



# THE CARDINAL CHIRP

VOL XLV ISSUE NO. 1

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



## From the Desk of the Superintendent

*Mr. Jon Davis, Superintendent*

I would like to welcome back our students, teachers and staff to the new school year. It is great to see our hallways full again with eager learners and dedicated staff ready to begin another year. Fall activities are already off to a good start. By the time you read this newsletter, every sport will have competed in at least one event.

As the year begins, Alma Public School encourages good sportsmanship at all activities, home and away. Fans are reminded to support our teams and players positively and to refrain from negative comments directed toward athletes, coaches, and referees throughout the season.

### **August Board Meeting Highlights:**

The August board meeting featured a short agenda.

- Approved the hiring of three new paraprofessionals to replace those who left.
- Discussed non-certified wages.
- Approved a seven percent tax request authority, as permitted by law, if needed.
- Accepted the resignation of Mr. Jesse Langley from the Alma Board of Education.

Mr. Langley, previously serving as Harlan County Deputy Sheriff, was promoted to Sheriff following the retirement of longtime Sheriff Chris Becker. By law, he cannot hold two high-level county positions simultaneously, which required his resignation. We thank Sheriff Becker for his many years of service to Harlan County, his dedication to the communities he served, and his strong support of Alma Public School. He and the Sheriff's Department maintained an excellent working relationship with our school, attending many events and always responding quickly when needed. We also extend our appreciation to Sheriff Langley for his contributions during his time on the board, and we look forward to working with him in his new role.

The Board of Education is now accepting applications to fill the vacant board seat. Applications are available in the Office of the Superintendent and will be accepted through September 3rd. The new board member will be appointed at the September 8th Board of Education Meeting and will serve the remainder of Mr. Langley's term, which ends on December 31, 2028.

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## Mark Your Calendar

**Sept 10--** 10:00 Start-- Teacher Inservice

**Sept 25--** 1:00 Dismissal-- Parent Teacher Conferences

## From the Desk of the Supt.

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### 2025-2026 Budget:

The 2025-2026 school budget has been completed and will be presented at the September 8th School Board meeting. The public is welcome to attend.

- 6:40 P.M. – Budget Hearing
- Immediately Following – Special Hearing to Set Final Tax Request
- 7:00 P.M. – Regular Board Meeting

Meetings are held in the school library. Please use the east office doors of the two-story high school building to enter.

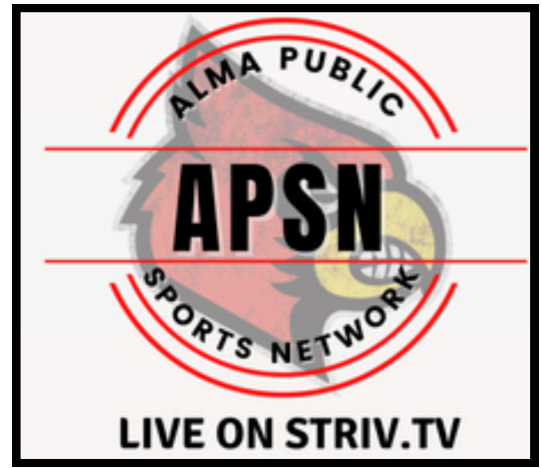
Key budget details:

- The Alma School District covers parts of Harlan and Furnas Counties, with a small portion in Franklin County
- The district's total valuation increased 7.72% (about 40,217,398). Property valuations are set by the County Assessor's office, not the school.
- The total school levy is \$0.8203, a decrease of 3.97¢ (4.62%) from last year. Over the past five years, the levy has dropped 20.47¢ (20%),
- The levy will raise \$4,591,651 in tax dollars, an increase of \$122,873 (2.75%).
- The school lost \$249,091 (16.23% decrease) in State Aid.
- The General Fund increased by \$226,455 (2.88%) to \$8,100,844.

The General Fund is the primary operating budget, covering salaries, supplies, utilities, and other daily expenses. Property taxes remain the main source of revenue for Nebraska schools, though it is the responsibility of the Nebraska Legislature to find alternatives to this system.

Alma Public Schools is the largest employer in the county, with over 66 employees, and has a payroll of nearly four million dollars. We serve nearly 400 students from PK-12th grades and are one of the largest schools in the 18-school conference. In a survey last year that included the 18-conference schools and two other area schools, Alma ranked 19th out of 20 in school expenditures per formula student at \$15,000. The conference low expenditure per formula student was \$14,930, and the high was \$24,333. Alma ranked 12th in land valuation, 8th in GF in tax asking, 9th in total tax asking, and 7th in levy asking. What does this all mean? Despite being one of the largest schools in the 20-school survey, Alma is very comparable in spending to its peer schools.

If you have questions about the budget, board decisions, or other school-related items, please contact me at 928-2131 or by email at [jon.davis@almacardinals.org](mailto:jon.davis@almacardinals.org).



Catch your favorite home events live on Striv.tv!

## Welcome Back to School!

*Mrs. Kim Ritter, Art*

The start of a new school year is always exciting-- especially in the art room! Fresh supplies and materials are ready to help students create amazing projects.

Students of all ages are eager to learn, grow, and explore. In art, everyone is encouraged to use their imagination and skills to bring creative ideas to life.

We look forward to a wonderful year filled with creativity and masterpieces!

Have a great year!

## Minds in Motion

*Mr. Matthew Hageman, Sixth Grade*

We're off to a great start to the new school year! It's been fun hearing about what everyone did over the summer, and I'm really looking forward to all the learning and adventures we'll have this year. We have a brand-new science curriculum, and I'm excited to dive into it with our 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. We're already jumping in with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade exploring various ecosystems, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade is learning about force and motion. I look forward to the school year!

## JH Volleyball Schedule

*Mrs. Jodie Schuller, Physical Education*

Junior High Volleyball is underway. Come watch these girls play! GBR!

September 8th-- Elm Creek (Home)-- @ 4:00 p.m.  
 September 15<sup>th</sup>-- Southern Valley (Home )-- @ 2:30 p.m.  
 September 22<sup>nd</sup>-- @ Cambridge-- @ 3:00 p.m.  
 September 24<sup>th</sup>-- @ Axtell-- @1:00 p.m.  
 September 29<sup>th</sup>-- @ Blue Hill-- @ 3:00 p.m.  
 October 7<sup>th</sup>-- @ Arapahoe-- @ 1:30 p.m.  
 October 13<sup>th</sup>-- Bertrand (Home)-- @ 2:30 p.m.



# Building Perseverance and Resilience

*Mrs. Ariel Neumeyer, School Psychologist*

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

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

I can try again, even if I don't get it the first time.  
I can remind myself, "I haven't figured it out yet."  
I can break a big job into smaller steps.  
I can ask for help when I need it.  
I can learn from my mistakes.  
I can keep working, even if it feels hard.  
I can use my strengths to help me through challenges.  
I can think about what worked before and try it again.  
I can cheer myself on with positive self-talk.  
I can take a short break and come back ready to try again.  
I can celebrate small successes along the way.

## National Suicide Prevention Month

September is an important month as we strive to raise awareness about suicide prevention. To learn more, I encourage you to visit the Suicide Prevention Resource Center at [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](https://www.sprc.org) or [sprc.org](https://www.sprc.org)

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

## 988 Lifeline

<https://988lifeline.org>

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

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

## Leaping into Learning

*Ms. Aliasha Luke, Third Grade*

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> grader are off and running! This year is going to be filled with exciting adventures in learning, new responsibilities, and plenty of fun. Third grade is the year students begin to see just how much they can do, and we can’t wait to celebrate their successes along the way.

Our days will be filled with opportunities to:

- Explore math in new ways, from multiplication to fractions! Our new curriculum is fast paced and they are already doing great!
- Read bigger books and share our thoughts in classroom discussions. We already started a chapter book for reading interventions and they have had great discussion!
- Write creatively while also practicing neat handwriting. We are writing an opinion paper about How to Blow a Bubble! They are also excited about the books we make this year!
- Experiments in science with hands-on investigations. We will dive into our new curriculum this year. I am nervous but they are excited!
- Learn responsibility by becoming leaders in and out of the classroom.

I asked each student what they are most excited about this year, and the responses were fantastic! Many are eager to make new friends, but most of them are excited for May to be here so we can go to the Kearney Archway on our fieldtrip!

**Cannon Haussermann-** I am excited to see my friends everyday!

**Jenna Webster-** I am excited to go to the Kearney Archway on our field trip.

**Alice Sikes-** I am excited for our field trip and to see my friends.

**Jose Gomez-** I am excited for our field trip.

**Taylyn Shriver-** I am excited about going to Kearney for our field trip.

**Risa Lee-** I am excited for our class parties!

**Emma Dockweiler-** I am ready for our field trip to Kearney!

**Adalina Wells-** I am excited to make books and spend time with my teacher.

**Nova Dickinson-** I am excited to see my friends everyday and our field trip.

I am so proud of how quickly our class has come together. I can’t wait to see all the growth, learning, and friendships that will happen in 3rd grade this year!



# Building Foundations for Community and Learning

*Mrs. Alisha McCord, Fifth Grade*

What a wonderful start to the school year! I've truly enjoyed getting to know all of our 5th and 6th graders—this is such a lively, curious, and fun group of students. One of the most important parts of any new school year is learning who our students are as individuals and celebrating what makes each of them unique.

I've enjoyed asking my 5th grade homeroom class questions for everyone to share and discuss. These questions range from silly to thoughtful, but they always spark great conversations and help us learn something new about each other.

My favorite question so far has been: "If you could switch places with one relative, who would it be and why?" While some common themes emerged, the answers were wonderfully creative and insightful:

**Tony Ardiana:** I would switch places with my dad so I could drive.

**Kaylee Deyle:** I would switch places with my grandma because she has a horse. I could also drive and have a credit card.

**Carolyn Dickinson:** I would switch places with my grandma because she spoils us and I wouldn't have to go to school anymore.

**Cassidy Ehrke:** I would switch places with my dad so I could drive and not go to school.

**Brynn Guthrie:** If I could switch places with someone for a day, I would choose my mom, Jenni Guthrie, in the SUMMER. I could have a shopping spree on her credit card, be able to drive my dad's grey truck, and go to Spring City. I chose her in the summer so I wouldn't have to work.

**Miracle Joppa:** I would switch places with my aunt Sarah because she works at the Florida beach.

**Nevaeh Kindler:** I want to switch places with my aunt because she works at the daycare. I like playing with the kids.

**Carter Kresser:** I would switch places with Dad so I could drive and do other fun stuff.

**Fletcher Low:** I would switch places with my step-sister, Jajriane, so I could meet her, see how her life is, do her job for her, drive her car, go to college, and be 24. She could see how my school is too.

**Bentley Lynch:** I would switch places with my brother because he can drive.

**Luis Maldonado:** I would switch places with my mom because I could go to dancing clubs.

**Hendryx Ogier:** I would switch places with my dad because I want to be a handyman.

**Briar Robinson:** I would switch places with my grandma so I could drink coffee and relax.

**Marcus Schultz:** I would switch places with Grandpa Max, so my grandma could see him one more time.

# Welcome Back to APS!

*Mrs. Brittney Biskup, Guidance Counselor*

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

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

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

I'm a busy mom with 3 kids. Linden is a Junior at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri, Tucker a Senior, and Layne is a 7th grader. I am regularly driving to activities and enjoy supporting students in their many endeavors.

I look forward to year 25th at Alma Public School and will continue to work with parents, students, and teachers to help students become the best they can be!

## Graduation Requirement Change/ Update

The State is now requiring senior students/families to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to graduate. While APS must comply with the state requirements for graduation, we are here to support our families in many ways. First, if a family plans to file the FAFSA, they are welcome to do that on their own or with support. Mrs. Biskup will be hosting a FAFSA informational meeting (hosted by EducationQuest) on Sept. 10th at 6:30 pm in the library. Additionally, students/ parents are welcome and encouraged to set up an appointment with EducationQuest to have them assist in filing the FAFSA after October 1st when it opens. Appointments can be made by calling 308-234-6310.

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# Welcome Back to APS!

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Finally, if families do not plan to file the FAFSA, the state is allowing parents to sign an opt-out form that will need to be submitted to the school. If you are planning to opt-out, we ask that you submit this to the office before April 1st. Forms are available from Mrs. Biskup. We hope that this change will be easy for students and families to complete and meet the needs of each situation. If you have any questions, reach out to Mrs. Biskup.

## IMPORTANT!

**Parent-Teacher Conferences**

**September 25th**

**2:30-7:30 p.m.**

## Special Note: Building a Culture of Kindness

*Mrs. Stephanie Brandyberry, Principal*

At Alma Public Schools, we believe every student deserves to feel safe, respected, and valued each day. Our classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, and lunchroom should be places where students can learn, grow, and build positive friendships. Unfortunately, we've noticed moments when unkind behavior, whether through words, exclusion, or gossip, has hurt members of our school community. These actions may seem small in the moment, but they can leave a lasting impact on the people involved and on the overall atmosphere of our school.

As your principal, I want to stop this from happening. But I cannot do it alone. I need help from both parents and students to make sure our school is a place where kindness is the standard, not the exception.

Parents, I encourage you to have conversations at home about the importance of kindness and respect. Children learn a great deal from the examples set by adults, and your guidance can help them make positive choices. Remind your child that even the smallest gestures, like inviting someone to join a game, offering a compliment, or standing up for a classmate can make a big difference in someone's day.

Students, I need your help too. If you experience unkindness or see it happening to others, please report it. Talk to a teacher, counselor, or administrator. If speaking face-to-face feels hard, you can write a note or send an email. What matters most is that you let someone know. We take every report seriously, and your courage in speaking up can help prevent future harm. Remember, problems cannot be solved if no one knows about them.

It's also important to understand the role of a bystander. When someone stays silent or looks away, it can sometimes make the problem worse. When you speak up, you are showing courage and helping protect others. Standing up for kindness doesn't always mean confronting the situation directly. It can be as simple as checking in on a classmate afterward or telling a trusted adult what you saw.

Our school should be known as a place where kindness, respect, and encouragement shine. That kind of culture is built not just by rules, but by the daily choices we all make, students, staff, and families. Each of us has the power to shape our school into the kind of community where everyone feels welcome and supported.

I want to challenge all of us, adults and students alike, to look for one opportunity each day to choose kindness. It could be holding the door open, inviting someone new to sit with you, or simply offering a smile. Small actions add up quickly and can change the way people feel about themselves and their school.

**Together, let's make sure Alma Public Schools is a place where kindness is expected, respect is practiced, and every student knows they belong.**

