

# Cole County R-I School District

December 2025 Newsletter

## Board of Education

President - Adam Weber; Christina Wood - Vice-President

Jenifer Seaver - Secretary; Renee Bungart - Treasurer

Ritchie Jenkins - Member; Stephen Schnieders - Member; Kent Shikles - Member

## Administration

Superintendent - Jeff Jennewein

Junior High/High School Principal - Danielle Greubel

Dean of Students - Lucas Branson

K-6 Principal - Tina Kauffman

Director of Special Services - Lori Clark

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## Superintendent's Letter

Dear Cole County R-I Families and Community,

Happy December! I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving filled with rest, family, and maybe a little extra dessert. As we head into the final weeks of 2025, our schools are buzzing with excitement, learning, and plenty of holiday spirit. With Christmas Break beginning on a half day December 19th and staff returning for our January 5th professional development day, this is a perfect moment to reflect on all we've accomplished together and look ahead to an inspiring new year.

## Celebrating District Achievements

We are thrilled to share that Cole County R-I Elementary has once again been named a 2026 U.S. News and World Report Best Elementary School, placing in the top 40% of elementary schools across Missouri. This is the second consecutive year our elementary school has earned this honor—a clear reflection of our students' hard work, our staff's dedication, and the unwavering support of

our families and community. Sustaining excellence year after year is no small feat, and we are incredibly proud of this recognition.

We also want to spotlight Mrs. Kauffman, who was recently highlighted by a parent for exceptional leadership, communication, and innovation—especially her efforts with PTO VIP Day, her family-focused newsletter, and her work launching the 5th/6th-grade gifted program. Her commitment shines each day, and we're grateful for the positive impact she brings to our school community.

## **Facilities, Safety, and Operations Updates**

### **Our district continues to make progress across several key areas:**

- **Emergency Preparedness:** We met with Phoenix Renovation and Restoration to begin work on their Ready Action Plan (RAP), a no-cost program that helps ensure our facilities and utilities are organized and accessible during emergencies.
- **Bond Project Phase 2:** Work continues on improvements at the baseball/softball complex, including the batting cage enclosure.
- **Parking Lot Enhancements:** Widened exits, improved landscaping, and resurfaced lots at both campuses are improving traffic flow and safety.
- **Security Upgrades:** Our new high-resolution security camera system is officially up and running! A huge thank-you goes to our technology director, Denita Jenkins, for her outstanding leadership and dedication throughout this project. Thanks to her hard work, the installation was completed ahead of schedule *and* under budget—an incredible win for our district's safety and efficiency!
- **New Elementary Playground:** Our new lower elementary playground is officially open! This project was made possible in part by a \$40,000 DNR Scrap Tire Grant, creating a modern, safe, and environmentally friendly space for students to learn and play.

## **Community Generosity on Display**

Our inaugural Wheels for Meals Car Show, hosted by Mr. Derrick Kerr, raised an impressive \$2,204 to help offset student lunch debt. This event showcased the heart of Russellville—neighbors coming together to make a difference for kids. We're excited to continue this tradition with the 2nd Annual Wheels for Meals Car Show on Saturday, September 12, 2026.

## **Board of Education Updates**

### **At the November Board meeting, several important actions were taken:**

- Approval of staff appreciation gift cards for all employees.
- Authorization of a surplus property sale for a Miller Millermatic 250X Welder.
- Approval of two EGS policy updates, including updates to board member qualifications and adoption of the new EGS Board Handbook.

- Approval of the updated Local Compliance Plan for Special Education, aligning district procedures with state regulations—specifically, expanding the “Young Child with a Developmental Delay” eligibility category to ages 3–7 years.

The Board also reviewed a detailed district membership and financial outlook, noting a three-year downward trend in weighted membership that will impact state funding. As we look ahead, discussions will continue around revenue options, staffing needs, and long-term financial planning to keep the district strong.

### **Upcoming Board Election Information**

Three Board of Education seats will be up for election on April 7, 2026. Filing opens December 9 and closes December 30 at the Superintendent’s Office. Full details and candidate requirements are available on our district website.

### **Staff Updates**

**We are excited to welcome and recognize the following individuals in their new roles:**

- Grace Kauffman – Substitute
- Kelli Hagenhoff – Substitute Cook
- Rachel Thousand – Substitute Cook
- Anna Young – High School Scholar Bowl Sponsor
- Shelby Luebbering – Paraprofessional
- Heather Voegeli - Assistant Archery Coach

### **Looking Ahead**

Our December Board of Education meeting is scheduled for December 18 at 5:30 PM, where we will present the Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR), the fiscal year audit, and updates from district leaders.

### **Final Thoughts**

As we wrap up the first semester, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the partnership we share with our community. Our students continue to thrive because of your involvement, encouragement, and support. The dedication of our staff, the curiosity of our learners, and the pride of our families make Cole County R-I a truly special place.

Let’s finish the year strong, enjoy the moments that make this season memorable, and carry our momentum into 2026 with confidence and optimism.

Wishing you all a joyful, safe, and meaningful December!

**Warmly,**

**Dr. Jeff Jennewein**

**Superintendent**

**Cole County R-I School District**

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## **FFA News**

**Russellville FFA Goes to Area Leadership Conference**

**By: Callee Smith**  
**2025-2026 Reporter**

Russellville FFA officers and junior officers went to the Area 8 leadership conference on September 17, 2025, at California High School. Our officer team got 2nd place in the rituals contest, which is the opening and closing ceremonies for the FFA meetings. The officers had to memorize all their lines and say them in unison. We learned about communication, leadership, and teamwork at the conference.

2nd place Area 8 FFA Rituals Conference:

Front Row L to R: Callee Smith, Audra Whittle, Aaryn Bunch, Kaylee Strobel, Erin Whittle, Silas Ellis and Brodie Scheperle.

Back Row L to R: Bella Maharas, Jada Schmidt, Alex Maier, Zeke Mertens, Brady Kauffman and Braden Schad



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### **National FFA Convention**

**By: Callee Smith**  
**2025-2026 Russellville FFA Reporter**

On October 28-31st, 17 Russellville FFA members and 2 advisors went to Indianapolis, Indiana for the 98th annual National FFA Convention. All year long, the FFA members compete to be in the top



17 members on the points chart to go to National FFA Convention. On the way to National Convention, members stopped by Top Golf as well as The Fashion Mall at Keystone when in Indianapolis. The next day members went to the opening session of the convention, where A'ric Jackson spoke about owning your own individuality. Then students went to the Career Exposition as well as the National FFA Shopping Mall. All of the members attended one National FFA leadership workshop. Members learned how to be a better leader, better team player and lots of things to take back to our hometown. FFA members then went to a rodeo later that night. On the last day, Russellville FFA went to McNamara Florist for a tour and designed a flower bouquet. This florist is owned by Toomie Farris, 1976 Russellville High School Graduate. FFA members went on educational tours to Conner Prairie and Beasley's Orchard in Indianapolis before heading home to Mid-Missouri. Thank you to all FFA supporters for your help in achieving the funding and the support for this special trip to National FFA Convention.

L to R front row: Braden Schad, Caleb Knoche, Hunter Harris, Bayley Graham, Callee Smith, Audra Whittle, Abby Forsee, Kaylee Strobel, Aaryn Bunch, Erin Whittle.

L to R Middle row: Alex Maier, Zeke Mertens, Brady Kauffman, Brodie Scheperle, Bailey Wineland, Jada Schmidt.

Back row: Grant Smith



Russellville FFA Members Jillian Schmidt and Shelby Morrow traveled to Indianapolis, IN November 1st, 2025, to receive their American FFA Degree. Not pictured and also receiving the degree is Lauren Stubinger. These students represent the top 1% of all FFA members in the United States based on their high level of FFA involvement and their Supervised Agricultural Experience.

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## **Community Health Services**

The Cole County Health Department invites you to experience the convenience and quality of their Quick Care Clinic, serving anyone 2 years of age and older. Please see the flier below or visit [colehealth.org](http://colehealth.org) for more information.

## **Upcoming Special Events and Activities**

### **Winter Athletic Enhancement Program**

We are excited to begin our Winter Athletic Enhancement Program!

Starting December 8th, we will be opening the weight room after school on Monday and Wednesday for the rest of the semester! Come join us! #WeAreAllIndians

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### **Elementary Christmas Concert**

You're invited!

Join us for our Elementary Christmas Program on Monday, December 15 at 6pm in the High School gym.

A grandparents-only matinee performance will also be held on Friday, December 12 at 10am in the Elementary gym.

### **Important Dates**

**December 13** - Carnival - 12:00pm-3:00pm

**December 19** - End of 2nd Quarter

**December 19** - Early Release at 12:30 - No After School Care!

**December 22-January 2** - Christmas Break - NO SCHOOL

**January 5** - Teacher Workday - NO SCHOOL

**January 6** - 2nd Semester Begins

### **Employment Opportunities**

**Sub Bus Drivers Needed** - Please contact Tina Weber at 573-690-3256.

**Substitute Teachers** - The Cole County R-1 School District is in need of Substitute Teachers. Must have Substitute Certification from DESE. The pay is \$100 per day. The Cole County R-1 School

District is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Download and print the Classified application from our website (coler1indians.socs.net), or you may pick up an application at the Superintendent's office. Any questions, please contact Rachel Brizendine at 573-782-3534.



**Jeff Jennewein**

Jeff is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters