

March 2023

Superintendent's News



Happy March!

I can't believe that it is already March! Winter sports have just concluded and we are starting to see longer days and hopefully fewer days affected by snow! Additionally, we have almost reached the end of the third quarter and will be getting into state tests before too long!

Congratulations to all of the winter activities, there were several examples of student and team success this year! Both boys' and girls' basketball teams made it to the district finals this winter-congratulations! Varsity wrestlers sent three athletes to state and both the boys and girls teams wrestled very well at districts! FFA continues to compete and qualify for state competitions as we speak!

I appreciate the efforts of all of our students, staff and coaches in not only participating but supporting all Hay Springs activities.

I have been reviewing the snow days that we have missed and will be visiting with the school board during the March school board meeting to finalize our plans to make up snow days. This winter has been very impactful on all families and I appreciate our families and community supporting the school in all we do.

With spring coming around the corner, we will have state tests coming up and those schedules will be shared soon. I can share that the state ACT test for Juniors will occur on Tuesday, March 21st in the morning. The value to these tests is not only to meet regulatory requirements but to also gauge how our district is doing with instruction. The district utilizes the results to determine the areas of strength and the areas of growth in our instruction and curriculum. Teachers and the administration utilize this data throughout the year when planning out lessons and supports.

Finally, the school district will be working with the Nebraska School Board Association again this spring to determine our strengths and our areas for growth. We have a very strong founda-

tion with our school but we are also continuing to look for ways to improve our practices. I appreciate the willingness of our greater school community including parents, volunteers and business partners to help whenever there is a need. I plan on reaching out as these meetings progress to keep you informed.

I hope everyone has a great start to the third quarter and hope to see you at the many springs activities that are planned for the rest of the year.

Mission Statement

The mission of Hay Springs Schools in cooperation with families and community, is to empower students within an emotionally supportive and physically safe environment with the academic, social, physical, and technological skills to achieve success as responsible, self-disciplined citizens of a global society.

Vision Statement

"Empower Students to Achieve Lifelong Success"

Goals

All Hay Springs Public School staff will be trained in the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT) Instructional Model.

80% of Hay Springs Public School students will meet projected growth on the NWEA MAP tests in Math, Reading, Language Arts, and Science.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support of our educational system.

Mr. Clear



Principal's Playbook

By Mr. Hagge

Dear School Community Members,

Our academic year is rapidly approaching the completion of the third quarter! While there have been numerous obstacles during the course of the school year, I am extremely proud of our efforts/achievements and would like to thank our students, parents, and community members for all of their support during the course of the school year. As we move forward, I would like to encourage parents/guardians to remain vigilant in monitoring student grades through infinite campus. Let's make certain our students finish the semester in fine fashion.

As the fourth quarter approaches please remember that our students have the opportunity to make tremendous academic and social learning gains. Make knowledge acquisition the priority this spring by continually encouraging school attendance and modeling positivity by helping your child practice gratitude. Moreover, read with your student every single day (let them see you read), engage in discussions about the stories read and help them make connections to real life experiences. Enjoy this special time in your young learner's life.

Students in grades 3rd - 8th and 11th graders will be participating in the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System this spring. Students in grades K-11 will also be taking the NWEA MAPS assessments to determine learning gains. During testing weeks please encourage your child to get good rest and arrive to school on time. In closing, please do not hesitate to reach out to myself or your child's teachers if you have any questions, concerns or celebrations you would like to share. We are here to partner with families and make certain each student has a first class educational experience.

With much Hawk Pride,

Mark J. Hagge

**ELDER'S WISDOM 2023
HONOREES ARE DORIS SCOTT AND
VIRGINIA JOHNSON
MARCH 9TH AT 6:00 PM.
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!**



Music Notes

By Raimo Varvel



2nd & 3rd grade students will be singing at the Elders Wisdom program held in the auditorium on Thursday, March 9th at 6pm. Please have students in their seats (students will know where they are to go) in the auditorium at 5:45pm and plan to stay for dessert after the program.

High school students are busy preparing for our upcoming contests, all students will participate in the large ensemble, but then everyone is also performing a solo or small group. Please plan to attend the Pre Concert Contest on Tuesday, April 18th to see what these students have been working on!

Several 7th & 8th grade students have been invited to join the high school music students at the PANCO music contest held in Hemingford on Monday, March 27th. These students have solos or small group songs they should be practicing at home.

Upcoming Concerts:

- ⇒ Thursday, March 9th Elders Wisdom 2nd & 3rd Grade students
- ⇒ Monday, March 27th PANCO Contest-High School Hemingford
- ⇒ Tuesday, April 4th 7pm; 6, 7/8 Spring Concert
- ⇒ Tuesday, April 18th Pre Contest Concert High School Students
- ⇒ Wednesday, April 19th District Music Contest Alliance-*High school students*
- ⇒ Tuesday, May 2nd 7pm; 4th & 5th Grade Spring Musical

Hay Springs Junior Wrestling Tournament

Saturday, March 11th 2023

Dental Day

Dr. Hadden
Chadron CAPWN Dental



We are planning on coming back to your school on April 6th. Recurrent dental fluoride varnish treatments will reduce up to 35% of a child's disease experience. As I'm sure you are aware, dental disease is the most common childhood disease. I thank you and your administration very much for accepting the opportunity to provide preventative dental services to the students of Hay Springs Schools.

***Parents, please be aware that children in grades K-4, 7, and 10 will be screened with OR without your permission, per NE DHHS State Education requirements, unless you are able to provide proof of dental examination for your child from your family dentist. Fluoride varnish and/or SDF treatment will only be done with your permission. If you choose to provide proof of evaluation from your family dentist, it must be within the past six months, and must be returned along with the form sent out.**

eSports

By Larel Reimann

Although the Hay Springs eSports Team is now entering our 7th season, we just recently became an official activity at Hay Springs Public Schools. We are a part of the Nebraska State eSports Association(<https://nebraskahsesports.com/>) which became an official league in the Fall of 2019. For the 2022-2023 school year, there are 76 schools and over 1300 students participating. During the school year, there are three seasons of eSports, Fall, Winter, and Spring, with different types of games or configurations of the same games each season. There are two parts to each season, the regular season and then the actual playoffs. Every team plays in the regular season and every team plays in the playoffs. Our performance in the regular season determines our place in the playoff brackets. There are 4 Divisions in the Nebraska State eSports Association based on number of students in the high school. Hay Springs is in Division 4 and we play other Division 4 schools from all over the state via the internet...all without having to leave the school! We have just begun our Spring season and are playing Super Smash Brothers Ultimate 2v2 where we will compete with 35 other teams for the chance to go to state finals. Be sure to watch the school website(<https://www.hshawks.com>) for more news and updates as we progress through the season!





GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

By Adriene Kelly

In appreciation for the support of our community, the students at HSH would like to “give back” to Hay Springs. We are seeking businesses, groups, organizations, and even the elderly who are in need of help. Teacher supervised groups of students are willing to wash windows, stock shelves, clean shops, rake lawns or scoop snow if necessary. We are willing to assist in any way needed.

Our “Give Back to the Community Day” is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on April 26, 2023. If you would like to be added to our list, please call the high school office at 638-4434.

Thanks to our community for all your support!

QUIZ BOWL

BY ADRIENE KELLY

On Friday, March 17th Hay Springs will be participating in the annual Quiz Bowl Panhandle Conference in Sioux County. Both the high school and the junior high school teams will participate.



Speech Minutes

BY Coach Varvel

Please join us for our Family Speech Night in the cafeteria on Sunday, March 5th at 4pm.

Speech meet schedule:

- ◇ Sunday, March 5th 4pm Family Speech Night-music room
- ◇ Monday, March 6th District Speech at South Platte High School
- ◇ Friday, March 17th State Speech-Kearney High

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 3/5/23—Family Speech Night**
- 3/8/23—Health Screening**
- 3/9/23—Elder's Wisdom Program, Last Day of Quarter**
- 3/2/23—NHS Induction**

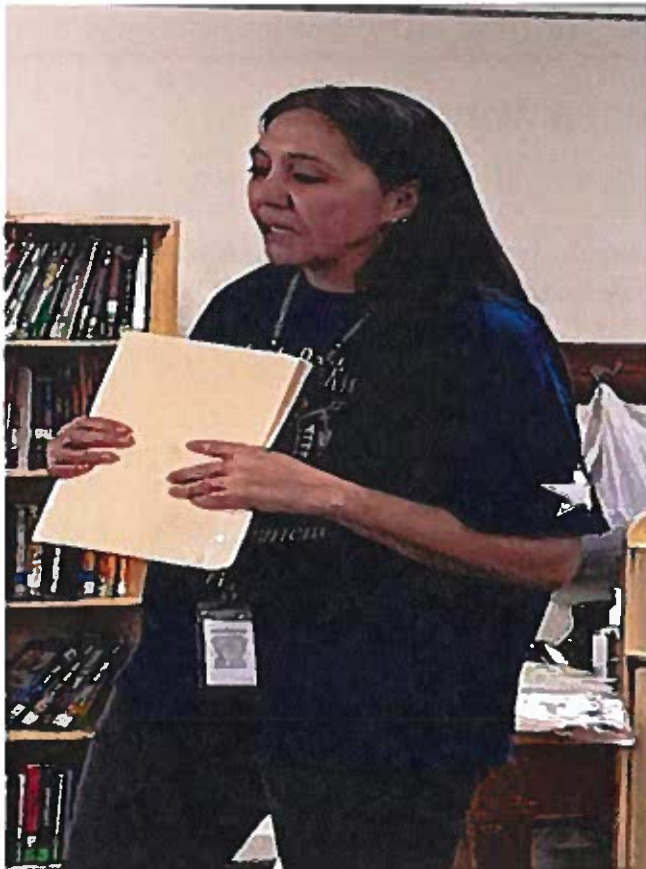
Sheridan County Give Program

By Bev Wellnitz

The Hay Springs School Community Foundation and the Sheridan County Give Program received a grant from the Snow Redfern Foundation for cultural presentations. On eight different occasions, a presenter came and talked about the culture of the country. The students enjoyed hearing about the country and asking questions. After the presentation, a book that celebrated cultural traditions was read to the students. Puerto Rico, Native American, Australia, Mexico, China, Ireland, Sweden and Nepal were the topics for the presentations.

Students also received a traditional snack from each culture. They really enjoyed Mantecaditos (Shortbread Cookies) from Puerto Rico. Each class was treated to a different activity. Activities included Castanets, Bead Loom, Boomerangs, Mexican Mirrors, Chinese Checkers, Limericks, Swedish Dance, and Rhythm Sticks. The students learned that it takes a lot of time to create a beaded bracelet.

This was a wonderful project and the kids were very excited to learn. The books and activities were donated to the school so they can use them in the future.



THE ELDERS' WISDOM IS BACK

By Melissa Sommerville

That's right! After three long years, we are hosting our Elders' Wisdom Program! Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we were unable to host the program, but now it's back and in "full force". The Elders Wisdom program will be held on March 9th, at 6:00 PM in the auditorium where we will showcase two of our outstanding community members. This year's honorees were high school classmates graduating in 1947. These wonderful women have a few other things in common they both lived south of Hay Springs, married, and had children. What is even more amazing is that they both still live here. We would like to introduce you to Mrs. Doris Scott and Mrs. Virginia Johnson.

After the event, everyone is welcome to the social hour that will be held in the school cafeteria!

Doris Scott



Virginia Johnson



High School Wrestling Wrap—up

By Coach McCance



The 2022-2023 season was a year for firsts. We had a total of 11 athletes out for wrestling this year, which is the largest team we have had in the 6 years I've been associated with the program. Also, a first this year, launching a new sport, Girls Wrestling. Hayden Boles and Ava McKillip were the two girls on the team. To start the year with no experience, they progress to winning tournaments by mid-season. That shows how determined and dedicated they were to learning the sport. Hayden ended up with a 12-10 record. Winning the Hemingford, and Mitchell tournaments. Ava had a rough start to the season with an injury at the first tournament which sat her out till after the winter break. She had a 7-10 record. She placed first in the Bennett County invite. District were tough. There were 34 teams and 159 wrestlers at the two day event. Both girls wrestled tough but came up short.

On the boys side, we have a very young team with five Freshman, three Juniors and one Senior. Our Senior was Wesley Jacobs. He ended the season with an impressive 27-9 record and was a State qualifier. Wes was a good leader and will be missed next year. The other two state qualifiers were Jarhett Anderson and Anthony Running Hawk. Jarhett had a fantastic season, he ended up with a 24-16 record and placed 2nd at districts. Anthony ended up with a winning record for his first time in his wrestling career, 24-19. Anthony wrestled the 285 weight class but he weighed 236, so with that he was giving upwards of 49 pounds and still managed to qualify. They both will be great leaders next year.

Chase Brunsch, is the third junior, he had a rough year and saw some success against some tough opponents. I believe he will regain his focus next year and will have a successful season next year.

The Freshman class consists of Parker Wellnitz, Mason Albrecht, Luis Mata, Heidyn Johnson, and Dakota Wesley. This group of men are the bright future of Hawk Wrestling. They each worked hard and found success on the mat this year. I believe they will all be very successful next year.



FFA

By Trevor Ginkens



February has been a very busy month for the Hay Springs FFA Chapter. On February 1st, the chapter competed at multiple different competitions in Gordon. The placings for our four teams are as follows: Ag Mechanics placed tenth, Food Science placed fourth, Farm Business Management placed second, and Vet Science placed sixteenth. On February fifteenth, part of our chapter competed in the Livestock Judging invite. Some of the participants on the junior team placed second, fourth, and eighth place and one person on the senior team placed second.

Many chapter members submitted proficiency applications for a chance to go to State FFA. Out of the state qualifiers, the reviewed proficiencies that are finalists were submitted by Braydon Binger and Colter Meeks. Braydon's proficiencies were in the fields of Diversified Agriculture, Diversified Livestock, and Diversified Crop, and Colter's proficiency was in Equine Entrepreneurship. Our next competition is on Wednesday, March 1st in Kimball and this is the last competition until state FFA. Teams competing that day will be Jr and Sr Livestock Judging, Agronomy, Agriscience, Nursery and Landscape, and Meats Evaluation.

We would like to thank everyone who supported the chapter during National FFA week by joining us at the pancake feed that we hosted. We brought in \$691 in donations that will greatly help out the FFA Chapter with yearly expenses. Even though the week was cut short by the winter storm there was still a lot of participation from the entire school and community to support our chapter during this week. With the short week, the only other thing the chapter was able to do was have a State Officer visit and talk to the students. Overall, February was a very busy and successful month for our chapter.

Girls on the Run Coming Back to Hay Springs this season for 3rd-5th grade girls!

By Kyli Heiting



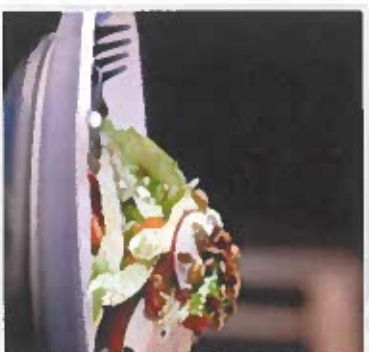
Girls on the Run is an innovative after-school program that combines, exercise, education, mentoring and "Girl Power!" to inspire girls to be joyful, healthy and confident with a curriculum that incorporates running/walking. Each meeting focuses on a topic like friendship or communication and includes engaging activities and running games that foster learning and skills on the lesson of the day. Girls will train at their own pace to complete the Panhandle GOTR 5K May 20th in Chadron.

The team will meet twice weekly after school from the second week of March to May 18. Online registration is open at www.GOTRNebraska.org. Registration includes a program T-shirt, drawstring backpack, and curriculum materials.

Don't miss the chance to enroll your daughter in the fun, physical education and character—building program and find out for yourself why "Girls on the Run is so much fun!"

MARCH 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Menus are subject to change.			1 Doughnuts orange Chicken, Rice, Peas, Fortune Cookie	2 Biscuits and Sausage Gravy BTS burgers, Baked Beans, Chips	3	4
5	6 Omelets, Toast, Potato Triangles, Fish Sticks, Sweet Potato Fries, Green Beans	7 Biscuits, sausage Patty, cheese Beef Tacos, Corn, Black Beans	8 French Toast Sticks, Pizza, apple crisp	9 Biscuits and Gravy Chicken Tenders, Sweet Potato Fries	10	11
12	13 French Toast Sticks Dino Nuggets, Smiley Fries, Bread Sticks	14 Breakfast tornadoes, Taco Casserole	15 Biscuits and Gravy Fried Chicken, Mashed Potatoes, corn, Roll	16 Doughnuts, fruit, Yogurt BTS Burgers, French Fries	17	18
19	20 Breakfast Pizza Pulled Pork Sandwich	21 Omelets, Breakfast Potatoes, English Muffins BTS Nachos, black Beans, Corn	22 Muffins, fruit, yogurt Grilled Chicken Sandwich, Baked Beans,	23 Biscuits and Gravy BTS Roast Beef, Potatoes, Gravy, Peas, & Roll	24	25
26	27 Pancakes and Sausage Hot Dogs, French Fries	28 French Toast sticks Chicken Fajitas, corn, black beans	29 Omelets, Toast Ham, Turkey, Swiss, Hoagies, Potato Chips, green Beans	30 Breakfast Pizza BTS Burger, French Fries	31	
NOTES: Choice of 1% White Milk, 1% Chocolate or Skim Strawberry Milk served daily. Alternate Lunch choices are Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich (Mon, Tue, Wed) and Yogurt (Thursday), choice of Chef Salad is available Daily. Menu subject to change without notice.						



Hay Springs School Cafeteria. Breakfast is always served with choice of Fruit, Yogurt and Granola. Lunch salad bar is served with a mixed lettuce salad, 2 Fruits, and 3 Other items that change daily.

*M*arch 2023

Hay Springs Public School Activities

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	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	1

Elementary School Parents[®]

Hay Springs Public Schools

March 2023
Vol. 34, No. 7

make the difference!



Three fun ways to celebrate your child's achievements

There is no better motivator for a child than setting a goal and reaching it. But sometimes, a major accomplishment also calls for a celebration.

Perhaps your child earned a higher grade in a class this grading period. Or, maybe your child finally finished reading that book series. Whenever your child sets and reaches a challenging goal, try one of these fun ideas:

1. Take a picture of your child reaching the goal—holding up a report card or a finished book series, for example. You could also ask your child to draw a picture of the accomplishment.

Frame the picture and place it by your child's bed. When children regularly see images of themselves

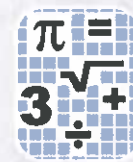
being successful, they will start to see themselves as achievers.

2. Plan a special surprise. On one side of a piece of paper, write down a goal your child wants to achieve. On the other side, write down a small reward—such as having a friend over for a sleepover.

Roll up the paper, put it into a balloon, and then blow up the balloon. Once the goal is reached, have your child pop the balloon to find out what the reward is.

3. Host a family victory dinner to celebrate your child's success. Set a "fancy" table and serve some of your child's favorite foods. During dinner, ask your child to say a few words about how great it feels to reach a goal.

Look for lines of symmetry in nature



If you fold a picture of a butterfly in half, you'll notice that the two halves match exactly. That's

because butterflies, like many things in nature, are *symmetrical*.

Showing your child how to look for lines of symmetry is a great way to practice recognizing patterns. It is also a fun family activity that can give your child a new way of looking at nature.

To get started:

- **Look for natural objects** that are symmetrical and take photos of them. Flowers, leaves, spider webs and shells may all have these lines.
- **Have your child predict** where the line of symmetry will be. Then fold along that line to see if the two sides match up exactly.
- **Find lines of symmetry** in other places, such as in the pages of a magazine or book. Remember that lines of symmetry can be vertical (as in the letter A) or horizontal (as in the letter B). They can even be diagonal. Sometimes, things may have more than one line of symmetry.

Regular family meetings build skills and make life a bit easier



Weekly meetings can make family life run more smoothly—and help children learn about cooperation and leadership.

- To hold productive family meetings:
- **Establish a schedule.** Meet at the same time every week and keep meetings brief. Fifteen minutes is often long enough.
 - **Set ground rules.** No devices or other distractions.
 - **Plan an agenda.** During the week, let family members jot down issues they'd like to address.
 - **Encourage participation.** Give each family member a chance to talk uninterrupted.
 - **Brainstorm solutions** for concerns raised during the meeting. Consider everyone's ideas.

- **Discuss expectations** for the upcoming week and review goals.
- **Coordinate schedules.** Review your family calendar and discuss who is doing what this week.
- **End with a team-building activity.** Play a quick game, or make up a story or sing a song.

After a few meetings, let family members take turns being the meeting leader.

“Unity is strength ... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.”

—Mattie Stepanek

Women's History Month is a great time to read a biography



March is Women's History Month—the perfect time for your child to read a biography of a famous woman.

To find a biography your child will enjoy, talk about interests. If your child likes:

- **Sports,** consider reading about Wilma Rudolph, a three-time Olympic gold medal winner.
- **Politics,** read about Victoria Woodhull, who in 1870 became the first woman to run for president. Or, look for a book about Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court.
- **Fashion,** find a biography about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who

was considered a cultural and fashion icon in the 1960s.

- **Science,** read about Marie Curie, the only person to win a Nobel Prize in two different sciences—chemistry and physics.
- **Helping others,** learn more about Mother Teresa, who dedicated her life to serving the poor and disadvantaged.
- **Space,** read about Sally Ride who was the first American woman in space. Upon her return, she dedicated her life to helping girls excel in STEM fields.

Read the book together or let your child read it independently, but don't stop there. Encourage your child to do some additional research on the person online.

How well are you listening to your child?



Communication between parents and children is important for developing a positive relationship. You want your child to know

that you are always available to talk about any school problems or difficult situations. But when your child talks, are you really listening? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you give your child some uninterrupted listening time every day, like after school or at bedtime?**
- ___ **2. Do you avoid interrupting when your child is speaking to you?**
- ___ **3. Do you say that you want to hear what your child has to say—and if you're not able to listen, set a time when you can give your full attention?**
- ___ **4. Do you ask questions if you don't understand what your child is saying?**
- ___ **5. Do you sometimes rephrase what your child has said to confirm that you understood?**

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are promoting effective communication with your child by demonstrating strong listening skills. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

Elementary School
Parents
make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents
to Help Their Children.

For subscription information call or write:
The Parent Institute, 1-800-756-5525,
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May.
Copyright © 2023, The Parent Institute,
a division of PaperClip Media, Inc., an
independent, private agency. Equal
opportunity employer.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

March weather activities can teach your child science skills



According to the old saying, March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Is this true where you live?

In many parts of the country, March brings changeable weather—which makes it a great time to enjoy science and other weather-related activities.

With your child:

- **Keep a temperature graph.** Have your child record and graph the temperature each day for a month. Or, use the online weather report for your area. Record whether the day was sunny, cloudy or rainy.
- **Measure the rain.** You'll need a plastic jar with straight sides and a flat bottom, a ruler and a marker. On the outside of the jar, use the ruler and marker to mark off each quarter inch. Have your child keep track of the amount of rainfall.

- **Make wind chimes.** You'll need four clean, empty cans, some string and a coat hanger. Make sure the edges of the cans are not sharp. Help your child punch a hole in the bottom of each can. Tie a knot in one end of the string and thread the string through a can. Then tie the other end to your hanger. Repeat with each can. Each time the wind blows, the cans will make music!

You and your child can also go online to learn more about weather. Check out these fun, age-appropriate websites:

- **Weather Wiz Kids**, www.weatherwizkids.com.
- **The Old Farmer's Almanac for Kids**, www.almanac4kids.com/weather.
- **NASA's Climate Kids**, climatekids.nasa.gov/menu/weather-and-climate.

Offer support when your child has a writing assignment



A writing assignment can seem like a tough challenge for many students. Good writing involves everything from understanding a subject to knowing how to organize thoughts to checking spelling and punctuation.

To support your child:

- **Suggest that your child** “talk through” some ideas before starting to write. Clear writing starts with clear thinking.
 - **Encourage your child** to take notes and make an outline before starting to write. Organized thoughts will make the writing clearer.
 - **Remind your child** that first drafts aren't supposed to be perfect.
- Students should focus on what to say first—and edit the paper for spelling and grammar later.
- **Offer plenty of praise** to motivate your child to keep working. Be as specific as you can: “I really like the way you've described what led up to this event. I understand it much better now.”
 - **Don't over criticize.** It's helpful to point out errors now and then, but if you are always looking for what's wrong, your child will be less likely to ask for help in the future.
 - **Be patient.** Good writing takes time. Your patience and support can help your child develop into a clear thinker and skilled writer.

Q: My fourth-grader does well on tests and quizzes, but doesn't always complete daily assignments. How can I get my child to take schoolwork more seriously?

Questions & Answers

A: It's critical that your child learn to take schoolwork seriously. Although quizzes and tests may have a larger impact on overall grades, it's regular assignments that reinforce knowledge on a daily basis.

To help your elementary schooler become a more responsible student:

- **Explain how you feel.** If you haven't spelled it out yet, do so now. “I've noticed that you blow off your assignments quite a bit. That's not OK, so let's figure out how to change the situation.”
- **Enforce a daily work time.** Brainstorm with your child to find a time that works best—and make sure your child sticks to it. “Study time starts at five o'clock. No arguments.” If there are no assignments, your child can use the time to review class notes, get started on a long-term project or read.
- **Tie schoolwork to privileges.** “After you have finished your assignment, you may go outside and play basketball.” To show your child you're serious, be sure to check that the work was really completed.
- **Follow up at school.** If your home strategies don't work, get the teachers involved. Let your child know that you'll be checking with them each week to see whether your student is turning in completed assignments. Set appropriate consequences for not doing so.

It Matters: Mental Health

Boost emotional well-being with family meals



Eating together as a family can boost your child's mental wellness. Regular family meals strengthen relationships,

giving your child a sense of security and connection.

Here's how to get the most out of meals with your child:

- **Make eating together a priority.** It doesn't always have to be dinner. If you work in the evening, have breakfast with your child or plan a weekend picnic or brunch.
- **Involve your child in planning and preparing nutritious meals.** Ask your child to choose the vegetable, toast bread for sandwiches or toss a salad. Having a say in what you eat and helping to get it on the table will give your child a more positive attitude toward family meals and teamwork.
- **Enjoy pleasant conversations.** Mealtime is a great time to check in by asking about your child's day. Sharing something about your own day first may inspire your child to speak up.

You can also spark conversations by asking a "question of the day." The question can be silly or serious. Go around the table and have each person answer. Have family members take turns coming up with future questions.

- **Eliminate distractions.** Turn off the TV and put away those mobile devices. You'll be fully present and able to focus your attention on one another.

Source: "Increasing Family Meal Consumption to Boost Mental Health," The Food Industry Association.

Teach your child how to recognize and manage feelings

All children feel worried or upset sometimes. Being aware of these feelings and thoughts is the first step toward managing them in healthy ways. Here's how:

- **Talk about thoughts.** When your child seems sad or anxious, ask, "What are you thinking about right now?" Your child might say, for example, "I'm worried no one will sit with me in the cafeteria at lunch tomorrow."
- **Show understanding.** Put your child's feelings into words. "I know you're worried about finding someone to eat with at lunch tomorrow."
- **"Flip" thinking.** Tell your child to make negative thoughts do a "flip" so they're more positive or helpful. Your child might think, "I can ask my reading buddy to have lunch



with me" or "I can tell my teacher I'm worried about sitting alone."

If your child often seems worried or upset, talk to your child's teacher, school counselor or pediatrician.

Source: "Catch, Check, and Change Your Thoughts," National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

Did you know that playtime is a proven stress reliever?



When children have fun, their brains release chemicals that cause happiness and reduce stress—which leads to improved mental health.

To get the most from playtime:

- **Make time for active play.** Your child needs at least one hour of daily exercise for good physical and mental wellness. Active play (jumping rope, playing tag, etc.) counts toward that hour. Have your child keep a physical activity diary for a week—does it total at least seven hours?

- **Limit recreational screen time.** Hands-on, real-life play stimulates your child's brain better than passively looking at a screen. Together, make a list of screen-free playtime activities. When your child wants to play a video game, point to the list.
- **Play with your child.** Parent-child play is great for strengthening bonds. Have a family board game night, build something together or ask to join in your child's pretend play.

Source: S. Wang, Ph.D. and S. Aamodt, Ph.D., "Play, Stress, and the Learning Brain," *Cerebrum*, National Library of Medicine.