

# ALEXANDER ELEMENTARY

## FALCON FAMILY COMMUNITY MEETING

**Sep 9, 2024**

6:30 pm

Alexander Library

### WELCOME! REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS

<b>Welcome!</b> (5 minutes)	<i>Tables Introduce Yourselves!</i>
<b>Principal's Report</b> (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Katie Thompson, Principal</i> Update on the first Two Weeks Mrs Thompson said: We have added about 100 new students and 15-20 new staff! We're off to a great start to the new year. This is the time of the year when we start setting expectations and get used to routines. We teach things like how to line up, how to use the bathroom, get lunch, and other daily procedures and routines. We also teach them how to be kind, be safe, and build relationships with their classmates. Thank you for your patience as we're all learning, especially in the car line!</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher-Speaker</b> (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Heidi Hassen, School Counselor</i> Please see notes at the end of the document for a summary</li> </ul>
<b>Run for the Schools</b> (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Katie Thompson, Principal, on behalf of PE Teacher Jen Neubauer</i></li> <li>● Every year we take a lot of pride in this event. For many years we have placed in the top 3! The number of people who participate or volunteer count toward our school. The school with the most participants or volunteers gets the #1 award! We were #1 in 2022. Last year we were #3! We are competitive and would love to get the 1st place trophy back. Mark your calendars - it's October 6 (Sunday). You can sign up online - search "Run for the Schools" and all the registration information will be there. If you want help with registration we can help. Mrs Neubauer will send home information sheets where you can indicate that you'd like support.</li> </ul>

## PTO UPDATE & DISCUSSION

Topic	Things to consider/Questions
<p><b>Quick PTO Updates:</b> (5 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="http://alexander.iowacityschools.org/pto">alexander.iowacityschools.org/pto</a> (Meeting Minutes)</li> <li>● Treasurer's Report - <i>balance</i>: \$3899.28. Recent transactions: -\$104.83 for ice cream social. Prior +1892.45 and -\$1042.45 for year books.</li> <li>● Districtwide Parents Organization <a href="http://www.iowacityschools.org/dpo">www.iowacityschools.org/dpo</a> First Meeting is Wed, 9/11 at The Green Room downtown</li> </ul>
<p><b>How Parents and Families Can Support Our School</b> (15 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Colbin Erdahl, PTO President</li> <li>● <i>We want to build community and support teachers in the classrooms.</i></li> </ul>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<p><b>Read-A-Thon</b> Thurs, Sep 26th - Fri, Oct 4th</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students will receive information on how to log reading minutes and gather pledges</li> <li>● Individual, Classroom and School-wide Prizes for meeting reading goals</li> <li>● We have 2 goals: To get kids to read and to raise money for our school We will send a letter home in mid-September with information for students to sign up, raise money, and read a lot of books.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Run for the Schools</b> Sun, Oct 6th</p>	<p>Sign up your student/family to run/walk <a href="https://runsignup.com/Race/Events/IA/IowaCity/RunfortheSchools">https://runsignup.com/Race/Events/IA/IowaCity/RunfortheSchools</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Help support kids who need financial assistance to participate! Venmo: @AlexanderElementaryPTO, please indicate in comment that your donation is to</li> </ul>	

	support Run for the Schools	
<b>School Picture Day</b> Mon, Oct. 28th During School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1-2 volunteers needed to assist with directing students</li> </ul>	
<b>Fall Fest</b> Fri, Nov. 8th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Largest Fundraising and Community Building Event of the year!!</li> <li>● PTO needs help with planning and setup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ First Planning Zoom: Mon, 9/16 at 7:30</li> <li>○ Sign up tonight!</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Parent-Teacher Conference Meal</b> Fri, Nov 22nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PTO will provide a meal for teachers</li> <li>● Sign Up will come</li> </ul>	

Please email [AlexanderElementaryPTO@gmail.com](mailto:AlexanderElementaryPTO@gmail.com) to join the PTO email list. This is the best way to find out about volunteering for upcoming events!

Summary of Ms Hassen’s presentation about the School Counseling Program at Alexander Elementary (transcribed by Ariane Rhone, summarized with assistance of ChatGPT)

**Background on Ms. Hassen:**

Before becoming a school counselor, Ms. Hassen worked as a teacher and an advocate for survivors of abuse. This is her 12th year as a counselor and her 9th year in Iowa City. She is trained in mental health and wellbeing and also works in mobile crisis response outside of school.

**Why Counselors in Elementary School?**

Elementary school is a critical time for children to develop:

- Their identities as friends and individuals.
- Skills for interacting and collaborating with others.
- Problem-solving, peer engagement, and attitudes toward academics.

The counseling program focuses on the *Wellness Triangle*: mental, social, and physical health.

**How the Counseling Program Supports Students:**

- **Guidance Lessons:** Each class (K–5) has one weekly counseling lesson.
- **Individual Counseling:** Students can request one-on-one time, and Ms. Hassen may reach out to families if a child is struggling.
- **Behavioral Interventions:** Support for self-management and executive functioning skills.

**Reasons Students Might Seek Counseling:**

- Resolving playground conflicts or addressing bullying/exclusion.
- Processing grief (e.g., loss of a pet or loved one).
- Managing anxiety or stress, especially when coping skills are underdeveloped.
- Identifying and intervening early with lagging skills to prevent long-term challenges.

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### Exciting Programs and Initiatives:

1. **Career Lunch:**
  - Older students meet guests from various professions to explore career options.
  - Guests have included welders, musicians, fencing instructors, and local politicians.
  - Volunteers from the Falcon Community are welcome to share their careers with 5th graders.
2. **Closegap:**
  - Daily emotional check-ins for students in grades 3–5 (parent permission required).
  - Includes tools for managing emotions and notifying staff if a student needs to talk.
  - Teachers receive reports on student trends over time.

### Tips for Families to Support Students:

- Ensure kids get enough sleep and limit screen time at night.
- Encourage conversations about emotions and problem-solving at home.
- Teach children to acknowledge and process emotions constructively.
- Guide them through resolving peer conflicts by asking questions like:
  - What's the problem?
  - What do both people need?
  - What are some possible solutions?

### Clarifications:

- Counseling at school is short-term, not long-term therapy or clinical diagnosis. It provides a safe space for students to feel heard.
- Families are partners in social, emotional, and behavioral health.

### Q&A:

- **Does every class get guidance lessons?** Yes, all K–5 students have one lesson per week.
- **How do you identify students needing extra help?** Through daily check-ins and other observations, all students can access additional support from Ms. Hassen.

For questions or concerns, families are encouraged to reach out to Ms. Hassen.

<https://alexander.iowacityschools.org/students-families/school-counseling>