



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA — June 11, 2026 — The Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) is pleased to announce the selection of two key leaders to the superintendent’s Executive Cabinet, effective July 1, 2026. Nicole Brown has been named the district’s new Chief of Learning, and Stephanie Van Hemert will assume the role of Area 1 Chief of Schools, Special Services, & Early Learning, pending board approval.

These selections follow a thorough leadership evaluation aimed at ensuring continuous instructional support and systemic stability across all CRCSD buildings. Both administrators bring extensive institutional knowledge, a deep understanding of district mechanics, and a strong history of student advocacy within the Cedar Rapids community.

"We are incredibly fortunate to have such a wealth of talent, passion, and expertise within our district," said Superintendent Dr. Tawana Lannin. *"Both Nicole and Stephanie bring the leadership qualities that matter most: trust, credibility, compassion, and a relentless commitment to our students. They understand that meaningful change happens through relationships, strong schools, and partnerships with staff and families. This is exactly the right leadership team to help us elevate student achievement and continue moving CRCSD forward."*

Nicole Brown – Chief of Learning

Nicole Brown transitions into the role of Chief of Learning after serving for two years as the district's Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction. Nicole brings 27 years of educational experience, including a decade of school-level service as an elementary classroom teacher, special education teacher, and elementary principal. Before joining CRCSD, she spent 15 years split between the Mississippi Bend and Grant Wood Area Education Agencies (AEAs). In those roles, she specialized in school improvement, Teacher Leadership & Compensation (TLC) structures, professional development, and the implementation of Iowa Core ELA Standards. Under her new cabinet title, Brown will continue to guide the district's curriculum and instruction pathways along with.

"I am honored and humbled to become the new Chief of Learning for Cedar Rapids Community School District. What I know to be true is that our educators care deeply about teaching, learning, and our students," shared Nicole. *"I am excited to continue to lead and learn alongside them as we continue to make the Cedar Rapids Community School District*

the district of choice. I look forward to supporting and building strong teams and aligning our practices and resources so we can continue to build upon our strong foundation in instruction, curriculum, and assessment.”

Stephanie Van Hemert – Area 1 Chief of Schools, Special Services, & Early Learning

Stephanie Van Hemert has 17 years of educational experience and has served as Principal of Grant Elementary School for the past 3 years. Prior to coming to CRCSD, she served as a special education teacher, building facilitator, and principal in the College Community School District. Stephanie’s leadership blends a deep commitment to student advocacy with vital school-level experience, earning family trust and demonstrating a proven ability to guide communities through change with empathy and systemic support. Stephanie holds a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education with an Instructional Strategist II Endorsement, as well as a Master of Science in Educational Leadership and a Master of Arts in Special Education/Autism Spectrum Disorders.

“My time at Grant Elementary has given me a deep appreciation for the students, families, and staff who work together to create such a strong and supportive school community. While I will deeply miss Grant’s amazing team and students, I am excited about the opportunity to support our staff, school leaders, and students in Area 1 so we can continue making a difference for families across the district,” shared Stephanie.

Superintendent Dr. Tawana Lannin notes that these leadership assignments mark an exciting step forward for the district’s executive team.

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Next Steps & Transitions

With Stephanie Van Hemert transitioning into her new role on July 1st, district leadership is working to identify her replacement at Grant Elementary School. The district is fully committed to maintaining operational stability and involving Grant staff and families directly in the interview and selection process.

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