



January  
2026  
Vol. 28  
No. 6

# Dakota Prairie Knight Reader

<http://www.dakota-prairie.k12.nd.us>

## A Few Things by Jay Slade, Superintendent



Hello everyone and welcome to January,

The month of cold weather, new beginnings, and getting back into the swing of regular life after the holidays. Speaking of the Holidays, I hope you all were able to enjoy some relaxing times with family and friends. I hope your travel plans were not overly disrupted because of the weather, and I hope all students and staff come back refreshed and ready to start semester 2 (S2).

For high school students, please make sure of any changes to your daily schedule and reach out to those teachers about materials you may need for their class. For elementary students, there isn't a significant change to your day regarding scheduling, so keep working hard and getting better every day.

For my first and only topic; I would like to address the bus driver shortage and what that may mean for the next school year. Simply stated, we don't have enough drivers for our area. Because of this reality, we have discussed some contingency plans with admin and board members. None of the plans discussed will allow routes/shuttles to remain exactly the same as they have been. To be blunt, some of these plans are going to make current stakeholders change their daily routine. My reasoning for explaining this problem and these contingencies is twofold: To inform every one of the options being discussed and to hopefully attract additional drivers so routes/shuttles can remain relatively similar to our current situation. I need to stress that none of these options are finalized, and I am hoping we do not have to resort to any of these:

Option #1 No going outside of the school district boundaries. This simply means bus drivers will not leave the boundary of Dakota Prairie and any student who is open enrolled to Dakota Prairie will need to find transportation to a previously agreed upon location with drivers.

Option #2 Drivers only pick up in towns (Petersburg, McVile, Aneta, Michigan, Tolna, Pekin). This means any student who lives outside of those towns will need to find transportation to the closest pick-up location.

Option #3 No shuttles after practice. This means that if your student

[Continued on page 2](#)

**PLEASE  
CONTACT  
THE SCHOOL  
TO RECEIVE  
A PRINTED  
COPY EACH  
MONTH**

### Inside this issue:

Library News	2
Community News	3-4
School Board Minutes	5-6
High School News	7-10
Elementary News	11

A Few Things continued.

is involved in an activity, it is the responsibility of each family to get that student home after practices are complete.

Option #4 Pick-ups only in McVile and Petersburg. This mean busses will only travel to the schools and all families are responsible for meeting the bus at a specific time arranged with the driver.

Again, this is not finalized, nor are any of the options ideas we enjoy. My purpose with this memo is to inform the public about the upcoming concerns and hopefully entice a would-be driver into driving. If you would like to become a driver for DP, all the classes you need to take are online and we will pay for them. Besides the completion of the classes, the two major things needed are a background check, and to pass a bus drivers physical, which the district pays for. If you are at all interested in driving, please contact me at either DPE or DPHS during the day.

## LIBRARY NEWS

Thank you to everyone who helped support the Scholastic Book Fair that took place Dec 1-5. We generated a new record for our Winter Fair funds. Our total was \$3,628! We received 40% back in Scholastic Dollars to spend on our school. There will be a second book fair in May, which will be Buy One Get One Free. Without our Winter Fair, we wouldn't be able to do the BOGO Fair. Many thanks.

I grabbed a couple books from the book fair to add to our collection — the new Baby Sitter's Club graphic novel and another cookbook. Over the winter break, I did some cataloging for the elementary school and cleared out a space in my home office for more new books. There are many fun read a louds and a series called Big Questions Answered that revolves around natural events and phenomenon. Titles include: *Are Bee's Nature's Tiny Heroes?* and *Can Predicting the Weather Save Lives?* Those and other new titles will be added to the collection in the coming weeks.

This year, January is reading month at Dakota Prairie Elementary. The committee has gathered and this year's theme is Race to Candy Castle, our take on Candyland. Each classroom will have punch cards with total books read as well as weekly challenges. The committee opted against dress up days this year. The final event will be a school wide movie and treat held in the gym.

Keep Reading!

SJ



## NC CHARGER BAND AND CHOIR

March 11<sup>th</sup> Large Group Music Festival March @ Carrington

April 1<sup>st</sup> Solo/Ensemble contest @ Jamestown

May 2<sup>nd</sup> State Music

May 4<sup>th</sup> Spring Concert Tuesday @ 6pm at Dakota Prairie High School

Dates may change. Watch this section and social media for updates to this schedule throughout the school year.

Nelson County Charger Band and Choir participated in the Barnes County Music Festival on November 24th. Pictures below.



**Christmas Break runs  
December 22nd  
through January 4th  
Teachers return Jan 2  
Students return Jan 5**

There will be no school for students on Monday, January 19th in observance of Martin Luther King Jr Day. Teachers have Professional Development.



The 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Johnson/Molstad 7 Mindsets Group raised funds to purchase ingredients for pumpkin pie kits, ensuring all items were non-perishable and shelf stable. Students selected a recipe, assembled the kits, and delivered them to the Michigan Food Pantry. While there, they also supported pantry volunteers by stocking and organizing shelves and breaking down boxes.



### 🍂 1. Pumpkin Spice Cake Kit

#### Box contents:

- 1 box *spice cake mix*
- 1 (15 oz) can *pumpkin purée*
- 1 can *cream cheese frosting* (shelf-stable)
- Optional: small container of cinnamon sugar or pumpkin spice mix
- Printed tag with instructions

#### Tag instructions:

🍂 *Pumpkin Spice Cake (no eggs, butter, or milk needed!)*  
 Mix together 1 box spice cake mix and 1 can pumpkin purée.  
 Spread in a greased 9x13 pan. Bake at 350°F for 25–30 min.  
 Cool completely, then frost and sprinkle with cinnamon sugar.

## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

## ~ UNOFFICIAL MINUTES~

DAKOTA PRAIRIE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #1

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2026

7:30 A.M. ZOOM MEETING

- ◆ Mr. David Blasey—President
- ◆ Mr. Charlie Stein
- ◆ Mrs. Jennifer Rusten
- ◆ Mrs. Nikki Ohnstad
- ◆ Mrs. Anna Halvorson

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Dave Blasey with members Nikki Ohnstad, Charlie Stein, Jennifer Rusten and Anna Halvorson present. Also present were Superintendent Jay Slade, principals Jackie Bye, Clay Johnson, Business Manager Lori Dahl and Hunter Sand Athletic Director.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Charlie Stein Second by Jennifer Rusten to confirm the proposed agenda, with the removal of items 4 and 5 off the agenda all in favor, motion carried.

The minutes and bills were presented to the board for review and approval.

Motion by Charlie Stein, second by Anna Halvorson, to approve the minutes as printed and the bills for payment. All in favor, motion carried.

Activity Director Report: Hunter Sand reported that there were 70 in attendance at the fall sports banquet. Basketball Seasons are in full swing, we have a Junior High Girls Coach, (Cory and Colleen Anderson will take it on), Courtney Stein may still be helping. The girls' basketball team had their first win at the Lake Region Tournament, and we had a selection for the all-tournament team. For the Spring season, we are looking for a head track coach. Mr. Sand is working with Hudl to set up sponsorships looking at a tier system, and next year to put together a sponsor package. We are still working on pricing, game sponsorship ideas, and will try to have it set up for the first of the year.

Elementary Principal Report: Elementary events and activities, student testing, virtual learning, human trafficking education, the. [Also](#) discussed behavior initiatives and academic initiatives. The elementary school is also working on the community engagement project of assembling elderly Christmas baskets. The current enrolments and hosting a student teacher in January. [Behaviors](#) this year have been wonderful; there are a few exceptions but are isolated incidents.

High School Principal Report: Music concert was very successful; there was a group of students in 7 Mindsets went to the Aneta Home and it was very well received. Virtual learning has been very well attended and connected. Students have made up all their time and did not need to attend the board meeting; the early graduation requests have made other arrangements. Finals week is coming up and stressful for all. The state testing at the high school will be done in late January.

Superintendent Slade presented calendar suggestions for the 2026-27 school year. He is looking for board suggestions and will bring back a proposal for the January board meeting. It was requested that there be snow days built in, not virtual learning, but also a question if the quality of instruction is acceptable with virtual learning, also could we try to make the schedule more compatible with Lakota due to practices etc.

The 2026-27 bus routes need discussion. We are going to be short bus drivers next year, so there

Continued on page 6

*School Board Minutes continued.*

will be changes made. This decision will need to be made prior to the end of this school year, so parents are aware of what will happen. At this point it looks like we will have 2 additional resignations and are already down one driver this year. We have only 1 person working on their license at this time. We need drivers or we need to make changes. Suggestions to date are to eliminate transportation for out of [district](#) students, elimination of after school practice shuttles, routes only between McVile or Petersburg. Jackie Bye suggested an open house night for anyone interested in driving so we can give them all the information firsthand, have board members and transportation. The discussion will continue at future meetings; board members will talk with their communities and other parents.

The following policies are recommended to approve updates: ABAA, ABAB, ABBDA, ABCA, ABCB, BAA, BAB.

Jennifer Rusten, second Charlie Stein to approve the following updates to policies: ABAA, ABAB, ABBDA, ABCA, ABCB, BAA, BAB, all in [favor](#), motion carried.

Policy BBC, BC is recommended for 1<sup>st</sup> reading.

Motion by Jennifer Rusten second by Anna Halvorson to approve BBC and BC for first reading. All in favor, motion carried.

Policy CAAA, CAAB, CABB, CBAA are presented for the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Motion by Jennifer [Rusten](#) second by Charlie Stein to approve policy CAAA, CAAB, CABB, CBAA for second reading. All in favor, motion carried.

Mr. Slade would like the board to review and decide if they would like to adopt policy BEC as this is a recommended policy regarding school board self-evaluation. There is also a recommended evaluation form that will be brought to the board; this item is tabled [to](#) the January Meeting.

The financial reports were presented for the board's approval.

Motion by Anna Halvorson second by Charlie Stein to accept the November 2025 financial reports as presented. All in favor, motion carried.

Here will be a formal thank you and pictures for the newspaper and the Knight Reader to [the Michigan](#), McVile and Tolna Legions for the donations for the school to purchase 6 backpack [AED's](#). There are also banners that will hang in the gym at the Elementary.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the DPHS Conference Room.

Motion by Jennifer Rusten, second by Charlie Stein to adjourn. All in favor, motion carried.

## HIGH SCHOOL NEWS

### Michigan Ambulance Service Helps 10<sup>th</sup> Graders Choice Ready

Article submitted by Mr. Dustin Martin

Sara Vaith, Sam Emory and Dan Reineke from the Michigan Ambulance Service brought their expertise over to the DPHS in early December to teach the 10<sup>th</sup> graders how to administer CPR, help out choking victims and use an AED machine. Students watched videos on the skills and then got to use mannequins to demonstrate and practice the techniques. Students learned that CPR could help save a life by pumping oxygen and blood into vital organs. This training also made the students more choice ready by earning an industrial credential under the workforce ready part of the choice ready framework. The counseling department at DPHS would like to thank the Michigan Ambulance Service for taking the time out of their busy schedule to help our students learn a great skill. If you would like to know more about the choice ready framework, please call Mr. Dustin Martin at the school. If you would like to know more about potentially saving a life or how to help in your community by getting involved with the Michigan Ambulance Service, please call Sara at 701-259-2299.



### November 7 Mindsets Projects

Student written article by Henry Parsons

On November 25<sup>th</sup> Dakota Prairie had a snowy day. The students had to have an e-learning day, so unfortunately some of them could not finish their 7 mindsets projects. The groups that were able to finish their projects were freshmen and juniors. The freshman made Thanksgiving dessert kits for the food pantry. Then, they volunteered at the Michigan Food Pantry for an hour. The juniors went to Aneta to the nursing home to do some puzzles with the elderly. Dori from the junior class said, "We went to the Aneta Nursing home for 7 mindsets project We Are Connected. At the nursing home we did puzzles and visited with the residents. It was interesting to hear how they grew up and how different it is in today's time."

Many of the groups didn't get a chance to finish their projects because of the snowy day. They all have plans to reschedule their projects. Those groups were 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The seniors plan to make a vision board to put their goals and quotes on. Sophomores made tie blankets to donate to the nursing home in Park River. The eighth graders plan to make hot chocolate for the whole school, and the seventh graders plan to use Canva to create designs for hats that include their goals.





## HIGH SCHOOL NEWS

### Ways to Get Gen Z Talking

Talking with teens can feel tricky but staying connected doesn't require long lectures or perfect timing. Some of the most meaningful conversations happen in the car, while making dinner, or during a quick check-in before bed.

One of the best ways to get Gen Z talking is to change *how* we ask, not *what* we ask.

#### Try these approaches:

##### 1. Ask open-ended, low-pressure questions

Instead of "How was school?" try:

- *"What drained your energy today?"*
- *"What was actually kind of fun today?"*
- *"What was the most interesting part of your day?"*
- *"What was stressful today?"*
- *"Who did you spend time with today? Online or in person?"*
- *"What's one thing you're looking forward to this week?"*

##### 2. Talk side-by-side, not face-to-face

Gen Z often opens up more during car rides, walks, or while doing an activity together. Unlike previous generations, eye contact isn't required for meaningful conversation.

##### 3. Lead with curiosity, not correction

When teens feel judged or immediately corrected, they shut down. As hard as it can be to bite your lip, try listening fully before responding, even if you don't agree.

##### 4. Validate before problem-solving

A simple *"That makes sense"* or *"That sounds frustrating"* can go a long way. Teens are more likely to keep talking when they feel understood.

##### 5. Silence can speak louder than words

Pausing instead of filling the space gives teens time to think and often leads to more honest answers.

##### 6. The Magic Minute

Some experts suggest trying to reach a total of 10-20 minutes a day of conversation with a teen. This can be all in one chunk or divided into short segments, like the first few minutes they get home from school or the 10 minutes before they fall asleep.

Please reach out to the counselors if you have any questions.



## HIGH SCHOOL NEWS

Student Council hosted a food-eating challenge for the month of November. One student from each grade competed to see who could finish their food the fastest. Participants were allowed to use their hands when eating the corn, but hands were not permitted for the pumpkin pie, stuffing, or mashed potatoes.



### CTE Program Makes a Big Impact

A new national study shows just how important Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) is to both students and our economy. The report found that more than 350 careers across 215 different industries rely on FACS skills. That includes everything from nutrition and child development to financial literacy and housing. FACS careers generate an \$753 billion in economic activity each year.

FACS plays a major role in preparing students for real life. Over 1 million high school students enrolled in FACS courses. It supports healthy families, smart budgeting, strong communities, and essential workforce skills.

#### Key Highlights

- \$753 billion in annual economic impact
  - 1+ million high school students currently taking FACS courses
- Lower unemployment for FACS degree holders

*Source: 2024 AAFCS Family and Consumer Sciences Industry Economic Impact Study.*

## HIGH SCHOOL NEWS

TRIO Talent Search is a federally funded program that supports students as they complete high school and make their next step. We offer encouragement and hands-on help with academics as well as college and career exploration. Our goal is to help students and families feel confident, informed, and excited about future opportunities.



Ruth is our TRIO coordinator. She mentors students as well as presents classroom presentations. She is here nearly every week. If you ever need assistance with anything college bound related, please email her: [ruth.gripentrog@und.edu](mailto:ruth.gripentrog@und.edu)



Student Council recently hosted a food drive to collect non-perishable items and supplies for the local food pantry. As an incentive, the Knight Time group that donated the most items earned donuts. Congratulations to Ms. McMillin's Knight Time for an outstanding effort, bringing in a total of 116 items.



In addition, Student Council organized a bake sale, with proceeds going toward purchasing Angel Tree gifts for three children, as well as supporting future Student Council initiatives. A total of \$179 was raised through the bake sale.

Thanks to student council members and their families for making delicious goods.





## ~ Elementary News ~

Traci from NDSU Extension—Nelson County had the chance to visit Dakota Prairie Elementary first grade classroom to teach “C is for Cookie” and talk about all the ingredients that go into making a cookie and how they all start with agriculture.

From wheat that becomes flour, to eggs, milk, sugar, and even vanilla, the students learned that cookies don’t just come from the store. They come from farms, fields, and hardworking producers right here in our ag community. The kids were curious, engaged, and full of great questions.



### AR Awards

#### November 2025

##### 25 Points

Kaynen Jones  
Kelsie Jones

##### 300 Points

Emmitt Engen

##### 100 Points

Gracie Flom  
Oliver Gordon  
Mila Watkins  
Ava Hjelmstad



### 2026-2027 PRESCHOOL INFORMATION

If you have a child who will turn 4 years old **BEFORE** August 1, 2026, and **HAVE NOT** notified the elementary school (322-4771) to be added to the census list, please **call by February 1, 2026**. We will be mailing out registration letters for pre-school for the 2026-2027 school year the middle of February and need your information to include you in our registration list.

### KINDERGARTEN 2026-2027

Any students who will be attending Dakota Prairie Elementary Kindergarten for **the 2026-2027 school year**, and **ARE NOT** enrolled in our Preschool this school year, please call the elementary office (322-4771) by **FEBRUARY 1, 2026**, to be added to the Kindergarten Class List for the 2026-2027 school year. To enroll in Kindergarten **you must turn 5 years old before August 1, 2026**.

# January 2026

January 5—Start of Second Semester

January 14—School Board Meeting @ DPHS 7pm

January 19—No School: MLKJ Day; Teacher PD

**PLEASE CHECK THE DAKOTA PRAIRIE HOME PAGE  
FOR THE MOST CURRENT ACTIVITIES SCHEDULES**

<https://www.dakota-prairie.k12.nd.us>

## Future Dates of Interest

*December 22—Jan 4: No School: Holiday Break*

*January 2—Teacher Work Day*

*January 5—Start of Second Semester*

*January 19—No School: MLKJ Day; Teacher PD*

*February 9—No School: Mid Winter Break*

*March 6—No School: Mid Winter Break*

*March 18— Teacher PD in AM; Parent Teacher Conf @ Elem 1-6*

*March 19-20—No School: Spring Break*

*April 3—No School: Good Friday*

*April 6—No school: Teacher Work Day*

*May 22—Last Day of School; Dismiss @ 1:30*

*May 24—Graduation @ 1pm*



### **Dakota Prairie School District**

**Box 37**

**Petersburg, ND 58272**

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Comments may be made in writing or by calling 701-345-8233 during school hours.

Discrimination  
and Harassment  
Grievance  
Procedure

Nondiscrimina-  
tion and Anti-  
Harassment  
Policy

Title IX Sexual  
Harassment  
Grievance  
Procedure



Dakota Prairie  
Course Descriptions



Dakota Prairie does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or age, in its programs or activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The Dakota Prairie Superintendent has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies. (Supt. Jay B. Slade, P.O. Box 37, Petersburg, ND, 58272, 701-345-8233, [jay.slade@k12.nd.us](mailto:jay.slade@k12.nd.us)).

Title IX Coordinator: Dakota Prairie Superintendent — District Office Phone Number 701-345-8233 (Supt. Jay B. Slade, P.O. Box 37, Petersburg, ND, 58272, 701-345-8233, [jay.slade@k12.nd.us](mailto:jay.slade@k12.nd.us)).