

April 2025

2025 Elders' Wisdom



This year, we are pleased to have honored two well-known individuals: French and Alberta Olson.

French Olson was born January 11, 1947 in Hay Springs, and had 12 siblings. He grew up on a farm outside of town and his family later moved to Colorado. In 1965 he graduated from Revere High School, Colorado. French later married Alberta Dahlgren in 1969. He taught at the high school as a shop teacher for 40 years before retiring in 2010.

Alberta Olson was born February 1, 1945 in Rushville, and had 3 siblings. She also grew up on a small farm, then graduated from Hay Springs High School in 1962. After marrying French, they had 2 sons: Ron and Marc Olson. Alberta taught for 47 years before retiring in 2015.

French and Alberta Olson are truly amazing people. They have been part of this community for years, helping to change the community and the school in many ways. Mr. and Mrs. Olson are always willing to support the younger generation still in school, including attending sporting events. They are always willing to share their knowledge with anyone who is curious to learn!

This year's Video Production team, Emma Albrecht, Bailey Hankins, and Jacob Dorshorst, were honored to get to know the Olson's and make this program possible.



Superintendent News

By Mr. Clear

As we head into spring and towards the last quarter of school, I am excited to share news of scheduled improvements to our school. During the March 10th school board meeting our school board approved bids to 2 major projects for our school.

First, the board approved the bid from TK Elevator to modernize our elevator. Over the last two years, we have had significant down time where our elevator was inoperable. This has been a great concern because we have members of our school community who need to access the elevator. This project is paid for by QCPUF funds that our board approved this past year. The bid came in at \$154,400.00. We were expecting a bid closer to \$300,000 – so we will be able to complete the project for almost ½ of the expected cost. The project will take place this summer.

Secondly, the board approved the bid from Rusher Rain to install a sprinkler system, condition the soil, and seed the football field. Over the last couple of years the condition of the field has deteriorated and impacting the ability to use the field throughout the year for practices (football and track) as well as recess and Physical Education. The bid came in at \$59,124.57. This will be paid out of general funds since it affects classes and activities. This project will start the week of March 24 if weather permits. Unfortunately, with the timing of the install, our elementary and middle school students will not have access to the field for recess or field day, and our track teams will not have access for their practice. We considered waiting until school was out but felt that with the reconditioning of the field, the project needed to start before the outside temperatures got too hot.

This has been both a very rewarding and a very trying year at the same time. I would like to thank our entire Hawks community for supporting us in all that we do! Without the support of our parents, community school board and friends, our job would be almost impossible to complete. Thank you for all of your support, I look forward to seeing you at our spring activities, concerts and graduation.

NOTICE:

Prom is scheduled for May 3rd. This is a reminder to parents and students that only students in grades 9-12 are eligible to attend prom. In addition students must be eligible the week of April 28th in order to attend prom.



Speech Minutes

By Mrs. Varvel



Congratulations to the Hay Springs Speech team for being the District Runner up!

The following students placed in their events. If they placed within the top 3 they are state bound! State speech is Friday, March 28th at Kearney high school. We will depart on Thursday, March 27th.

Duet-1st place (Bailey and Emma)
 Lilly-1st entertainment; 3rd humorous
 Adeline-3rd entertainment; 5th serious
 Aubry-6th serious; 1st POI
 Jaelyn-2nd informative
 Jacob-2nd humorous
 OID-2nd place (Jacob, Jaelyn, Emma and Bailey)



GOOD LUCK AT STATE HAWKS!



Music Notes

By Mrs. Varvel



Hay Springs Music students would like to thank the Hay Springs for their amazing support as we prepare for our Southern California trip on May 28th-June 1st. We will make sure to post updates and pictures throughout the trip. Thank you for making this possible for our students!!

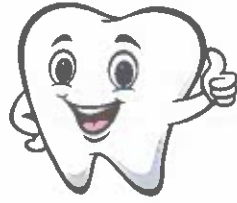
Upcoming events:

Tuesday, April 22nd @ 7pm Pre-Contest Concert & Recital
 Wednesday, April 23rd District Music Contest-Alliance, NE
 Thursday, May 8th 4th & 5th Grade Musical



Spring Dental Day

By Adriene Kelly



Chadron CAPWN Dental is coming back to our school on April 9th to perform our Spring Dental Screening.

*** 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 from you 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.**



Preschool with their Leprechaun trap.

\$5 Physicals

\$5 physicals will be held on May 6th. We will meet at the school at 6:15 and leave on the bus by 6:30. JH track kids who want do to the \$5 physical will need to come talk to Mrs. Marcy about an alternative date. April 29th will be the nurses portion of the physicals.

“Give Back to the Community Day”

By Mrs. Marcy

Thank You

In appreciation for the support of our community, the 6th-12th grade students at HSPS 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, and paint walls. Please note that students will not be allowed to climb ladders, get on roofs, etc.

Our “Give Back to the Community Day” is scheduled for April 30th, 2025, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. In the event of inclement weather, the date will NOT be rescheduled. If you would like to be added to our list or have any questions, please call the high school office at 308-638-4434.

Thanks to our community for all your support!

Prom 2025

By Mrs. Marx

The 2025 Prom will be held in the auditorium on May 3rd. The Grand March will be held in the auditorium beginning at 8:30. The doors will open to the public at 8:15 p.m. to attend the Grand March and parent dance ONLY. All public, including parents, are asked to leave immediately following the parent dance so that the students can enjoy spending the evening with their classmates and friends.

Hay Springs Schools would like to give a big THANK YOU to the community for all the continued support! We appreciate all you do for our school!!



**Find us on
Facebook**

HS Golf Preview

By Coach Badje

Golf is a great lifetime sport, and I always look forward to sharing the game with anyone. We have 11 golfers, and a great assistant coach, Gabe Varvel, this year. Players consist of Hunter McDonald, Dylan Young, Ayden Digmann, Heidyn and Riley Johnson, Tripp Buettner, Cooper Johnson, Tanner Tobiasson, Larry Nelson, Westin Boles, and Jaydub Turman. There are about 8 golf invites this year not including conference, districts and state. High School varsity golf teams are comprised of 5 players. 5 compete and the four lowest scores are taken. There are a couple of invites that allow a junior varsity to compete in. So while not all eleven will compete every week, everyone should get a taste of competition.

There are some very good prospects for team and individual state qualifiers this year. Spectators are welcome at all meets, so if you have a free day, come cheer on your Hay Springs Hawks Golf.

HS Track Preview

By Coach Johnson

The Hay Springs High School track team began practice last Tuesday and has been fortunate to train in great weather. This year, the team is led by head coach, Frankie Johnson and assistant coach, Catie Deines, with Kaylee Kaiser serving as the student manager. With 20 student-athletes participating—including lone senior Dylan Raymer—the team has tripled in size since last season. They will compete in eight regular meets leading up to the district competition in Leyton on May 14th, followed by the state competition on May 23rd-24th. Fans can follow the team's schedule on athletic.net and hshawks.com, while student-athletes and parents can stay informed through the Hay Springs Track and Field Remind. Come out and cheer on the Hawks this season!



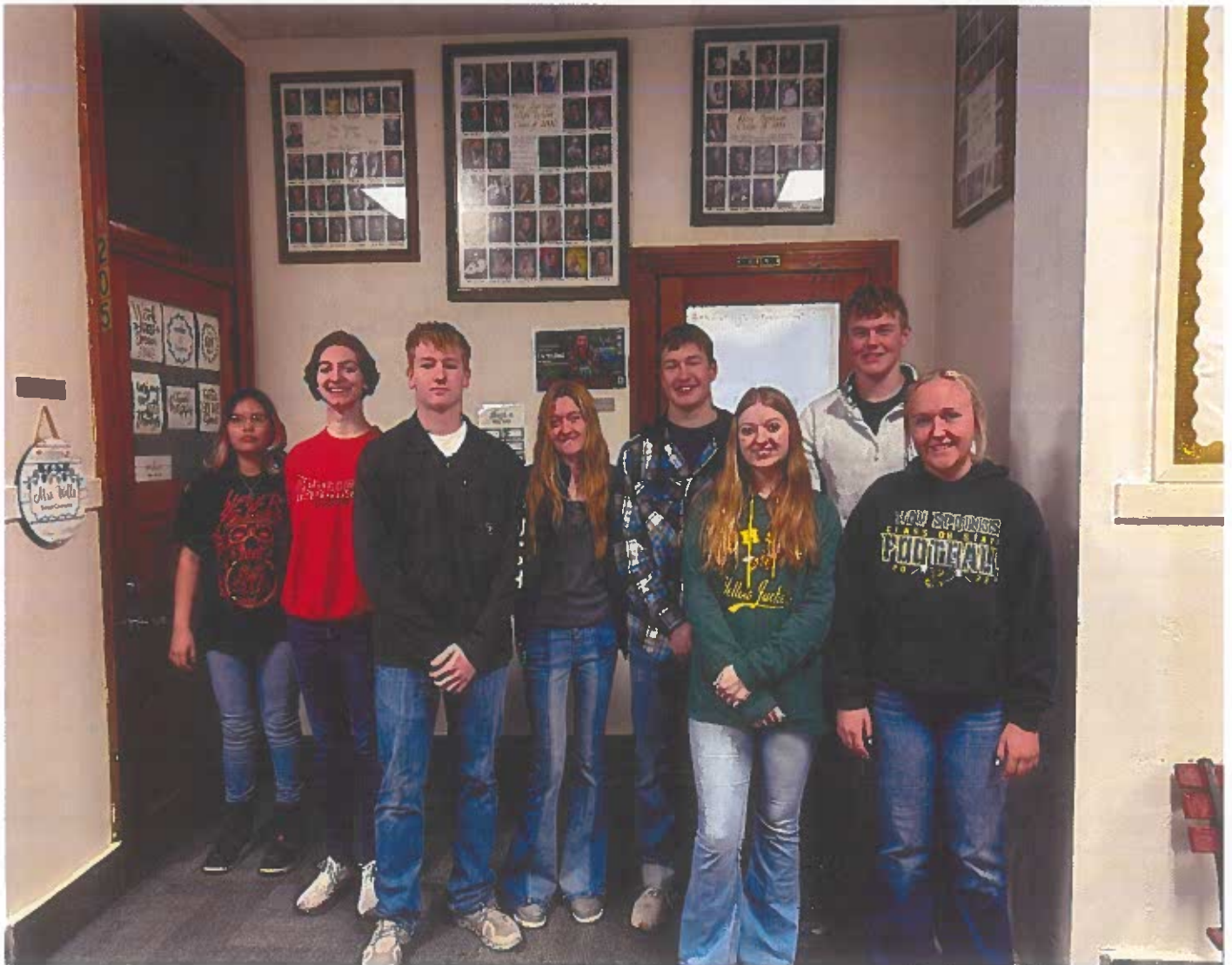
Finance Challenge

By Mrs. Sommerville

Hay Springs had two teams compete in the Western Division of the Nebraska Personal Finance Challenge sponsored by the Nebraska Council on Economic Education. The first round is a test of 30 questions and students have 30 minutes to complete the test.

The Hay Springs team consisting of Lilly Dorshorst, Jaelyn Rasmussen, Dylan Raymer, and Talan Smith competed this year. The students ranked seventh in the western region and twenty-second in the entire state. There were a total of 202 teams in the High School division: 45 in Lincoln, 56 in Omaha, and 101 in Western Nebraska.

The 2nd Hay Springs team consisting of Rori Ashly, Josie Kelly, Kaylee Kaiser, and Dylan Young also competed this year. The students in this team ranked sixty-second in the western region and 142nd in the entire state.

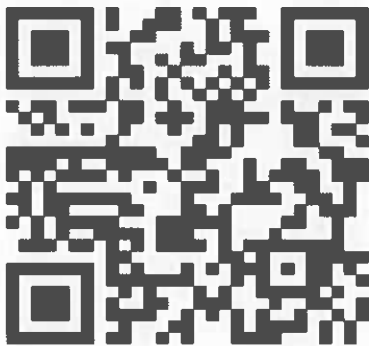


JH Track

By Coach Anderson

I am very excited for this year's track season! We have 21 junior high athletes. A Remind will be available for parents and students to sign up for. It is highly recommended that you sign up for this because all communication will go through this app.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO JOIN THE REMIND.



Hay Springs JH Track - times are approximate				2025
Date	Day	Time	Meet Location	Notes
4/12	Saturday	9:00 am	Chadron Invite: Chadron HS	
4/14	Monday	9:00 am	Bayard JH Invitational: Bayard HS	
4/24	Thursday	10 am	Bennett County, Martin, SD	
4/26	Saturday	9:00 am	Alliance High School	
4/29	Tuesday	9:00 am	JH Best in the West: Scottsbluff HS	Must qualify to attend
5/2	Friday	9:00 am	Panhandle Conference: Morrill HS	
5/8	Tuesday	9:00 am	Morrill JH Invitational: Morrill HS	
5/10	Saturday	9:00 am	Gering JH Invitational: Gering HS	This meet is the same day as High School graduation -so this meet is pending

eSports Spring Season Wrap-up

By Coach Reimann



The Hay Springs eSports spring season is coming to a close as I write this. On Tuesday, March 25, our #3 ranked Mario Kart Team 1 will be playing our final round of playoffs. This game will determine if we make it to state competition...we just need to outscore the #6 ranked team from Eustis-Farnam! Also, on Saturday, March 29, our Fortnite team will be competing at state remotely from the high school. Be sure to keep an eye open for how the teams did!

The eSports spring season started at the end of January this year. We ended up with three teams for the spring season playing two different games. Our Mario Kart Team 1 consisted of Tanner Tobiasson, Larry Nelson, Cooper Krotz, and Dutch Weaver. We had Lillian Dorshorst, Jacob Dorshorst, William Gaswick, and Grant Wellnitz forming our Mario Kart Team 2. Both of these teams played extremely well this season with lots of improvement being shown. Team 1 entered the playoff bracket ranked #3 out of 28 schools in the state and Team 2 was ranked #17. Unfortunately, Team 2 fell to #1 ranked EMF in the second round of playoffs. As previously mentioned, Team 1 will be taking on #6 ranked Eustis-Farnam to see if they get to make the trip to state.

Our third team is a Fortnite team that consists of Arian Mata, Cade McKillip, Preston Kelly, Hunter Thies, and Kooper Scott. While Arian Mata and Cade McKillip are the 2024 State Champions in Fortnite, the mode of gameplay has changed and so this is a new experience. We have won several of the regular season games, so we feel fairly confident about playing at the state level. Time will tell, but all of these students are having fun and are looking forward to their next games!

Tuesday, April 8th -National Honor Society Induction 3:30 pm

Wednesday, April 9th—Spring Dental Day

Wednesday, April 30th—Community Give Back Day

Saturday, May 3rd— Prom

Tuesday, May 6th—Senior Check-Out

Tuesday, May 6th—\$5 Physicals @ Chadron

Wednesday, May 7th—PreK/KG Round-Up

Saturday, May 10th—Graduation

Tuesday, May 13th—ML/HS Activity Awards 6:30 pm

Monday, May 19th—Preschool Graduation & Ice Cream Social

A yellow sticky note with the words "IMPORTANT" and "DATES" written in black and red marker respectively. The word "DATES" is underlined in red.

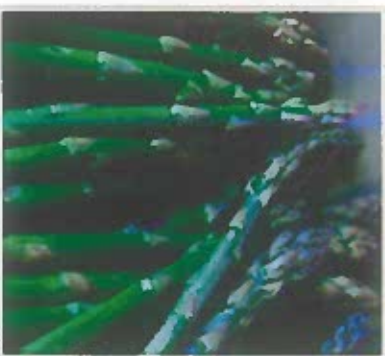
IMPORTANT
DATES

shutterstock.com · 1827606503

APRIL 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Ham & Cheese Omelets Chicken Nuggets, Macaroni Salad, Glazed Carrots	2 Banana Bread	3 Frittatas	4	5
6 Cheese Omelets / Toast	7 Beef Tacos, Rice/Re- fried Beans	8 Donuts Chicken Alfredo w/A Twist, Peas	9 Cream Cheese Mini Bagel Chili, Cinnamon Roll	10 Cereal Hot Turkey Sandwich w/Gravy, Mashed Potatoes	11	12
13 Pancakes & Sausage Links	14 Grilled Cheese w/ Choice Of Soup	15 Tornado Meatball Sandwich, Smiley Fries	16 Banana Bread Mashed Potato Bowl w/Popcorn Chicken & Gravy	17 Biscuit & Egg Sandwich Beef Nachos, Corn/Black Beans	18	19
20 No School	21 Happy Easter!	22 Breakfast Pizza Salisbury Steak w/Gravy, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans	23 Cinnamon Roll Beef Enchilada Casserole, Spanish Rice	24 Scone Chicken & Cheese Quesadilla, Spicy Black Beans	25	26
27 Cereal	28 Chicken Fried Steak w/Gravy, Scalloped Potatoes, Corn	29 Biscuit & Gravy Goulash, Peas, Dinner Roll	30 French Toast Stix Orange Chicken, Rice, Broccoli			

NOTES:
 Choice of 1% White Milk, Skim Chocolate, or Skim Strawberry Milk served daily. Alternate Lunch choices are PBJ(Mon, Wed), Deli Sandwich(Tue, Thur), Chef Salad(Includes a bread) is available Daily. Alternate choices only replace the Main Entree, all sides can still be chosen. 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.





Join us for a

MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE

Saturday April 12, 2025

7:00-11:00 PM

Hay Springs Auditorium

\$5 Admission for Class Funding

Please reach out to Mrs. Marcy or
Mrs. Deines to help donate snacks
and decorations.

nichole.marcy@hshawks.com

Kindergarten Round-up and Preschool Open house will be May 7th, 2025

Incoming Kindergarten students will join Ms. Meeks from 3:00-4:00. Registration packets will be available along with a Q/A portion at 4:00 pm for parents.



Preschool will meet Ms. Rasmussen for an open house from 4:00-4:30.

Kindergarten students need to be 5 before July 31, 2025

Kindergarten Entry Forms: Copy of Certified Birth Certificate, Copy of Social Security card, current eye exam, current Kindergarten physical and updated immunizations.

Preschool students need to be 3 before July 31, 2025

Preschool Entry Forms: Current immunizations, Copy of Certified Birth Certificate

All Registration packets need to be turned into the school office by July 1, 2025

Helping Children & Teens Cope with Fear After a Death

from The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

It's common for children and teens to have an increased sense of fear and anxiety after a death. (It's common in adults, too.) Children and teen's questions and concerns are normal: *How will we live without the person who died? Who will take care of us? Will someone else die? Where do people go after they die? Will I die, too?*

Some children and teens develop fears about places or circumstances related to the death. They might get nervous or uncomfortable encountering reminders like driving by the hospital, hearing a fire-truck siren, or going to the doctor. Fear is the body's natural alarm for danger. When someone dies, it is natural for our bodies to be on "high alert." Acknowledging that this is a normal reaction can help reduce children feeling overwhelmed. Knowing how to help your child or teen can be challenging. We are here to offer support.

Listen and Ask Questions

Try hard to just listen instead of thinking about what to say.

It's natural to want to reassure children and teens and take away their fears, but it can be more helpful to **start by listening and really hearing their worries**. If you want to offer reassurance, do so without making promises that can't be kept. For example, children and teens may worry that you or someone else they know will die too. Rather than saying, "Don't worry honey, I won't die," it's more helpful to say something like, "I know you're worried about other people dying too. While everyone does die, I plan to take good care of myself and to be here for a very long time. If something were to happen to me, there will always be someone to take care of you."

Ask what they need.

Children and teens often know what they need, but may not feel like their ideas are valid or worthy. Look for opportunities to ask children and teens what they need, and validate their suggestions. If a child gets panicky when a fire truck goes by, start by noticing and saying, "When the fire truck goes by, you seem to get scared and cover your ears." Then ask what's needed: "When you get scared about the fire truck, what do you think would be helpful? What could I do to help you feel safe? What could you do to help yourself feel safe?"

Talk Together

Help children and teens acknowledge their fears.

When fears arise, children can feel overwhelmed. Their natural instinct may be to push the fears away. As an adult, you will likely also want to push fears away for your children or teens so that they feel better. As scary as fears are, it's more helpful to start by acknowledging them, rather than dismiss or minimize them. While it might seem strange at first, saying fears out loud can be a positive step toward facing and coping with fear. Your child or teen might say, "I'm scared right now and worried that something bad will happen if I go to sleep," or "Being in the car makes me nervous because of the accident." It can help if you ask about their fears and help model saying them out loud. Helping children and teens acknowledge their fears can help stop the fears from growing stronger.



Night time can also bring up a lot of worries and fears after a death. Children and teens often find it difficult to fall asleep or will wake up with nightmares.

Some children might want to sleep in the same room or bed with their parent or siblings.

Even those who are okay sleeping by themselves might need additional comforts like leaving a light on, having the door open, being read to sleep, or holding a special stuffed animal.



Helping Children & Teens Cope with Fear After a Death

from The Dougy Center: The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

Provide solid and helpful information.

Some fears and worries are rooted in a lack of knowledge. You can help children and teens manage their fears by asking if they have questions about the death or the person who died. Answer honestly, in language they can understand. You can also ask them what they think and what they have heard from other people. Sometimes just having the details they're wondering about will lessen their fears.

Encourage children to investigate their fears.

Invite children and teens to be detectives about their fears. If they're afraid something's hiding under the bed, get down on the floor with a flashlight and look under the bed with them. Find out what they're afraid might happen: "What are you afraid will happen if something is hiding under the bed?" You might help them explore where they feel the fear starting in their bodies (in my throat; in my stomach; in my shoulders). Where does it travel to next? What seems to make their fear get bigger? What makes it smaller? You can also encourage them to talk to their fears. It could sound something like, "I hear you fear, but I don't want to talk to you anymore tonight, I need to get some sleep. I'll check in with you again tomorrow."

Provide Comfort

Establish routines.

Because so much has changed that children and teens couldn't control, consistency and predictability go a long way towards helping them feel safe after a death. Routines around going to bed, meal times, school, and activities can provide reassuring structure. While routines are helpful, it's also good to remain flexible and allow for things to shift and change when needed.

Offer choices.

When someone dies, children and teens, as well as adults, often feel powerless and out of control. Providing choices helps to rebuild a sense of control, and lessens their fears about the world being unsafe. These choices can be as small as, "Which of these two cereals do you want?" or as big as, "Would you like to attend the memorial service?"

Help children create a comfort thought or image.

Fears often show up in the form of a repetitive thought or image that children can't get out of their minds. Trying to push the image or thought away doesn't usually work very well, and sometimes makes the fear grow even louder. Encourage children and teens to come up with a phrase or an image that they find comforting, instead. Every time the scary fear or thought arises, they can replace it with their comfort thought or image. For example, after seven-year-old Maya's dad died in his sleep, she became fearful that bad things always happen at night. She was also frightened by the memory of ambulance lights flashing outside her bedroom window. Maya loves giraffes, so she and her mom cut out a picture of a giraffe and pasted it on a piece of paper with the words "It's safe to sleep" drawn in bright pink crayon. They framed it and put it on the table next to Maya's bed so that she could look at it anytime she wanted.



When bad or sad things happen, it's natural to be afraid more bad things will happen.

Our Mission

The Dougy Center provides support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families grieving a death can share their experiences.

The Dougy Center Bookstore/Resources

The Dougy Center has been helping children, teens, young adults and their parents cope with death since 1982. Our practical, easy-to-use materials are based on what we have learned from over 40,000 Dougy Center participants over the past three decades. To order online, visit www.dougy.org or www.tdcbookstore.org or call 503.775.5683.



The Dougy Center

The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

WESTERN COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS

300 Shelton St., Chadron, NE
1 (308) 432-8979

Community Support
Emergency Community Support
Crisis Response
Supportive Employment
Youth Transition Services
Pharmacogenomics testing
Children's Outreach Program
Connected Youth Initiative
Early Development Network
Community Essentials Pantry
Families and Schools Together
Respite
Women, Infants and Children
Commodity Supplemental Food Program
Immunization
Family Reproductive Health Services
HIV Testing & Counseling
Ryan White Early Intervention Program
Population Health
Mental Health Outreach/Telehealth
Patient Prescription Assistance Program
Contracted Services

REGIONAL RESOURCES

Mental Health Alliance
203 Klueffer St., Rushville, NE
815 Flack Avenue, Alliance, NE
3321 Ave I, Scottsbluff, NE
731 Illinois St., Sidney, NE
509 W 5th St., Kimball, NE
1 (308) 225-6572

**Regional West Psychiatry and
Behavioral Health**
2 W 42nd St. Suite 3200, Scottsbluff, NE
1 (308) 635-3888

**Addiction Counseling and
Consultation Services, Inc.**
1917 Avenue A, Scottsbluff, NE
1 (308) 633-1390

DOVES Program
803 3rd St Suite 5, Chadron, NE
1 (866) 953-6837
text-line: 515-599-6620

Sponsored by the A.W.A.R.E. grant and
partnered with Western Community Health
Resources (2023)

MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

In the Northern Panhandle

PROVIDERS & TREATMENT

Affinity Therapy Associates, LLC

327 Ann St., Chadron, NE
1 (308) 432-6910
www.affinitytherapy.org

Chadron State College Health Services

1000 Main St., Chadron, NE
1 (308) 432-6232
www.csc.edu/healthserv/counseling

Inspirit Counseling, LLC

709 W 4th St., Suite 2, Chadron, NE
1201 W 8th St., Chadron, NE
723 Flack Ave., Alliance, NE
1 (308) 430-1944
www.inspiritcounseling16.com

Pathways to Wellness, LLC

127 W 2nd St. Chadron, NE
11 Paddock St. Crawford, NE
1 (605) 646-3786
www.pathwaysne.com

Independence Rising

1803 E 3rd St Suite 3 Chadron, NE
1 (308) 633-7025
www.irnebraska.org/

Village Therapy Resources, LLC

104 W 3rd St., Chadron, NE
1 (308) 430-3070

Crossroads Resources, LLC

104 W 3rd St., Chadron, NE
1 (308) 432-3920

Western Nebraska Behavioral Health

307 Conrad St., Rushville, NE
1 (308) 327-2026

Options in Psychology- Adrianna Calle

212 Main St., Chadron, NE
863-899-8502
acalle@optionspsych.biz

Inner Peace Holistic Healing Center

229 Main St., Chadron, NE
605-673-7822

Chelsea Turner (virtual)

<https://chelsea-turner.clientsecure.me/>

Morningstar Counseling (virtual)

www.morningstar-counseling.com

ADOLESCENT OUTPATIENT PROGRAM

This program is available through the UNMC department of Psychiatry. It is available to referred 13-18 year old patients who struggle with substance abuse disorders

and/or any co-existing mental health diagnoses. Provider referral preferred. Self-referral also accepted.

For more information, please reach out to:

Dept. of Psychiatry, Addiction Services/IOP
1 (402)-552-6007

HELPLINES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

call or text: 988

Veterans - Crisis Line

1 (800) 273-8255 and press "1"

Behavioral Health Inpatient Unit

1 (308) 635-3711

DOVES Program Hotline

1 (866) 953-6837

Nebraska Substance Abuse Hotline

Dial 211 or 1 (866) 813-1731

Native Youth Crisis Hotline

1 (877) 209-1266

Boys Town National Hotline

1 (800) 448-3000

SAMHSA National Hotline

1 (800) 662-4357

Chadron LOSS Team

1 (308) 660-4551

No Transportation? No Problem!

Many counselors also offer telehealth appointments.

Many counselors adjust fees based on the patient's financial capability. This is known as "sliding-scale" payments.



Elementary School Parents®

April 2025
Vol. 36, No. 8

Hay Springs Public Schools

make the difference!



Research shows that free time builds your child's brain

While extracurricular activities can enrich your elementary schooler's life, it's important to balance them with unstructured play. Free time allows your child to goof off, explore interests, develop creativity and simply relax.

Studies show that even when children's brains are in a "resting" state—that is, not being fed a formal stream of instruction—they're still active. They are simply learning in a different way. So, just because your child may not *look* busy, it doesn't mean your child's brain isn't busy!

To provide some brain-boosting during your child's downtime:

- **Allow occasional boredom.** Don't race to solve your child's every

"There's nothing to do!" whimper. Instead, challenge your child to figure out how to fill the time. Who knows? It might be just the spark your child's brain needs to come up with something innovative!

- **Turn off digital devices.** It's easy to hand your child a smartphone or tablet to occupy downtime. But consistently doing so robs your child's brain of the chance to actively acquire information (instead of passively being "fed" information by a screen). Let your child look out the car window instead of at an app during your next drive. Just think what new knowledge might take hold.

Source: L. Waters, Ph.D., "How Goofing Off Helps Kids Learn," *The Atlantic*.

April activities can boost your child's learning



April may bring showers, but it also brings opportunities to promote responsibility and learning.

Try these activities with your child:

- **April 2**—International Children's Book Day. This day is designed to inspire a love of reading. Select a book and spend some time reading together.
- **April 8**—National Library Workers Day. Have your child make a card to thank the school librarian for helping in the library.
- **April 15**—National Laundry Day. Teach your child how to do a load of laundry.
- **April 22**—Earth Day. As a family, think of things you can do to protect the earth, such as using less water.
- **April 23**—Shakespeare's birthday. With your child, act out a scene from one of Shakespeare's plays. Or, challenge your child to write a play.
- **April 30**—National Honesty Day. Talk to your child about why it is important to be honest *every* day!

Boost reading comprehension and writing skills with summaries



Whether it's a passage on a handout or a novel from the library, elementary school assignments often involve reading.

One effective way students can check comprehension after reading is to write a summary of the material.

Encourage your child to answer the following questions when writing a summary:

- **Who are the characters** or people involved? Your child should write about each person or character and what's important about each one.
- **What did the characters** or people do? This is the basic plot.
- **Where did the story** take place?
- **When did the events** take place?

- **Why did things occur** as they did?
- **What events or feelings** affected the characters' choices?

It's OK if your child has to go back and reread the material—more carefully this time—to answer these questions. Over time, your child will get the knack of summarizing.

“The unread story is not a story; it is little black marks on wood pulp. The reader, reading it, makes it live: a live thing, a story.”

—Ursula K. Le Guin

Reinforce your child's academic skills with these simple activities



Learning doesn't happen *only* during school. You can reinforce your child's academic skills any time! Here's how:

- **Have conversations** with your child about everything. Ask what your child thinks about certain topics—and really listen to the answers.
 - **Ask about** what your elementary schooler is learning in school. What does your child find most interesting about each subject?
 - **Ask your child to explain** a new concept or idea to you. When students retell the things they learn, they reinforce those things in their own minds.
 - **Help your child engage** in analytical thinking. Discuss the similarities and differences between things.
- Think out loud when you are trying to solve a challenging problem.
 - **Give your child** meaningful responsibilities. If you have a pet, ask your child to help with its care. Demonstrate how to prepare simple snacks, dust the family room and do other household chores.
 - **Respect your child's** abilities. Let your child use newly acquired knowledge and skills to help you. For example, ask your child to sort laundry, or count out napkins and forks for setting the table.
 - **Expose your child to new things.** Every meaningful experience your child has—from a walk around the neighborhood to a trip to a store—has an impact on learning. On your next outing, ask how the things you both see relate to what your child is learning in school.

Are you teaching your child to use time wisely?



Learning to prioritize tasks, manage time effectively and stay organized helps elementary school students reduce stress

and improve academic performance. Are you helping your child use time wisely? Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you review** your child's schedule and made adjustments as necessary when priorities change?
- ___ **2. Do you help** your child make a list of weekly “must-dos” and plan when to complete them?
- ___ **3. Do you try** to keep a balance between your child's schoolwork and the rest of your lives? Elementary schoolers need plenty of time for exercise, family time and sleeping.
- ___ **4. Do you help** your child break down big assignments into smaller tasks to complete step-by-step?
- ___ **5. Do you make** sure that your child has some time each day for pleasure reading?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you are helping your child learn to use time wisely. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Strong thinking skills enhance learning and problem solving



Does your child often feel overwhelmed by detailed assignments, like a big history project or a research paper? Helping your child develop strong thinking skills provides the tools to tackle the challenge.

When students gain insight into their own thinking strategies, they are better equipped to approach and solve complex problems. Students who are effective thinkers:

- **Are aware of *how* they think.** Educators call this *metacognition*, or the ability to think about the thinking process. These students have a plan before they take action. They know if they need more information in order to draw a conclusion. And if they get new information later, they adapt. If your child is struggling, say something like, “Let’s think this through.”

Talk about your child’s strength as a problem solver. “Remember that when you make a plan, things seem to fall into place.”

- **Apply past experiences** to current challenges. Your child may not have had an assignment exactly like this one, but has likely worked on other large assignments. Ask your child, “How did you approach your last project? What did you learn from that experience?”
- **Focus on momentum.** Progress, not perfection, is the key to success. “It’s not that I’m so smart,” Albert Einstein once said, “it’s that I stick with a problem longer.” So when your elementary schooler gets discouraged, point out the headway already made.

Source: A.L. Costa, *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Five easy strategies can help you build your child’s self-confidence



Self-confidence can have a positive impact on your child’s academic and social life. When students believe in themselves, they’re more likely to take on challenges, persevere through frustration and achieve goals.

To inspire self-confidence, celebrate your child’s effort, progress and achievements. Consider these ideas:

1. **Send “fan mail.”** Praise your child’s efforts in a short note, poem or silly riddle. Sign it, “From your biggest fan” and leave it where your child will find it.
2. **Create a mini-museum.** In addition to the refrigerator, designate a wall in the house as a place to hang your child’s art, writing, test papers and certificates. Change the “exhibits” often.
3. **Make a date.** Each month, devote one day to doing something your child enjoys and does well. Write it on the calendar. Let your child choose what to do.
4. **Have a testimonial dinner.** Put your child at the head of the table and have each family member say something nice about the honored guest. Encourage siblings to participate by reminding them that their turn will be coming.
5. **Give a good night boost.** When your child is getting ready for bed, take time to chat about something your sleepyhead did well today.

Q: My children just don’t get along. They fight constantly and I always get caught in the middle. How can I teach them to treat each other respectfully and resolve their conflicts peacefully?

Questions & Answers

A: You aren’t alone! Even the friendliest of siblings have times when they don’t get along—and many families feel like they have to act as referees.

Instead of getting in the middle of every squabble, teach your children some basic strategies for resolving conflicts peacefully and respectfully. These strategies will also help them when they face conflicts at school.

Teach your children to:

- **Talk about issues *before*** they become conflicts. When little things are ignored, they tend to grow into big disputes.
- **Use “I-messages.”** Encourage your children to talk about their feelings, not the other person’s mistakes. Instead of, “YOU always steal my supplies,” try, “I feel angry when you take something without asking to borrow it first.”
- **Avoid the “blame game.”** If there’s a problem, it probably doesn’t matter whose fault it is. Help your children focus their attention on fixing the problem, not placing the blame.
- **Listen.** Your children will never understand another person’s point of view if they don’t listen to what that person has to say.
- **Cooperate and compromise.** If two people have a conflict, they each have a problem. To solve it, they’ll probably both have to make some changes.

It Matters: Building Character

Respond to failure in positive ways



Sooner or later, your elementary schooler will experience a failure or setback. The way you react to it can help shape your child's character and academic achievement.

To help your elementary schooler bounce back after setbacks:

- **Remind your child** that your love is unconditional—it is not tied to school performance.
- **Say that mistakes** are actually opportunities for learning. Help your child think about what to do differently in the future.
- **Praise what you can.** “Most of your answers were correct on this test. That’s an improvement.”
- **Be realistic.** If your child is unable to raise a class grade despite working hard to do so, don’t show disappointment. Instead, work with the teacher to help your child create a plan for improvement.
- **Teach your child** to respect teacher’s decisions—even if your child does not like them.
- **Move on.** Don’t dwell on the failure. When families spend too much time talking about setbacks, children can have a harder time getting past them.
- **Offer support** without taking over. If your child earns a low grade on a writing assignment, discuss ways to improve.
- **Be a role model.** Handle your own mistakes and failures in positive ways.

Source: D. Walsh, *No: Why Kids—of All Ages—Need to Hear It and Ways Parents Can Say It*, Free Press.

Focus on four areas as you help your child develop character

Children are born with unique personalities. Their character; however, is shaped by their experiences and the values they learn.

To guide your child’s character development, focus on teaching:

1. **Flexibility.** Model compromise and negotiation by listening to the opinions of others. Encourage your child to do the same.
2. **Empathy.** Teach your child to imagine how others might feel and to treat them with kindness. Make caring for others a priority in your family.
3. **Self-control.** Explain that while people can’t control others’ actions, they can control their own behavior. Encourage your child to always think before acting.



4. **Responsibility.** Let your child know that responsibilities are like promises. They are things that must be done—especially when others are counting on your child.

Try these effective strategies to encourage respectful behavior



A positive and respectful learning environment is linked to higher academic achievement and better overall school performance. To instill a strong sense of respect in your child:

- **Set an example.** Seeing you treat others with respect—from the teacher to the homeless person on the street—teaches your child the proper way to behave.
- **Name it when you see it.** When you see other people behaving in respectful ways, make a positive comment. “Did you see how that man gave up his seat so that elderly woman could sit down?”

What a respectful thing to do.”

No lecture is necessary. Your child will get the message.

- **Praise it** when your child demonstrates it. “I felt very proud of you when you held the door for Mrs. Jones. I know she appreciated that respectful gesture.”
- **Correct it.** If your child slips up, suggest a course correction. In private, say something like, “Remember what we said about how to greet guests?”
- **Report what you hear.** If someone tells you that your child greeted them politely, pass on the compliment to your child and say how proud it makes you.