to meet with the Juniors and the Post Prom committee to work on details. We will continue to monitor local COVID data as we move closer to May 1st.

## Superintendent Dohmen's Message

*Continued from page 1*

The report asserts that states and local communities must act to sustain and improve small rural schools with declining enrollment. There are always students “left behind” in these communities and they have the same rights to an equal educational opportunity as those who leave. Indeed, our society’s obligation to educate is not dependent on demographic good fortune and cannot, and should not, be compromised by geography.

Below is a summary of the recommendations contained in this report regarding state-level funding policies.

### State-Level Funding Policies:

1. State funding formulas should include provisions that cushion the impact of declining enrollment, like the use of a rolling average or hold-harmless provision.
2. Every state should supplement state aid for small districts and/or schools based on enrollment and/or sparsity.
3. Supplemental aid for low enrollment should be determined and allocated on a school level.
4. Criteria for small school aid should be broad enough to cover all small, poor schools that cost more to operate because of low student enrollment.
5. Supplemental aid should be substantial enough to adequately cover additional costs associated with low student enrollment.
6. Supplemental aid should vary along a continuum of school sizes, with the smallest schools receiving the most additional aid, rather than setting artificial size categories.
7. States should avoid spending and levy caps, or eliminate them if they exist, so that local communities can fill gaps created by low enrollment, if they so choose.

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## February Board Meeting Highlights

Each month the North Cedar School Board shares two or three highlights of our monthly board meetings. These takeaways are messages that the board collectively feels are important for the public to know. Here are the highlights from the Feb. 15, 2021, meeting:

**Little Knights Daycare.** North Cedar continues to work to enhance the daycare offerings in Lowden and Mechanicsville. The district has been operating the programs for about 18-months and while parent meetings and a recent survey showed above average satisfaction, leaders are committed to strengthening the curriculum, improving communication and adding stability to the program. A new childcare management app, Brightwheel, will soon launch to improve daily communication with parents and offer families improved billing and payment choices. Semiannual surveys will be used for continuous improvement and to gauge satisfaction.

**Legislative Update.** The board is actively monitoring a number of bills at the statehouse that could impact students and families at North Cedar. Both the House and Senate approved a measure that was recently signed into law by Governor Reynolds to increase Supplemental State Aid for the coming school year by 2.4%. While any amount is appreciated, the reality is that for a district like North Cedar with steady or slightly declining enrollment, this amount is not enough to keep up with rising costs. In 2020, 66% of Iowa school districts experienced a decline in enrollment. Board members also continue to closely monitor school choice, or voucher, legislation. Vouchers have the potential to take tax-payer dollars away from public schools and redirect them to private schools with little or no accountability. A bill was passed in the Senate earlier this year but it did not receive traction in the House. This issue may come up again during the current session in a modified form. The district also encourages legislators to consider funding full-day preschool and allocate additional resources to offset the increased costs that we have taken on to prepare for and keep offering in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To view the full agenda and attachments of North Cedar School Board meetings, click the Online Board App button at [https://north-cedar.org/Board\\_of\\_Education](https://north-cedar.org/Board_of_Education). Meeting minutes are also posted online following each meeting.

## Principal Horman's Message

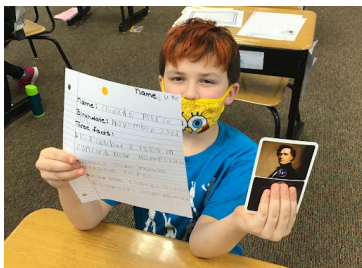
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Third graders in Mrs. Jackson's room have been busy reading and writing about presidents. We also read about the White House in Washington, D.C. Students enjoyed sitting in the author's chair and reading their president's report/facts to the class.

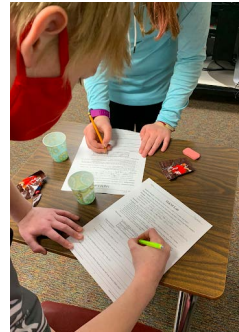
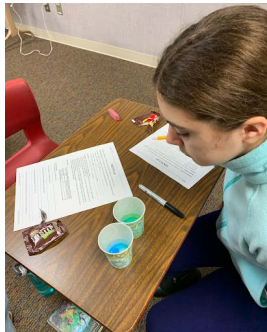
On February 25, Teresa Bohlman, from the Iowa State University Extension, met with us via Zoom. She brought Ag To The Class once again. This month's theme was "Sheep to Sweater" and the kids learned how to spin wool. We absolutely love this program!

Fractions, fractions, and more fractions. The students are very busy learning about fractions. They are also enjoying our math centers/rotations. They are working hard and completing activities using math pockets, grab and go math, math fluency review daily, and an assortment of math games/activities.

They are getting ready for March! March brings warmer weather, Dr. Seuss's birthday, and Spring!



Mrs. Crittenden's sixth grade class has been busy doing science experiments. They learned about using the scientific method. The pictures show the kids working on an M&M experiment and a paper airplane experiment.



Mrs. Hayes's classroom has been having a lot of fun in February. Students have been checking in with Gary the Groundhog, making rock candy, and of course playing in the snow! Students were also very excited to make a snow volcano!





March 2, 2021

Dear North Cedar Community,

North Cedar Post Prom Committee is planning an evening of safe, alcohol/drug-free fun for all the students after their North Cedar High School Prom which will be held on May 1, 2021. This year has looked different due to COVID. We have been unable to have our traditional fundraisers like in the years past, such as the cake auction, homecoming pep rally food stand, Mr. North Cedar, and a vendor show to name a few. This year we are asking for more support from parents, our community members, and businesses so we can provide the students with a memorable night. These kids have had to adjust and handle a lot of changes in the last year and we want them to have a special night that they deserve. We are planning an exciting night with entertainment, activities, prizes, snacks, and refreshments. Our students enjoy the games with prizes and the hypnotist the best.

We are in need of financial support to help make the night a success. We are hoping our North Cedar Community will rally together to make sure these juniors and seniors get the prom experience they all deserve. If you would be willing to donate to post prom, the kids would be grateful. All types of donations are appreciated. Any business apparel and merchandise will be used in drawings and for prizes. Cash donations are appreciated. Donations will go towards rental costs, hypnotist, games, and prizes drawn throughout the night. If you would like a committee member to pick up your donation, please call or text Tera at 319-981-1394.

Please make checks out to North Cedar Post Prom and mail any donations to:

Fidelity Bank  
PO Box 308  
Clarence, IA 52216

If you are able to donate this year, please send it by March 20th. Thank you in advance for your continued support of this special night for our students. It is an evening they will talk about for years to come and our community appreciates your help.

Sincerely,

North Cedar 2020/2021 Post-Prom Committee



Congratulations to Bianca Johnston, Hunter Jones and Olivia Carr! They received 1, 1 and 2 from their 3 judges on their choral reading for Speech. This is an overall 1.

# ***North Cedar Lunch & Activities Calendar***

## ***March 2021***

Calendar is subject to change.

Mon., March 1:  
Lunch: Chicken Club or BBQ Chicken  
4:15pm Jr. High Boys Basketball @ Camanche MS

Tues., March 2:  
Lunch: Chicken Alfredo  
1pm Dismissal - Parent/Teacher Conferences

Wed., March 3:  
Lunch: Breaded Pork Chop

Thurs., March 4:  
Lunch: Crispito  
1pm Dismissal - Parent/Teacher Conferences

Fri., March 5:  
No School

Mon., March 8:  
Lunch: Hot Dog or Cheddarwurst

Tues., March 9:  
Lunch: Chicken Fajita  
7pm 7th-12th Choir Concert @ Debbie Harms Theater

Wed., March 10:  
Lunch: Sloppy Joes  
1pm Early Dismissal

Thurs., March 11:  
Lunch: Popcorn Chicken  
7pm 7th-12th Band Concert @ Jr/Sr High Gym

Fri., March 12:  
Lunch: Macaroni & Cheese

Mon., March 15:  
Lunch: Elem.: Chicken Sticks; Jr/Sr High: Orange Chicken  
6pm School Board Meeting @ Stanwood

Tues., March 16:  
Lunch: Hot Ham & Cheese

Wed., March 17:  
Lunch: Totally Tacos  
1pm Early Dismissal

Thurs., March 18:  
Lunch: French Toast Sticks

Fri., March 19:  
Lunch: Grilled Cheese

Mon., March 22:  
Lunch: BBQ Rib

Tues., March 23:  
Lunch: Beef Nachos

Wed., March 24:  
Lunch: Chicken Patty  
1pm Early Dismissal

Thurs., March 25:  
Lunch: Lasagna

Fri., March 26:  
Lunch: Pizza

Mon., March 29:  
Lunch: Burgers  
4pm Varsity Girls Golf @ Monticello Golf Course  
4pm Varsity Boys Golf vs Monticello @ 3-30 Golf & Country Club

Tues., March 30:  
Lunch: Homemade Chili or Chicken Noodle Soup (Jr/Sr high also has choice of Broccoli Cheese)

Wed., March 31:  
Lunch: Chicken Nuggets  
1pm Early Dismissal

**The mission of North Cedar Community School District, in partnership with its community and staff, is to ensure a safe and caring environment for each student, providing the essential knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes to create lifelong learners who are responsible, contributing, and productive citizens in a changing and increasingly diverse world.**

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Everything we do at NCCSD is for our students, and we encourage them all to take part in the enrichment and extracurricular opportunities for which they are eligible.

- Athletics for junior high school and senior high school students
- Fine arts activities for 5th through 12th graders
- Extracurricular clubs and organizations for junior high and senior high school students
- Counseling services for all grades

An active, supportive community strengthens NCCSD. Parents and patrons who elect to get involved and support our students and their activities aid the district.

- Athletics Boosters bolster our student athletes and the athletics programs
- Encore Club supports our fine arts programs
- Knights Community Organization fosters the relationships between parent, student, staff, and community
- North Cedar Education Foundation provides financial support to help broaden the district's education opportunities

Postal Customer

**North Cedar Community School District**  
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