

The ^{CCPS} BOARD REPORT

May 27 & 29, 2025

→ Two meetings held as year concludes

Two Board meetings were held this week with the May 27th meeting featuring regular monthly business, and the May 29th special-called meeting resulting in the Board's approval of the tentative district budget for the 2025-26 school year. Highlights:

- The district is financially stable, maintaining a strong contingency fund.
- Staff compensation is a priority with the Board opting to support competitive wages to retain quality personnel.

SEE PAGE 3 for more information and a presentation link.

→ A year of beginnings, opportunities

This year has marked a defining chapter in CCPS history with the opening of not just one, but two transformational additions – a brand-new preschool and the Cardinal Innovation Center. The May Instructional Spotlight featured presentations from our incredible early childhood learning and Innovation Center programs. See [Pages 5-7](#) for more.

→ i-Ready scores show steady growth

Students across our district are making significant strides in both reading and math, according to the latest results from the universal screener assessments administered throughout the school year. The data, collected from kindergarten through eighth grade, highlights both the progress we've made and the continued efforts underway to support every learner.

"We're pleased to report significant growth in both reading and math across all grade levels," said Assistant Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer Kelly Fithen. "While we're not yet where we ultimately want to be, we are trending in the right direction and making steady progress."

For more on i-Ready results, [SEE PAGE 3](#).

→ NEXT REGULAR MEETING: TUESDAY, JUNE 10

NOTABLE & QUOTABLE

On May 23rd, we graduated over 460 students – one of the largest classes we've had in a long time – and did it in about an hour and eight minutes. A lot of work went into making it so successful and I want to thank everyone who played a role in the planning and execution. It was an absolutely fantastic day.

-Superintendent Dustin Howard

District staff honors Superintendent Howard



Superintendent Dustin Howard was honored prior to the Board meeting with a reception to celebrate his designation as Eastern Kentucky University/ Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative "Experience Excellence" Superintendent of the Year. Shoutout to our Food Services Team for a great meal and to Cassie Puckett and Sally McKinney for their beautiful work in setting up and decorating. Congrats, Mr. Howard, on this tremendous and well-deserved award.



[CLICK HERE](#) to view more pictures in **The Cardinal Rule**.



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→ In other action, the Board...

- Approved the Certified and Classified Evaluation Handbooks as part of the annual update to procedures. Due to House Bill 48 (Red Tape Reduction Act), the evaluation cycle for tenured certified staff has shifted from a 3-year to a 5-year cycle. The only change to the Classified handbook is that the Cardinals Nest staff will now use only the state-mandated evaluation forms required by the state.
- Approved the ARC and 504 chairperson list for 2025-26 as part of state compliance.
- Approved contracted school psychological services. While the district currently has four psychologists for 2025–26, this contract is a proactive step in case of staff changes or increased caseloads.
- Approved contracted physical therapy services. While the district doesn't have enough demand for a full-time physical therapist, this contract allows the district to provide required gross motor services for students per their IEPs.
- Approved the ability to request emergency certification from KDE if a certified teacher cannot be found for a potential opening. This is a proactive measure in case the need arises.
- Approved the monthly Financial Report, authorized payment of salaries and bills, and approved numerous consent agenda items. **VIEW AGENDA.**
Note: The PIE agenda item was tabled until June.
- Approved the annual request to move excess capital funds – after all bond debt and capital project needs are covered – into the general fund for approved operational expenses. This year, the district is transferring nearly \$1.4 million to help cover items like bus bond payments, utilities, and property insurance. The transfer is already included in our budget; this action formalizes the process.
- Approved the fidelity bond for 2025-26. Finance Director Aleisha Ellis is required to be bonded.
- Approved a reserve balance for sick leave. State law requires us to set aside funds for potential sick leave payouts at retirement—30% of unused sick leave, with 50% of that amount reserved. The approval allows the district to set aside that balance during year-end closing. The exact amount will be finalized once the books are closed.
- Acknowledged that the district will once again apply indirect cost rates to eligible programs: 16.57% to Food Service and 2.12% to applicable federal grants. These rates, set by the state, help cover general overhead costs.
- Approved the 2025-26 Pledge of Collateral Agreement, which ensures that the district's money held in the bank is fully protected. Although our funds are insured up to \$250,000 by the FDIC, this pledge guarantees that any amount over that is also backed by collateral. This protects taxpayer money and complies with state law.

VIEW AGENDA for the May 29 tentative budget meeting.



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→ District pleased with i-Ready results

The i-Ready universal screener is administered three times a year – in fall, winter, and spring – to students in grades 1-8. The results serve as one of the district’s most important data points to guide instructional planning, professional development for teachers, and allocation of resources.

The spring assessment showed particular improvement when compared to the fall data. Students are categorized into three levels: green (on or above grade level); yellow (one grade level below), and red (two or more grade levels behind). Educators use this data to provide individualized support. “Typically, students who are just one grade level behind can be brought up to grade level within the school year,” said CAO Kelly Fithen. “Those further behind often require more intensive, multi-year intervention.”

Administrators and grade-level teams conduct detailed data analyses to identify trends and gaps, then plan instructional strategies accordingly. “It allows us to see not just where students are, but exactly which skills they’re missing,” Mrs. Fithen said. “That’s a game changer for guiding small-group instruction.”

Through data analysis, the screener revealed that 75% of students in grades K-8 are on grade level with regards to phonics. “We’re proud of these gains and will continue to emphasize phonics while strengthening overall literacy support,” Mrs. Fithen said.

While challenges remain, the district is committed to continued growth. Teachers also rely on multiple data points beyond the screener, including daily formative assessments and end-of-unit summative evaluations, to ensure learning stays on track.

“Student growth is like building blocks,” said Mrs. Fithen. “It takes time and consistency. But we’re laying a strong foundation, and we’re seeing results.”

[VIEW i-READY PRESENTATION HERE.](#)

→ Draft budget approved

The tentative budget for the 2025–2026 school year totals \$77.7 million, encompassing all district funds. This serves as the financial foundation for the upcoming school year, though some final numbers are pending. The budget must be submitted to the Kentucky Department of Education by May 30.

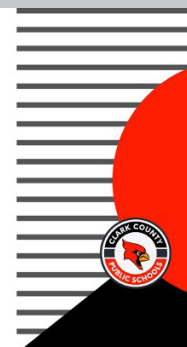
Finance Director Aleisha Ellis broke down each aspect with a lengthy explanation (included in the presentation linked below).

The Board approved the draft budget, which includes the following:

- 2% across-the-board raise for certified staff
- \$0.85/hour across-the-board raise for classified staff
- The Board can legally adopt a 4% revenue increase without voter approval. This would generate approximately \$866,000 in additional revenue. The 4% refers to revenue, not tax rate.
- Due to rising property values, tax rates may decrease even if revenue increases.

**CLICK THE IMAGE BELOW TO VIEW
THE PRESENTATION.**

***Tentative Budget
2025-2026
School Year
May 29, 2025
Board Meeting
Aleisha Ellis
Director of Finance***



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→ Superintendent's Report

Dustin Howard:

A huge shoutout to everyone who made graduation a gigantic success. Honestly, it was pretty much the greatest day ever. I don't want to leave anybody out so I'll just give a big shoutout to everyone who contributed to the success of this night. It was a great showcase of our community coming together to give a wonderful send-off – not the end of the journey, but the beginning of our graduates' journey to change the world.

Speaking of making great gains, we did something for the first time in Clark County Public Schools history last year – we ran a literacy camp for six weeks, and we're doing it again starting next week. We feed the kids twice a day, provide transportation, and fully immerse them in phonics and literacy with targeted strategies for first and second graders, so we don't have gaps. If a student can read by third grade, they will be successful in life. Last year's growth was uncanny. This year, we hope to double down on that. We will give you a report at summer's end outlining the successes.

If you're a parent or guardian, an email was sent out today with info about next year – online registration, calendar, open houses, all of it. We're launching a district-wide two-way communication tool which is huge for us. We've lacked this for a long time, and we've worked hard to make it happen.

At the end of the messages, there's a chance to give feedback. I want to encourage you to do that because we can't improve if we work in silos. Our kids and families are the heart of what we do. We want to hear what we're doing well, but also what we need to tighten up. I promise we will work our tails off to make it better for parents and kids. We'll send follow-up updates throughout the summer and keep everyone informed.

Meeting SNAPSHOTS



The Early Learning team who presented during the Instructional Spotlight portion of the Board meeting gather for a picture with Angie Estes, left, Preschool admin assistant, who came to support her colleagues. Next to Angie are Gail Ricketts, Cardinals Nest Director; Jill Blanton, Early Learning Director; Marianne Trimble, LBD teacher; and Allison Nelson, District MTSS specialist.



Assistant Superintendent/CAO Kelly Fithen was not expecting the Trailblazer award presented to her during Board recognitions. She likes to avoid the spotlight but deserves to be spotlighted.



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SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL SPOTLIGHT



2024-2025 Enrollment:

Infants: 17
Toddlers: 19

2025-2026 Enrollment:

Infants: 20
Toddlers: 23

*Additional Infant Room
Opening up in October 2025!*



CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS **CCPS SUMMER CARE**

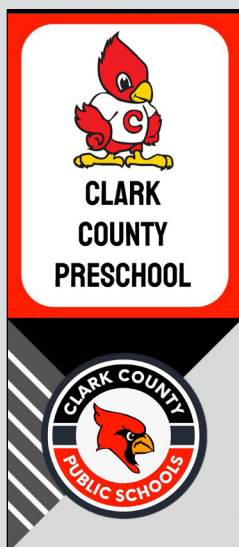
Current 2025 Enrollment

Preschool:
38 Students

Elementary:
86 Students

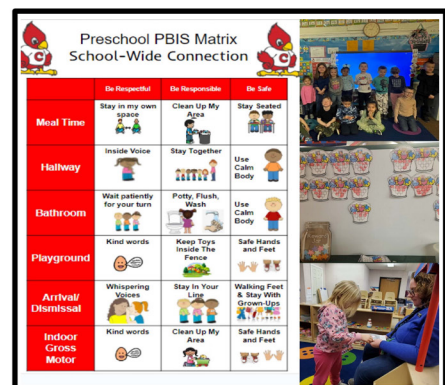
Drop-Ins:
23 Students

CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS **AFTERCARE**



BIG ROCKS

- The Pyramid Model
- Lil' Cards Matrix
- Positive Reward System
- Coaching



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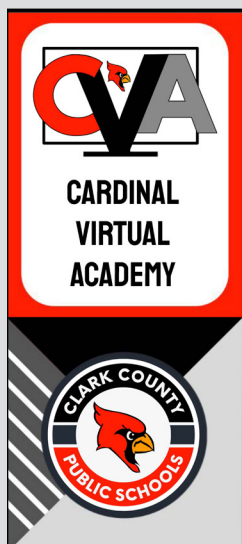
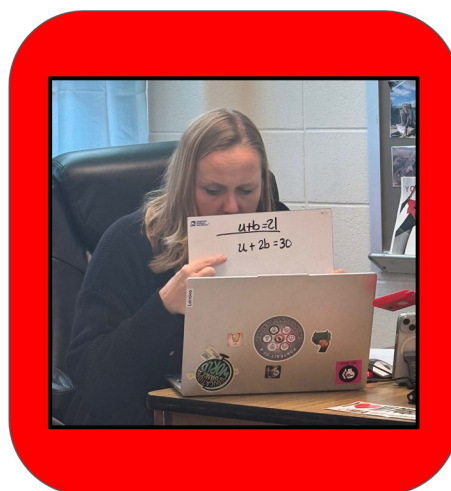
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SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL SPOTLIGHT

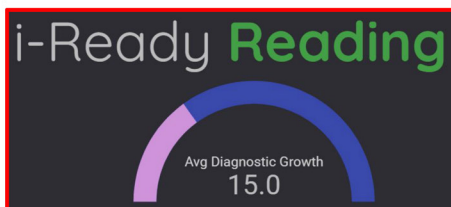
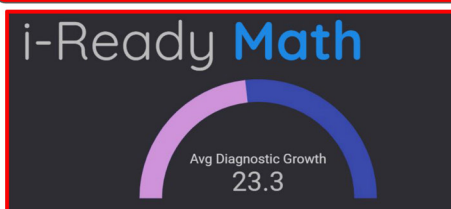


Enrollment:
279 Students

Community Partners:
63 Students



BIG ROCKS



Academic Success

- 167 Apex courses
 - 84% average grade
- 78 students took ACT
 - average score of 16
 - 1 student scored a perfect 36

GROWING GREATNESS CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2024-25 School Year
Breakfast Numbers

Baker	7146
Conkwright	7167
GRC	10,556
Justice	6052
Phoenix	325
Preschool	4560
RDC	770
Shearer	5742
Strode	6370
Grand Total:	55,688

DATA EXTRACTED: April 1, 2025 to April 30, 2025



2024-25 School year
Lunch Numbers

Baker	10,600
Conkwright	7259
GRC	16,228
Justice	6713
Phoenix	331
Preschool	4619
RDC	10,420
Shearer	6827
Strode	7706
Grand Total:	70,703

DATA EXTRACTED: April 1, 2025 to April 30, 2025



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SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL SPOTLIGHT



PHOENIX
ACADEMY



- 76 Students
- 23 Graduates
- 16.67% reduction in behavior; 32.2% overall
- 26 KECSAC & DJJ
- Total Average Growth
 - Math – 10.10 GLs
 - Reading – 3.98 GLs



PHOENIX
ACADEMY



BIG ROCKS

Community Connections

Community connections are vital at Phoenix Academy, where partnerships with families and local organizations help support student success both inside and outside the classroom.

Positive Relationships

Positive student/staff relationships are at the heart of Phoenix Academy, creating a supportive environment where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to succeed.



PHOENIX
ACADEMY



BIG ROCKS

Personal Growth

At Phoenix Academy, we believe personal growth is just as important as academic success. We work every day to help students build confidence, develop resilience, and discover their strengths, knowing that growth in these areas lays the foundation for a successful future.

2x weekly groups for middle school, 9th boys, 10th-11th boys and girls;
1x weekly transition group

Weekly data tracked:

- 35.7% - Individual sessions
- 40.5% - Check-ins or follow up
- 23.8% - De-escalation
- 4.8% - Mental Health referrals
- 8.3% - Academic/career counseling
- 1.4% - Threat assessments



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Board Recognitions

Your Greatness Shows...



Phoenix Academy Staff

Superintendent Dustin Howard and the Board of Education recognized the incredible staff of the Cardinal Innovation Center for the powerful impact they are making across our district. This year alone, the programs housed within this building impacted more than 350 students, with many more positive effects anticipated in the years to come. Their dedication and hard work are truly setting a new standard for innovation and student success.

Phoenix Academy

This dedicated team consistently provides a safe, supportive environment for students seeking a new start. They achieve this by expertly combining high expectations with truly individualized care, helping students navigate challenges and succeed. Congratulations to Tammy Calloway, Instructional Aid; Amanda Ferguson, Instructional Aid; Caroline Richardson, Exceptional Children; Victoria Tzouanakis, Social Worker; Haley Turner, Social Worker; Robbie Graham, Program Coordinator; Mike Murray, Teacher; Tom Collins, Teacher; Danny Mayer, Teacher; Kristina Covington-Jones, Teacher; Kevin Neal, SRO; Andre Sitter, Food Service; Clyde Catterson, Custodial; Jill Stout, Administrative Assistant; Chantel Akers, Administrative Assistant; and Emily Marquez, Nurse.



Cardinal Virtual Academy Staff

Cardinal Virtual Academy and Home Hospital

This team has successfully redefined the landscape of flexible, rigorous online learning, offering personalized virtual and hybrid educational pathways that foster significant student growth and achievement. Congratulations to Alison Campbell, Teacher; Kristin Hall, Teacher; Kelley Harlow, Exceptional Children; Troy Hatfield, Home Hospital; and April Gillespie, Home Hospital.



District STEM Teachers & Technology Resource Teachers

District STEM Teachers/Technology Resource Teachers

The STEM team has brought innovation to life for our youngest learners, and our TRTs are the digital learning coaches for the district. Congratulations to Robbie Sergent, STEM Teacher; Stacie Carrington, STEM Teacher; Jennifer Turley, Technology Resource Teacher; and Chris McClellan, Technology Resource Teacher.

Congratulations to Principal Lindsay Hale and our Cardinal Innovation Center staff!



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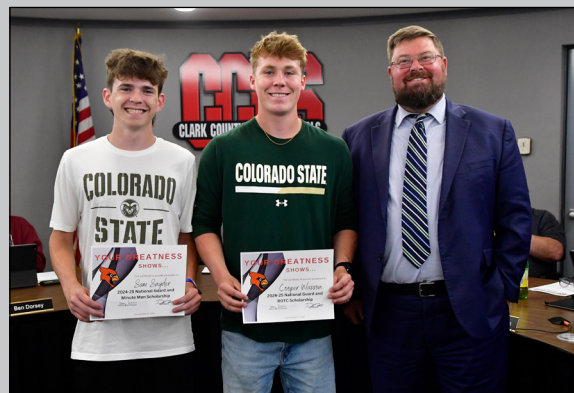
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Board Recognitions

Your Greatness Shows...

Our track athletes were honored for their great showing at the State Elementary State Track Meet. Twenty-two athletes from Conkwright, Justice, Strode Station, and Baker competed, with Baker finishing an impressive 8th out of 38 teams. Congratulations to Braelynn Bell from Baker on breaking three state records in all three events she participated in – 100M dash, 200M dash, and long jump. This has never happened before at the elementary level. Braelynn advanced to the Middle School State Meet, where she represented RDC in the 100M and 200M runs. Congratulations to all!



Superintendent Howard and the Board of Education recognized Sam Snyder and Cooper Wasson on receiving prestigious merit scholarships. Cooper has been awarded a full-tuition, four-year national scholarship from the ROTC program. Sam received a three-year Minute Man scholarship through the Army Reserves. Cooper and Sam will both attend Colorado State University and serve our country in the Colorado National Guard. Congratulations!

Two CCPS students achieved a PERFECT 36 composite score on the ACT. This top score – an average of the English, Math, Reading, and Science sections – is accomplished by less than 0.2% of test takers each year. Congratulations to Elijah Strain and Ben Gillespie (not present at the meeting) on this remarkable accomplishment!



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Board Recognitions

Your Greatness Shows...

Superintendent Howard and the Board of Education recognized the GRC Bass Fishing anglers for their outstanding season with several qualifying for the upcoming state competitions.

Congratulations to the following qualifiers for the state competition at Rough River June 10-11: Tristan Whiteside and partner Gunner Willoughby, with boat captain Cherokee Willoughby; Bryce Alfrey, with boat captain Roy Dunaway; Bentley Purcell and partner Eli Purcell, with boat captain Wes Purcell; Emma Griffith and partner Megan Robinson, with boat captain Chris Griffith; Landon Chenault and partner Nathan Hoskins, with boat captain HD Chenault. Members of the junior team who will represent CCPS at the Junior State Competition on Herrington Lake are Lucas Stang and partner Kamdyn Elkins, with boat captain Kevin Stang. Good luck to our anglers!



Jayden DeLeon Lopez was honored for completing the Senior Interpreter Co-op coordinated by the Clark County Equity Coalition. Students receive a rating for their fluency proficiency and complete the 40 hours of PD that are a prerequisite to taking the medical interpreter certification test. Jayden joins six other classmates (honored at an earlier meeting) who have completed the first-of-its-kind co-op. He is pictured with Donna Carter from the Equity Coalition. Congrats!



**GROWING
GREATNESS**
CLARK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Assistant Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer Kelly Fithen received the Board's Trailblazer Award, a recognition given to individuals or organizations who have made pioneering, innovative, and significant contributions in their respective fields.

The award noted Mrs. Fithen's "innovative thinking, meticulous planning, and collaborative spirit for CCPS. Her dedication truly makes a difference, and it's clear how much effort she pours into everything she does. Thank you for consistently going above and beyond on behalf of CCPS." Congratulations, Mrs. Fithen!



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