



THE CARDINAL CHIRP

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Mission Statement: "ALMA: Providing quality educational opportunities to Adapt, Learn, Motivate, & Achieve"

From the Desk of the Superintendent

Mr. Jon Davis, Superintendent

The New School Year is Here!

The new school year is here, and we are excited to welcome back our students, teachers, and staff. The first few weeks of school have gotten off to a great start, and it is exciting to see our students back in the classrooms and participating in school activities. The fall activities are already underway, with softball, football, volleyball, cross country, and cheerleading all in action. Our students have already participated in several games and events, and we look forward to a great fall season.

As we begin another school year, Alma Public Schools would like to remind everyone of the importance of good sportsmanship at all school activities, both at home and away. Fans are encouraged to be positive in their support of our teams and players and to refrain from negative comments directed toward players, coaches, officials, or other participants. Our student-athletes work hard to represent Alma Public Schools, and they need and deserve our unconditional support.

School Attendance is Important

One of the top priorities at Alma Public Schools is stressing the importance of regular school attendance. Student attendance is important not only to the school but also to the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Legislature. Nebraska law places responsibilities on school districts to monitor attendance, address excessive absences, and work with families to identify and reduce barriers that may prevent students from attending school regularly.

Nebraska law requires school boards to have a written attendance policy that is developed and annually reviewed in collaboration with the county attorney of the county in which the school district's principal office is located. Alma Public Schools' attendance policy has been developed to comply with state attendance requirements and is reviewed regularly.

Under Nebraska law, children who reach six years of age before January 1 of the current school year and who have not reached eighteen years of age are generally required to attend school regularly. State law also recognizes circumstances in which a student may be absent from school for legitimate reasons.

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Mark Your Calendar

Sept 4th-- No School

Sept 16th-- 10:00 Start/ Teacher Inservice

Sept 24th-- 1:00 Dismissal for PT Conferences

From the Desk of the Supt.

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As stated in the student handbook, "The establishment and maintaining of desirable habits of punctuality and attendance is a shared responsibility of the parents, students, and the school."

That shared responsibility is extremely important. Without regular school attendance, a student can struggle to keep up academically and may miss important classroom experiences. Regular attendance is one of the most important factors in a student's ability to be successful in school. It also helps establish habits of responsibility and punctuality that will be important later in life.

Regardless of the reason for an absence, when a student misses a day of school, they miss a day of learning. While a student can make up assignments, take a quiz, or read what was discussed in class, they cannot completely recreate the questions, discussions, interaction with classmates, and other classroom experiences that make learning meaningful.

Parents Can Help

Parents play an important role in helping their children develop good attendance habits. Whenever possible, parents can help by:

- Scheduling doctor and dental appointments outside of the school day.
- Avoiding family trips during the school day when possible.
- Minimizing unnecessary absences.
- Making sure students are up and ready to leave for school on time.
- Talking with their children about the importance of attending school regularly.
- Supporting the school's attendance policy and helping their children understand the importance of regular attendance.

Regular attendance benefits everyone. Students have more opportunities to learn, teachers spend less classroom time reteaching material that students have missed, and office staff spend less time contacting families to verify absences.

Alma Public Schools Attendance Policy

A brief explanation of the Alma Public Schools attendance policy is as follows:

The total of all excused and unexcused absences shall not exceed ten (10) days per semester. A student who exceeds ten (10) absences in a single class may have credit affected in that class in accordance with the school's attendance policy.

We understand that there are circumstances that may make regular attendance difficult. If parents or students believe there are extenuating circumstances contributing to excessive absences, they are encouraged to communicate with school administrators. The school will work with the student and family to identify barriers to attendance and develop a collaborative plan when appropriate.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Nebraska law requires schools to track student attendance and address excessive absences. Absences may occur for a variety of reasons, including illness, medical or dental appointments, family emergencies, bereavement, religious observances, court appearances, or other circumstances.

Parents should continue to follow the school's procedures for reporting and documenting absences. An absence that is excused by the school may still count toward Alma Public Schools' attendance limit unless the school policy specifically provides otherwise.

Participation in Alma Public Schools extracurricular activities is considered part of the school day. School-sponsored activities such as band, choir, FFA, play production, Quiz Bowl, academic competitions, athletic events, and other school activities are school-excused absences and are not counted toward the school's absence limitation.

Excessive Absences and State Law

Nebraska law requires schools to take specific steps when students have excessive absences. Schools are required to address barriers to attendance and provide services designed to improve regular attendance. This may include communication with parents and meetings involving school personnel, the family, and the student when appropriate.

The goal is to identify the reasons for excessive absences and develop a collaborative plan to reduce barriers and improve attendance.

Nebraska law also establishes requirements for addressing students who are habitually absent from school. When the requirements of state law are met, a school district may be required to make a report to the county attorney. These procedures are intended to address attendance problems and ensure that students receive the support necessary to attend school regularly.

Alma Public Schools will continue to follow Nebraska law and the district's attendance policy. Our goal is not to punish students or families. Our goal is to work with parents and students to remove barriers to attendance and help every student attend school regularly.

The majority of our students have good attendance records, and we appreciate the efforts of our parents and students. We also recognize that circumstances sometimes arise that make regular attendance difficult. When those circumstances occur, we encourage families to communicate with the school so that we can work together to find solutions.

High School Bonus Days

To encourage and promote regular attendance among secondary students, Alma Public Schools has a High School Bonus Days policy that rewards students for attending school regularly and being on time.

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From the Desk of the Supt.

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Students who qualify for High School Bonus Days are exempt from taking semester tests and do not have to attend the final two days of the semester. The Bonus Days concept was originally created by students, with the policy developed by the administration as a way to reward students for good attendance.

The purpose of Bonus Days is not to punish students who do not qualify. Instead, the purpose is to provide an incentive for students to attend school regularly and be on time.

Like all school policies, the Bonus Days policy has been reviewed by the school's attorney. The Bonus Days policy has produced positive results. Each year, the majority of students in grades 7-12 qualify for Bonus Days each semester. We have also seen other positive results associated with regular attendance, including better grades, increased numbers of students on the honor roll, students returning to school after appointments, families scheduling appointments outside the school day when possible, and a decrease in tardies.

Most importantly, the policy helps reinforce the idea that showing up, being on time, and meeting responsibilities are important habits. These are skills that will serve our students well throughout their education and as they enter the workforce and adulthood.

Our Goal

Our goal is simple: We want every student at Alma Public Schools to be in school, on time, and ready to learn every day they are able to attend.

Thank you to our parents, students, teachers, and staff for working together to make regular attendance a priority. When we work together, our students have the best opportunity to be successful.

If you have any specific questions regarding school-related matters, please feel free to contact me by calling the school at 308-928-2131 or by email at jon.davis@almacardinals.org.

Ready, Set, Move!

Mr. Matthew Hageman, Physical Education

Summertime flew by, and we are all getting back into the school routine. I am excited about my new role as a K-12 PE teacher, and the first few weeks have been going great!

In elementary PE, we started the year by working on our football skills. The students enjoyed practicing catching and passing, as well as learning how to punt the football. We wrapped up the unit with a few days of Ultimate Football. By the end, all the grades were getting the hang of the game and having a lot of fun! We are now moving into our frisbee unit, where we will continue developing our throwing, catching, and teamwork skills.

In high school Personal Fitness, we have been hitting the weight room. The students have been working hard and giving great effort during each class period. I am excited to see their continued progress throughout the year!



Catch your favorite home events live on Striv.tv!

Welcome Back to School!

Mrs. Kim Ritter, Art Education

A new year is here, and the art room is ready for another year of creativity, imagination, and inspiration! Fresh supplies and fun materials are waiting to be turned into amazing works of art.

Students of all ages will have opportunities to learn new skills, try new techniques, and explore their own unique ideas. The art room is a place where creativity is encouraged, mistakes become a part of the learning process, and every student can discover their own artistic voice.

I am looking forward to seeing the wonderful ideas, creative projects, and masterpieces our students will create this year!

Welcome back, and have a fantastic year!

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Thursday, September 24,

Students will be dismissed
at 1:00 p.m.

Conferences will run from
2:30-7:30 p.m.

Building Perseverance and Resilience

Mrs. Ariel Neumeyer, School Psychologist

School is in full swing, and our students are already working hard to make those big and small academic gains. One of my favorite things to observe is students persevering through challenges or “sticking with it” when things get tough. Here are some ways we can continue to encourage our students to keep trying, persevere, and build resiliency:

- Praise effort, not just results (“I like how hard you worked on that problem.”).
- Normalize mistakes as part of learning (“Mistakes help our brains grow.”).
- Encourage self-talk strategies (“I can try again.” or “I haven’t figured it out yet.”).
- Break big tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.
- Allow time for practice and patience without rushing.
- Use stories or examples of resilient people who overcame obstacles.
- Encourage students to support and cheer for one another.
- Remind students of past times when they overcame obstacles.
- Encourage students to support and cheer for one another.
- Remind students of past times when they overcame difficult challenges.

National Suicide Prevention Month

September is an important month as we strive to raise awareness about suicide prevention. To learn more, I encourage you to visit the Suicide Prevention Resource Center or sprc.org.

The SAMHSA says it best: “Suicide affects millions of people every year, yet too many struggle in silence. Whether you’re facing challenges, supporting a friend or loved one, or are looking to help, your voice matters. This month is dedicated to recognizing the warning signs for suicide, encouraging open conversations about mental health, and connecting people to proven treatment and resources. When we stand together in strength, dignity, hope, and purpose, we can make a difference—we can help save lives.”

988 Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org>

If you need to talk, the 988 Lifeline is here. All you have to do is call, text, or chat 988, and you will be connected with a counselor who provides judgment-free care. You can expect confidential conversations about mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns, or just to talk to someone.

Community Events

- September 17th @ 12:00 p.m.: Suicide Awareness and Prevention Walk-- meeting at the SLS office (old clinic) 715 Brown St.
- September 30th @ 9:00 a.m.: Meet your mental health team cake and coffee hour with Sarah Shurigar-Meyer, Sara Zikmund, DeLaina Wulf, Katie Seyler, and Melissa Monahan at Dragonfly

It’s going to be a great school year as we work together to keep our students healthy, safe, and learning every day.

Welcome Back to APS!

Mrs. Brittney Biskup, Guidance Counselor

As the guidance counselor, one of my favorite parts of my job is that I get to see the students grow and change from year to year. Each fall I’m amazed at what extra sleep and sun do to help the kids shoot up and transform! Coming back to school is a fresh start for everyone with new enthusiasm to explore new topics, greet old and new friends, and strive to meet our goals!

My primary role is to serve APS students by supporting their social and emotional needs. I also support students in their academic success and teach Skills for Growing to students in grades K-6. During these classes, I teach skills that help children develop successful habits for interacting with others and becoming successful in the classroom. I teach Senior Survey which is a class for students considering their options after high school, specifically college as a post-high school option. In this class, we do career exploration, college applications, scholarships, and some fun projects. I am always looking for area experts who would want to share adulting skills with the seniors. Examples of previous presentations are budgeting, taxes, interviewing skills, banking, and more. Usually, these presentations happen in the spring. If you have something you think would help students, please reach out by email at brittney.biskup@almacardinals.org.

Outside of the classroom, I have many additional duties. I meet with students individually for counseling when they are facing struggles at home or school. While I am not a Licensed Mental Health Practitioner (LMHP), I can provide brief (around 20 min) sessions to help students manage feelings that may impede learning. If a student has deeper-rooted, long-term, or specific mental health issues, I can refer students to a LMHP in our area who can provide specific therapy that the school cannot provide. I participate in many meetings for our students, including our Student Assistance Team (SAT), IEP teams, and School Improvement Committees. In addition to my school roles, in the spring, I am an assistant track coach and love working with student-athletes in this capacity.

I’m a busy mom with 3 kids. Linden is a Senior at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri; Tucker is a Freshman at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona; and Layne is an 8th grader. I am regularly driving to activities and enjoy supporting students in their many endeavors.

I look forward to year 26 at Alma Public School and will continue to work with parents, students, and teachers to help students become the best they can be!

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Welcome Back to APS!

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Graduation Requirement Change/Update

The State is now requiring senior students/families to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to graduate. While APS must comply with the state requirements for graduation, we are here to support our families in many ways. First, if a family plans to file the FAFSA, they are welcome to do that on their own or with support. Mrs. Biskup will be hosting a FAFSA informational meeting (hosted by EducationQuest) on Sept. 28th at 6:30 pm in the library. Additionally, students/parents are welcome and encouraged to set up an appointment with EducationQuest to have them assist in filing the FAFSA after October 1st when it opens. Appointments can be made by calling 308-234-6310. Finally, if families do not plan to file the FAFSA, the state is allowing parents to sign an opt-out form that will need to be submitted to the school. If you are planning to opt-out, we ask that you submit this to the office before April 1st. Forms are available from Mrs. Biskup. We hope that this change will be easy for students and families to complete and meet the needs of each situation. If you have any questions, reach out to Mrs. Biskup.

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR

@ APS Library

Hours:

September 14-17 – 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

September 18-- 7:30 a.m.-noon

**Support your school while picking
your newest read!**



**Scan the QR code for book
trailers!**

First Grade Fun is Just Beginning!

Ms. Aliesha Luke, First Grade

Welcome to an exciting new school year! First grade is going to be a year full of learning, growing, exploring, and most importantly having FUN! This year is extra special for me because I am new to first grade, too! After teaching older students, I am excited to experience first grade and all the moments that come with it. I can't wait to learn and grow right alongside my students! In reading, we will become stronger readers by learning new sounds, practicing phonics skills, reading decodable books, building our vocabulary, and discovering the joy of reading. We will read stories, talk about characters, make connections, and become storytellers ourselves!

In math, we will explore numbers, addition and subtraction, shapes, measurement, place value, and so much more. We will use games, hands-on activities, and lots of problem-solving to help make math exciting.

Of course, learning isn't just about books and numbers. We will also spend lots of time learning how to be kind, respectful, responsible, and great classmates. We will practice working together, solving problems, helping others, and becoming more independent every day. There will be plenty of laughs, celebrations, special activities, creative projects, and memorable moments along the way. We may be little, but we have BIG things to learn and accomplish!

Here's to a fantastic year of learning, growing, and making memories in first grade! I can't wait to see where our adventure takes us!

