

# Couple Connection: Seniors crowned homecoming royalty

By ALIVIA DUNAWAY

Homecoming royalty is typically important to whoever wins it, but for this couple, it was more emotional.

Queen Stella Charles and King Mason Reed have been dating for more than two years.

They were placed on the court together with their peers. Candidates were Rylie Koranda, Ava Schaal, Beth Brennan, Brady Gartner, Preston Price and Treyce Ferguson.

The fact that they won together was important in their relationship for numerous reasons.

“It felt really good to know the person I got king with,” Reed said. “I know everyone, but I know her on a different level.”

At the dance, the king and queen always dance together.

“I didn’t want to dance with someone, and it be awkward,” Charles said. “So, it was nice being able to dance with someone I’m used to being around.”

Charles receiving queen was not only huge in her relationship, but also in her life.

Charles’ dad and grandpa are well known throughout the school for various records and accomplishments; following up on that legacy can be challenging both mentally and physically.

“My sister and brother also have records,” Charles said. “My family is known

to be really good at sports, so I want to keep going with that.”

Charles, being named queen, followed up on the reputation her family had set and made her start to fall in line with it as well.

“My whole family has gone to Mead and set some kind of reputation there, so this

is me starting to set mine,” Charles said.

Some wonder if they received king and queen together because they are a couple.

“I definitely think that played into it a little bit,” Charles said. “Some people have told me that if they were going to vote for me, they had to vote for Mason and vice versa.”

Charles and Reed had similar emotions leading up to the announcement, like nerves and excitement, but one of Reed’s stood out more than the others.

One of Reed’s close friends, Ferguson, was injured during the game before the announcement; he was also on court.

“I was kind of hoping Treyce would get it to boost his spirits up a little bit after being injured,” Reed said.

After hearing he was on the court, Reed wanted to win.

“When I heard my name, I was super excited, just because I know that’s a big accomplishment and really does show that you have more friends than you think you do,” Reed said.



Mason Reed hugs his cousin Drew Bloomquist after being named homecoming king.

**“I was kind of hoping Treyce would get it to boost his spirits a little bit after being injured.”  
Mason Reed**

# POWERED OFF

## *New Phone Policy Causes Controversy*

BY ALIVIA DUNAWAY

Mead Public Schools implemented a cell phone ban for the 2025-26 school year with numerous benefits hoping to come. Teachers are hopeful, while some students are upset and not understanding the point.

According to K-12 principal Darin Kovar, students will not be able to use their phones from the time school starts at 8 a.m. until the final bell rings at 3:25 p.m.. The thought behind this is getting students to build stronger relationships with peers and also helping with the mental health of students, he said.

“It is one less thing they have to worry about,” Kovar said.

Some students do not understand the point of the phone ban and don’t think they will see any improvement with it.

“I think kids will still be thinking about what is going on on their phones,” senior Preston Price said. “Taking their phones so that they can’t check them makes the kids

more focused on that than learning.”

Price has been able to use his phone during passing periods and lunch since seventh grade, so this is a bit of an adjustment for him.

“I find myself pulling my phone out, going to check it and then realizing I can’t and putting it back,” Price said.

Some students see it as more of an inconvenience rather than an annoyance.

“If I get a text or need to text my parents about things going on, I can’t anymore,” junior Abram Lee said.

Elementary students have not been allowed to use their phones at all, so they come into seventh grade ready to use them. This year that is not the case.

“The year I finally get to have it and now I don’t,” seventh grader Charlie Reed said.

The students have found different things to keep them occupied during downtime like lunch and passing periods.

“We’ve started to play card games together at lunch and just having real conver-

sations with each other,” Price said.

Lee added, “During passing periods, I actually talk to my friends rather than being on my phone checking it before the next class starts.”

Some students used their phones at lunchtime as a debrief time, so this could also be a difficult change for them.

“You take away phones from people who use that as a stress reliever at lunch,” Lee said. “It’s not really fair to them.”

Some stipulations to the phone policy have been put into place, like kids with diabetes have theirs on at all times to be able to check and balance their numbers. Another exception to the policy is journalism students.

Students in journalism use their phones to record interviews, film broadcasts or even take quick pictures. The phone ban was a big concern for Rod Henkel, journalism advisor. He was at first worried students would not be able to have them at all, but then worked out a plan with the school

board and superintendent.

“They assured me we would still be able to use them. I’d just have to monitor it a little bit closer,” Henkel said.

Some of last year’s problems, according to Kovar, led up to the decision of the phone ban, but it was not the administration’s first decision.

“Our recommendation was that we felt for the most part phones weren’t a huge issue, but there were some problems,” Kovar said. “Even some legal things that definitely made us understand why the board voted the way they did.”

Even though it wasn’t the administration’s decision, they are happy to support and think it will help students with building deeper connections and relationships with peers and focus more on their mental health.

“We have even started to see students who usually sit alone, sit with new people and build the connections we are hoping they will,” Kovar said.

# ...NEW ELEMENTARY

## Old building means many problems, safety concerns

BY WYATT ENGEL

For more than a century, the old brick walls of Mead Elementary School have echoed with the sounds of pencils scratching, lockers slamming and children's laughter.

But at 107 years old, the elementary school may soon face its biggest test yet: whether to be completely rebuilt or remodeled.

The historic structure is facing a multitude of significant concerns, including spalling bricks that are crumbling and losing their integrity, which not only affects the building's aesthetic appeal but also compromises its structural stability.

Compounding these issues are various electrical problems, such as faulty wiring and aging circuit systems, which have raised safety alarms and posed potential fire hazards.

These pressing challenges prompted the decision to proceed with necessary renovations and upgrades.

Superintendent P.J. Quinn views these challenges not merely as obstacles but as significant safety issues that directly impact the well-being of the students.

"The bricks needed to be replaced because their faces were cracked, and this was a safety risk because anyone standing below could be struck by a brick," Quinn said.

In addition to the noticeable brick spalling that surrounds its exterior, this aging building is equipped with an antique heating and air conditioning system that struggles to maintain a comfortable indoor climate.

Third-grade teacher Valerie Reiman has faced these conditions throughout her teaching career.

"Temperature control is a big issue we have at the elementary school, whether it's with the big radiators or the air conditioners that get turned off because they can't run anymore," Reiman said.

The antiquated boiler system is inefficient and no longer meets modern safety

standards, resulting in rising energy costs and inadequate heating during colder months.

"Every year, when it's the beginning of boiler season, I get really worried. Is the boiler going to start? Is it going to run all winter?" Quinn said. "We believe that this boiler was installed sometime in the 60s."

So, what measures does the school take to address these issues and ensure a supportive learning environment for the students?

At this juncture, the school board faces two distinct options regarding the future of the elementary school: restoration or reconstruction.

School board president Richard Kuhr believes that a new building is the best option.

"We've had a lot of memories in that building, but from a practical standpoint, putting money in that building is probably not the best thing to do," Kuhr said.

The costs of building a new elementary school and restoring the old building are more similar than one might expect.

"When you put that kind of money into it, it's about half of what it would take to take care of that building versus building a new elementary school, at least that was the estimate," Kuhr said.

The members of the school board are facing a pressing deadline as they deliberate on the future of a new elementary school project.

With critical meetings on the horizon, there is a sense of urgency to make decisions that will affect the fate of the historic building currently in question.

"At the December board of education meeting, they would consider whether or not to have a bond election to levy a bond tax to accumulate the funds necessary to build a new building," Quinn said.

This revered building has stood the test of time and has become a safe place for thousands of children. Laughter will forever echo the halls of Mead Elementary School, whether it be in a new building or a renovated one.

**James Engel**

**Mead High School**