



THE CARDINAL CHIRP

VOL XLV ISSUE NO. 6

MAY 26

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



From the Desk of the Superintendent

Mr. Jon Davis, Superintendent

End of the School Year News

It's that time of year again. Classes are wrapping up, activities are coming to an end, and the final days of school are upon us. With the cool spring weather we have experienced this year, it hardly seems possible that only a couple of weeks of school remain.

After this weekend, our senior students will officially begin a new chapter in their lives. They will no longer be high school students, but young adults preparing for college, the military, the workforce, and many other opportunities ahead. The Class of 2026 has represented Alma Public Schools well, and we wish each of them the very best in all of their future endeavors.

As we close another successful school year, I would like to take a moment to recognize several staff members whose service and dedication have made a lasting impact on Alma Public Schools.

Staff Changes

Each new school year brings change, and next fall will be no different. As mentioned previously, we will have four retirements and one resignation at the end of this school year. It is always difficult to see outstanding staff members retire or move on, but we are grateful for the many years of service they have given to our students and community.

Mr. Dale Ritter

After 36 years at Alma and 39 total years in education, Mr. Dale Ritter has retired from his position as secondary vocal music and 5th–12th grade band instructor. It would take pages to fully describe the impact Mr. Ritter has had on the Alma music program and music education across Nebraska. His induction into the Nebraska Music Educators Association Hall of Fame this past fall speaks volumes about his dedication and influence. We thank Mr. Ritter for his years of service and commitment to excellence.

Mr. Ritter also played an important role in helping select his successor. Mr. John Heldridge of Omaha, a recent graduate of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, will take over the program this fall.

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Mark Your Calendar

May 13th-- Elementary Track Meet; Preschool Graduation

May 15th-- Elementary Awards; Last Day of School; Youth Choir Fundraiser

From the Desk of the Supt.

(continued from page 1)

Mrs. Jodie Schuller

Mrs. Jodie Schuller has served Alma Public Schools for the past seven years as the K–12 Physical Education teacher and has completed a total of 31 years in education. In addition to teaching, Mrs. Schuller has also coached and driven activity and route buses during her time at Alma. She has consistently been willing to help wherever needed and has been a tremendous asset to our district.

Her position will be filled by Mr. Matthew Hageman, who has served as one of our elementary teachers for the past six years.

Mr. Josh Quinn

Mr. Josh Quinn began his educational career at Alma in August 2022 as a secondary English teacher and coach. Earlier this spring, Mr. Quinn resigned his position to accept a similar role in his hometown of Mead, Nebraska. He will also assume the head basketball coaching position previously held by his father, Mr. P.J. Quinn, who serves as superintendent there.

We thank Mr. Quinn for his contributions to Alma Public Schools and wish him the best in his future endeavors. His replacement will be Ms. Hannah Bartling of Elm Creek.

Mr. Bruce Ring

After 31 years as head custodian, Mr. Bruce Ring has decided to retire from his custodial and bus driving duties. A graduate of Alma High School, Mr. Ring has served the district faithfully and has taken tremendous pride in maintaining our school buildings and grounds. His knowledge, work ethic, and dedication will certainly be missed.

Mr. Jeremiah Luth and Mr. Brendan Ring will assume many of the daily duties previously handled by Mr. Ring. We have also hired Mr. Jeff Vance, who will begin work on June 1. Mr. Rick Walker will continue in his role as nighttime custodian and the “Voice of the Cardinals.”

Mrs. Kathy Whetstine

Mrs. Kathy Whetstine began working in the Alma school kitchen in 1999 as an assistant cook and became head cook in 2010. Throughout her years of service, Mrs. Whetstine has helped prepare thousands of breakfasts and lunches for our students and staff. Her dedication and expertise in managing the school lunch program will certainly be missed.

Taking over the head cook position will be Mrs. Michelle Zerr, who has served as an assistant cook during the past year.

The End of the School Year

I would also like to thank everyone who helped make this school year a success, beginning with our students. Throughout the year, as students traveled to activities and events, I consistently received positive comments regarding their behavior, sportsmanship, and conduct. Those compliments reflect not only on the students themselves, but also on their parents, teachers, coaches, and activity sponsors. We have high expectations for our students, and they certainly met those expectations this year.

Our support staff once again played a vital role in the success of our school year. Every staff member contributes to making Alma Public Schools a special place for students, staff, and families. Without the dedication of our paraprofessionals, secretaries, custodians, cooks, transportation staff, and maintenance personnel, our school simply could not function successfully.

Finally, a sincere thank you to the talented and dedicated teachers of Alma Public Schools. Your efforts to educate, inspire, and guide our students each day do not go unnoticed. You continually work to help students become not only better learners, but also better individuals. I am incredibly proud of your hard work, professionalism, and commitment to our school district.

I would also like to thank the Alma Board of Education and our parents and community members for their continued support throughout the school year. Strong schools are only possible when communities work together in support of students.

As always, I encourage anyone with questions, concerns, or suggestions to contact me at the school. I genuinely appreciate both positive feedback and constructive input regarding our school and programs. Our goal is to make Alma Public Schools the best it can be, and we can only accomplish that through the support and involvement of our entire community.

Have a great summer, and thank you for another outstanding school year at Alma Public Schools!

Growth, Grit, and Greatness

Mr. Alex Schoneman, History

It has been a very successful year for the Junior High boys' basketball team. We went undefeated and multiple times scored over 50 points in the A games. Our boys continued to get better every week, and from game one to the end of the season were immensely better. I am proud of the work the boys put in. We were the Franklin Junior High Tournament Champs as well.

The B team had also had great success this year and went undefeated. This group has made huge strides over the season and shows up every day willing to work and push each other to their full potential.

Overall, it was a memorable season filled with growth, energy, and accomplishments. The future looks bright for these young athletes, and we are excited to see many of them continue their success this spring during track season and in future basketball seasons to come.



Oh, the Places First Grade Will Go!

Mrs. Jenna Christensen, First Grade

Another month has come and gone in our school year. First grade seems to be flying by extra fast this year! My first graders have been growing so much, both academically and socially, this year. We have worked on spelling words with the long e sound using -y and -ey. In Math, we were adding two-digit numbers with and without regrouping. The kids are loving the challenge!

A fun focus for us in early March was Read Across America Week. We celebrated with lots of Dr. Seuss activities, along with having people from the town coming in to our classroom to read Dr. Seuss stories and telling us about their professions. We've had business people from eye doctors to bankers to farmers. It's been such a fun experience for the kids! A special thank you goes to Mrs. Olson for starting this tradition years ago.

One of our activities that month included reading "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" and completing a writing craft to go along with it. Please read the kids' submissions below.

When I grow up, I want to...

Westlyn: be an artist because I love to color.

Owen: be an actor because I like doing hard things.

Rhyleigh: be a veterinarian because I like taking care of animals.

Avery: be a cheerleader because I like to cheer for the team.

Jagger: be an actor because my family says I can be a good actor.

Daniel: be a teacher because I like to help kids on a test.

Iliana: be a teacher because I like reading.

Bristol: be a gymnast because I like to do tricks.

Young Voices Shine This Semester

Mrs. Mattie Kreifels, Elementary Music

The Elementary Choir has had a busy and exciting spring! Earlier this semester, eleven students represented Alma at Sing Around Nebraska in Holdrege. Students auditioned for the opportunity and, after being selected, attended rehearsals during recess and after school to prepare their music leading up to the event. On February 7th, they traveled to Holdrege where they worked with guest director Ashley Brock from Holdrege High School. At the end of the day, the students performed in a concert alongside singers from several other schools. Congratulations to Kelcee Simonson, Sydney Siebels, Aela Low, Miracle Joppa, Brynn Guthrie, Kaylee Deyle, Alaina Thomas, Grace McLain, Malia Stottler, Abigail Noonan, and Coraline Swink on this accomplishment!

The Elementary Choir is also looking forward to hosting its annual fundraiser on May 15th at 7:00 p.m. We hope the community will join us for an evening of music and support for our young singers!



Catch your favorite home events live on Striv.tv!



Readers on the Rise

Mrs. Candace Sage, Sixth Grade

Congratulations! Thank you for making sure your student is reading at least 20 minutes a day. The fifth and sixth graders made their winter reading MAP goal by increasing their individual test scores. The students enjoy a variety of prizes by meeting the goals they set for themselves and as a grade level they celebrate with a movie and popcorn day. Keep up the great work as we head into the next round of testing. The Spring testing dates will be coming up soon. Please continue to encourage your students to read, read, read. It is easy to get in a few extra minutes of reading by providing them with everyday reading options. Here are some ideas to get in those minutes to help your child grow and succeed. Magazines: sports, animals, science or comics. Magazines provide an opportunity for finding pictures and picture captions. An interesting picture can lead to wanting to know more about it and reading to find out. Menus are another way to read for information. While standing in line at your favorite fast food restaurant or sitting down with a printed menu, let your child find their favorite foods or read the items to you to find a new favorite. Staying home to eat a meal together is another great opportunity for your child to read and help in the kitchen. Work together to find that favorite recipe to make connections with math and reading by making dinner together. After dinner is a great time to play games, have your child read the instructions to you for the game they know how to play or a new game. Board games often have cards to draw and use for strategy purposes, let your child read them aloud to build fluency skills. Lastly, when catalogs or sales flyers come in the mail, take time to let them circle their favorites items. Researching and finding out more about these items is a great way to encourage reading for information. The key is to count all reading as reading—even if it's a cereal box or game instructions. When students see reading everywhere, they're more likely to do it!

Helping Every Voice Be Heard

Mrs. Jenni Guthrie, Speech-Language Pathologist

May is the month for celebrating Speech, Language, and Hearing (previously known as Better Hearing and Speech Month). During this period, we think about Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists who work with infants, children, teens, adults, and geriatric populations to help them better communicate. Here are some fun facts about Alma and the surrounding communities' service offerings.

- Alma Public Schools employs one full-time and one part-time Speech-Language Pathologist.
- These two SLPs serve early childhood (Birth through preschool), school-age (Kindergarten through 12th grade), and transition (18 through 21-year-olds). Services are free of charge to those who meet the eligibility criteria.
- When a referral is needed, APS utilizes the Audiologist and her team at ESU10.
- UNK offers a Speech-Language and Hearing Clinic for all ages. These services are provided by a student under the supervision of a professor. These are offered at reduced rates.
- Harlan County Health Systems contracts an SLP who serves the adult population.
- Phelps Memorial Health Center is the closest SLP who serves the Pediatric Outpatient population.
- Harlan County Health System and Phelps Memorial Health Center have ENTs (ear, nose, and throat specialists), or otolaryngologists, who regularly visit their specialty clinics.

**If you have questions or concerns, please contact Jenni Guthrie (SLP) or Amy Donley (SLP) at Alma Public Schools (308) 928-2131.

Reporting Success at State

Mrs. Courtney Stottler, English/Journalism

Alma's journalism students recently participated in the Nebraska State Journalism competition, submitting entries in a variety of categories that showcased their creativity, writing, photography, design, and storytelling skills. This marked only the second year Alma has participated in the state competition, making the experience an exciting opportunity for students to represent their school on a larger stage.

Several Alma students were selected as finalists in their events. Titus Epp earned 4th place in Broadcast Sports Story, Creighton Lynch received 2nd place in Broadcast Feature Story, and Gianna Schneider placed 8th in Feature Photography. Several other students also earned superior and excellent ratings for their work.

The journalism team is proud of the growth it has made in just two years of competition and is already looking ahead to next season. Students are excited to continue building their skills and return even stronger next year. Congratulations to all of the students who represented Alma at the state level!

As we talk about the end of school, the most popular question in my room is, "are we first graders yet?" Oh my goodness, where has the school year gone? We are definitely all ready for school to be over, but it honestly seems just like a couple of months ago we were getting ready for these little ones to become the Class of 2038. I am so proud of what all these kindergarten students have accomplished this year!

We are finishing the year learning about where we live. We have learned about our towns and addresses, our state, and our country. We also finished the year identifying and understanding long vowel sounds, and our handwriting has been amazing!

We also wrote a book entitled "Wise Words from Kindergarten". We took well-known sayings and asked the kids to finish them with their own thoughts. They have a lot of useful information, so I hope you all heed their words.

Wesley Sikes - People who live in glass houses shouldn't...live in them in case they fall.

Maeve McLain - The grass is always greener... than the sky.

Lincoln Blank - Don't put all your eggs in...the microwave.

Josie Laux - You can't teach an old dog... how to swim.

Houston Dietz - When it rains... you should stay inside.

Levi Noonan - Good things come to those who... are good.

Kya McCord - There are other fish...at the ocean.

Thomas Wright - A leopard never...goes in the water.

Maverick Eggink - When you play with fire...you will get in trouble.

Francis Moulton - When you want something done right...you take your time.

Maverick Slocum - Keep your friends close... when you see a venomous snake.

Rawlings McKenzie - Laughter is when ... you get tickled.

Olivia Robinson - You can't have your cake and... cookies too.

Barrett Engel - There are too many cooks in ...the restaurant.

Sayer Sutton - We'll cross that bridge before... it breaks.

Myles Brandt - Home is where...we live.

Magnus Herrick - Don't bite the hand...off a lion.

Jack Stoelting - Don't count your chickens before...midnight.

Kol Koziski - There is no place like...a bouncy house.

Asher Maas - Don't cry over spilled...water.

Elsie Calkins - An apple a day...can be sweet.

Oliver Calkins - When life gives you lemons...they make everything sour.

These kids have been a great group to work with and get to know this year. They have learned so much, and have blown me away on how well they are doing with their reading. They also have worked very hard in math, and have done amazing with beginning addition and subtraction concepts. They are all very special smart young men and women who will be going on to first grade very shortly. No matter if you are a senior, a pre-schooler, or somewhere in-between, congrats on a great year and have a fun and safe summer!



SUMMER

Membean Madness

Mr. Josh Quinn, English

Throughout the month of April the 7-12 grade classes participated in a competition called 'Membean Madness', which revolved around their vocabulary accuracy. Membean is a vocabulary software that is tailored to each student's level. So, the vocabulary words that they come across are all individualized to their own personal development and progress. The rules for the competition were that each student needed to complete all minutes for their accuracy to count, they could not surpass 10 'dubious' minutes, and then their accuracies were averaged out for a total class average. The class with the highest average accuracy would win their matchup and move forward in the tournament.

Eleven total teams participated in the tournament with four coming from Mrs. Stottler's classes and seven of them coming from my classes. The winning class was given a 'grand prize' and the joy of being the 2026 Membean Madness champions. Also, there is a traveling trophy that will stay in the teacher with the winning class' room. The championship matchup consisted of a Seventh grade team from Mrs. Stottler's classes and an Eleventh grade team from my classes. During the championship week, the Eleventh grade class finished with an overall accuracy average of 80.7 percent accuracy and were crowned the 2026 Membean Madness champions! The Membean Madness trophy is back in its rightful place.

Closing Out a Memorable Year

Mr. Matthew Hageman, Sixth Grade

As we approach the end of the school year, it's hard to believe how quickly the fourth quarter has flown by! As I wrap up my final year as a 6th-grade homeroom teacher, it has been fun to reflect on how much our students have grown since those first few weeks in August. They have been preparing for the transition to junior high, and I think they are ready.

The 6th graders have had a very busy end to the school year. In social studies, they have been working hard on their Wax Museum projects. In science, students recently completed their Duct Tape projects and enjoyed creating a variety of items using only duct tape. On May 4th, Mrs. Sage arranged a field trip to Fort Hays State University, where the 6th graders visited the Maker Space. During the visit, students worked in groups to build LEGO robots, and every group successfully created a robot that was moving before the trip ended.

The 4th, 5th, and 6th graders are also looking forward to the end-of-the-year field trip to Methodist Cove as a fun way to celebrate the close of the school year.



Third Grade Adventures Await

Ms. Alisha Luke, Third Grade

As the school year begins to wind down, excitement for summer is definitely growing in our third-grade classroom! The students have started a countdown to summer and are eagerly looking forward to summer break, but not before finishing the year strong.

Over the past month, our third graders showed incredible dedication during NSCAS Math and Reading testing. Each student set a personal goal to work hard and do their very best, and I am so proud to say they not only met their goals, but exceeded them! Their hard work and positive attitudes truly paid off.

We also enjoyed an exciting field trip to the Kearney Archway Museum and Yanney Park. Students had a wonderful day filled with learning, exploring, and making memories with their classmates. It was such a fun way to celebrate all of the growth and accomplishments we've had this year!

Even with summer right around the corner, our class continues to stay focused on learning and growing each day. I have loved watching these students become more confident, responsible, and kind throughout the year.

The 3rd graders have been sharing their summer plans, from vacations to swimming, sports, and spending time with family and friends. It sounds like everyone has an adventure-filled summer ahead!

I can't wait to hear all about their summer adventures when I see them again. Until then, we'll keep making the most of these final days together and creating lasting memories in third grade. Our class hopes everyone has a fun, relaxing, and safe summer!

Jace: Ride my dirt bike as much as possible.

Cannon: I plan to work cattle.

Nova: Go to the pool with friends.

Emma: Go to the stream with my goat.

Adalina: Go to the pool as much as I can!

Taylyn: Play with my cousins at the park.

Alice: Go to South Dakota with my family.

Jenna: Play with cousins this summer.



AUGUST 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

14/14

Aug 10 – Start of Fall Practice
Aug 10 –11 Teacher Workday
Aug 12 – 1st Day of School – 2 PM Dismissal
Aug 13 & 14 – 2 PM Dismissal
Aug 19 – 1st Day for Preschool

SEPTEMBER 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

21/35

Sep 7 – No School – Labor Day
Sep 16 – 10 AM Late Start
Sep 24 – 1 PM Dismissal PT Conf (2:30-7:30)
Sep 24 – ½ Teacher Workday

OCTOBER 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

21/56

Oct 9 – End of 1st Qtr. 42 Days
Oct 12 – Start of 2nd Qtr.
Oct 14 – 10 AM Late Start
Oct 22 – 2 PM Dismissal
Oct 23 – No School – Fall Break – State CC

NOVEMBER 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

18/74

Nov 11 – Veterans Day Program
Nov 16 – Start of Winter Practice
Nov 17 – 12 PM Dismissal JH WR
Nov 24 – Regular Dismissal
Nov 25 – Thanksgiving Vacation
Nov 26 – Thanksgiving Vacation
Nov 27 – Thanksgiving Vacation

DECEMBER 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

14/88

December 3 – 12 PM Dismissal - WR Quad
Dec 9 – 10 AM Late Start
Dec 17-18 Semester Test – 2 PM Dismissal
Dec 18 – End of 2nd Qtr. 46 Days
First Semester 88 Days
Dec 23-27 NSSA Moratorium
Dec 19 – Jan 3 – Christmas Vacation

JANUARY 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

19/19/107

Dec 19 – January 3 – Christmas Vacation
Jan 4 – Teacher Workday
Jan 5 – School Resumes
Start of 2nd Semester
Jan 13 – 10 AM Late Start

FEBRUARY 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

19/38/126

Feb 11 – 1 PM Dismissal - PTC (2:30 to 7:30)
Feb 11 – ½ Teacher Workday
Feb 18 – 2 PM Dismissal
Feb 19 – No School - Winter Break

MARCH 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

17/55/143

March 1 – Start of Spring Practice
March 3 – 2 PM Dismissal
March 4 – 5 – No School – Spring Break – State Girls BB
March 10 – 2 PM Dismissal
March 10 – End 3rd Qtr. 44 days
March 11-12 – No School – Spring Break – State Boys BB
March 15 – Start of 4th Qtr.
March 25 – 2 PM Dismissal
March 26 – 29 – Easter Vacation

APRIL 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

22/77/165

April 14 – 12 PM Dismissal - JH TR
April 21 – 10 AM Late Start

MAY 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

177 Student days + 6 Teacher work Days = 183 Contract days.

May 6 – No School –DH TR MI.
May 6 – Teacher Workday
May 7 – Seniors Last Day
May 8 – Graduation
May 12 – Last Day for Preschool
May 18-19 Semester Test – 2 PM Dismissal
May 19 – Last Day for Students
End of 4th Qtr. – 45 Days
End of Semester – 89 Days
End of School year – 177 Days
May 20 – Teacher Workday
12/89/177

HS Summer School May 24-June 11 – Elem Summer School June 1-July 1