

# ALEXANDER ELEMENTARY

## FALCON FAMILY COMMUNITY MEETING

**Mar 10, 2025**

6:30 pm

Alexander Cafeteria

### WELCOME! REPORTS & PRESENTATIONS

<b>Welcome!</b> (5 minutes)	<i>Tables Introduce Yourselves!</i> In Attendance: Katie Thompson, Principal Mary Coughlin-Julian, Melissa Zieglowski, Susan O'Dell, staff Colbin E., PTO president Sara K, PTO temp vice-president Emily Voss, PTO treasurer Ariane Rhone, PTO secretary Michelle, Lindsay, David, Sofia, Anna, Lucia, Anita, Arnol, Sonia, Cecilia, parents Interpreters
<b>Principal's Report</b> (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Katie Thompson, <i>Principal</i></li> </ul> February went very fast, thank you for your flexibility with the weather-related closures and delays. We are working on having quick, quiet, and safe transitions. Elementary students have hundreds of transitions a day, we are working very hard to practice our transitions.
<b>Teacher-Speaker</b> (15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mary Coughlin-Julian, <i>School Facilitator</i></li> <li>● Emily Voss, <i>Parent</i></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>School Attendance (see notes below)</b></p>

### PTO UPDATE & DISCUSSION

Topic	Things to consider/Questions
<b>Quick PTO Updates:</b> (5 minutes)	<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 - balance: \$8383.06. Recent transactions: \$365.80 Jimmy Johns for teacher conference meals</li> <li>● Districtwide Parents Organization <a href="http://www.iowacityschools.org/students-families/get-involved">www.iowacityschools.org/students-families/get-involved</a> Ariane Rhone. Next meeting is Wed, 3/12, Spring "DineOut"</li> </ul>

	coming in April!
<b>DPO Honorees:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each year every school can nominate teachers to be honored <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ \$50 contributions go toward DPO scholarships for seniors</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Yearbook Design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Yearbook design page is active</li> <li>• Teachers: Page designs will be due on April 11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ PTO donations for all 5th graders. MK moves to fund 5th graders who cannot pay for their own. All (&gt;10) Yes, no Nos.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Order yearbooks by april 09, form went home with students or order online:  <a href="https://www.jostens.com/apps/store/customer/2546211/Archibald-Alexander-Elementary-School/">https://www.jostens.com/apps/store/customer/2546211/Archibald-Alexander-Elementary-School/</a></p>
<b>Alexander PTO Planning for 2025-26</b> Meeting 4/14 at 6:30 in the Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need new PTO parents! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ If you are interested, or know someone who would be perfect for this, please come to our meeting on Mon, April 14 in the Alexander Library</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We will start planning for next year's events and form the new PTO leadership team</li> </ul>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>Summer Playdate Schedule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We would like to schedule three get-togethers at parks for the Falcon Family this Summer (with Popcicles!)</li> <li>• Last year we held these at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Wetherby Park</li> <li>◦ Hills Park</li> <li>◦ Alexander Playground</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>PTO will set dates and communicate with parents before the end of school year</b>
<b>STEM Night</b> Thurs, April 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A great evening at Alexander for kids to experiment with different areas of Science, Technology, Engineering &amp; Math</li> </ul>	<b>Sara K doing this! If there are people interested please reach out.</b>
<b>Bike Rodeo</b> Wed, May 21 at Wetherby Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bicyclists of Iowa City will help us put on a bike clinic and some fun challenges for kids.</li> <li>• Kids should bring their own bike and helmet, but BIC will also have a small amount of loaner bikes</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! Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AlexanderPTO>

**ADJOURN**      **NEXT BUSINESS MEETING (IN PERSON): APRIL 14**  
**NEXT COMMUNITY MEETING (IN PERSON): MAY 12**

School Attendance Meeting Notes and Links:

ICCSD Websote: <https://www.iowacityschools.org/students-families/attendance>

Slides from this presentation:  FFCM - Attendance Presentation 3/10/25

Handouts from this Meeting:  Handouts\_20250310\_FFCM.pdf

## School Attendance Meeting Notes

In April, the school will launch an Attendance Awareness Month to emphasize the importance of attendance. This is the first time we're doing this! Here is some information about the current ICCSD attendance policies and how this is put in practice at Alexander. This presentation was led by Mary Coughlin-Julian, School Facilitator, and Emily Voss, Alexander parent, PTO Treasurer, and attorney who works for the District Attorney's office, specializing in truancy and other family issues.

## Overview of New Attendance Policies

- The state of Iowa introduced new school attendance laws in Fall 2024, including stricter reporting requirements
- Notifications are sent to guardians at 5%, 10%, and 15% absentee rates per trimester (for Elementary schools).
- Attendance is measured by hours, meaning tardies and early departures contribute to absenteeism.

## Steps in the Attendance Process

1. **5% Absentee Rate:** Guardians receive an email notification from the district, signed by Mrs. Thompson.
2. **10% Absentee Rate:** A certified letter requiring a signature is sent to the guardian in the mail. This letter comes from the district.
3. **15% Absentee Rate:** A school engagement meeting is scheduled, usually coordinated by Miss Mary (or Mrs. Thompson).
  - The meeting helps identify issues and develop an attendance improvement plan.
  - If attendance does not improve or if the meeting is skipped, the case may be referred to the county attorney.

## Legal Implications & Court Process

- If referred, the county attorney's office determines whether court charges are necessary.
- The ultimate goal is improving student attendance, not penalizing families.
- Families may qualify for a court-appointed attorney, if needed, by signing a financial affidavit.
- Mediation is also sometimes offered, where an attorney may assist in articulating concerns.

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## Special Considerations

- **Medical Absences:** After 8 excused absences for medical reasons, a doctor's note is required for further excused absences.
- **Exemptions:** Absences may be excused for medical reasons, court appearances, religious observances, and IEP/504 accommodations.
- **Physical/Speech/Occupational Therapy & Mental Health Appointments:** A standing note from a doctor can cover recurring appointments.
- **Travel:** Absences due to travel must be communicated in advance, especially if exceeding two weeks.
- **Religious Observances:** Families can document religious absences, including religious holidays or associated activities.

## Communication & Parent Concerns

- Attendance notifications are sent via email in the language selected in Infinite Campus.
- Parents expressed concerns that emails often go unnoticed due to poor translation or children filtering them.
- Suggestions were made to add urgent labels to attendance-related emails.
- At Alexander, communication efforts include phone calls, backpack notes, etc. We will try to reach you using multiple methods.

## Attendance Awareness Month (April)

- **Initiatives:**
  - Weekly communications highlighting the importance of attendance.
  - School-wide attendance tracking (not individualized).
  - Prizes and drawings for students attending daily.
  - "Kite Day" event at the end of April (around Earth Day), inspired by Hills tradition.
- **Future Plans:**
  - Discuss attendance policies at parent-teacher conferences and Meet the Teacher Night.
  - Increase awareness that chronic absenteeism can lead to legal consequences.

## Final Thoughts

- Alexander staff are committed to supporting families in improving attendance.
  - Here at Alexander we have sympathetic and empathetic ears. We will support you as best we can. We are resourceful. Although we cannot guarantee anything, we will do EVERYTHING we can to support you. We want your children here. It is the only way they can learn their foundational education.
- Open communication with the school can help avoid unnecessary legal action.
- If you're having trouble getting your kid to school (e.g. transportation, family issues) please reach out to the office.