

WELCOME TO OUR

# December Newsletter



Dear Lion Families,

We are ready to pump up the holiday spirit around Newaygo Elementary with some key events including the beginning of a new NES tradition...decorating our own Christmas trees! In addition to that, we have our annual shopping experience at the Secret Santa Shop (the week of Dec. 8-12) as well as the much anticipated 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Christmas Music Program on Dec 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 in the HS gym. Each of these activities adds festive fun to our regular days of learning. They also take a great deal of planning and organizing so I'd like to thank our NES Boosters, Mrs. Horton, Mrs. Crane, Mrs. Charette and the rest of the staff in helping to make these memorable events special for our students!

Mr. Cox

## Important Dates:

Dec 8-12 Secret Santa Shop  
Dec 11 2nd/3<sup>rd</sup> grade musical  
Dec 19 Half-Day of school  
Dec 22-Jan 2 Christmas Break!

## Office Notes:

**Now that we are clearly into the winter weather season, please send students with all of the necessary winter gear. Thank you!**

## Beginnergartners Celebrate 50th Day of School:

Celebrating the 50th day of school was a joyful milestone in our Beginnergarten class! Students dressed up in fun 1950s-inspired outfits, practiced counting to 50 with creative activities, and enjoyed a special snack and games. The day was filled with music, laughter, and hands-on learning as we celebrated how much we've grown together during our first 50 days of school.



### Firestarters for Sale!

Dear NES Families,

ASP students are selling firestarters, at 2 for \$1, for your holiday gatherings. Thank you to everyone who purchased during conferences. Students will fill orders until supplies are gone. You can send cash in an envelope to your child's teacher. Be sure your child's first and last name is written on the envelope. Snow is on the way, so stay warm by the fire!

Sincerely,

The ASP Students



# “Growing” our Kids!

This month we continue taking a look at some highlights of the book, *The Anxious Generation*, by Dr. Jonathan Haidt. Specifically we will take a look at what our kids need from a developmental standpoint. Did you know that children’s brains grow to 90% full size by the age of 5? However, their brains then need a long time to configure until they are fully developed.

This slow growth childhood needs lots of face to face connections (attunement), free play, and social learning to become fully developed.

## Face to Face Connection

From the time we are infants we crave face to face connections. Think about playing “peekaboo” or making silly faces to illicit smiles and giggles! This is more than just a game. Babies are attuning to the adult and learning turn taking and engaging in shared emotion. As children begin to talk, this opens up even more opportunities for turn taking and “serve and return” interactions. These connections are essential to a child’s development. Now consider that upwards of 60% of parents report being distracted by their phones while spending time with their child. Synchronous(in real time) face to face interactions are crucial for learning social skills at ALL ages and stages of life! Consider how much connection time is being lost when we are on phones, on social media (which does not offer true connection), or just scrolling!

## Free Play

Play is the “work” of childhood. Through all stages of childhood, play offers countless opportunities for kids to learn and grow in a ‘low stakes’ environment, meaning that mistakes are not very costly. In free play, kids learn from trial and error with direct feedback from their peers. Experiences, not information, is the key to emotional development. Free play is as essential to development as academic instruction!

## Social Learning

Social learning occurs throughout childhood but there appears to be a sensitive period between the ages of 9-15. Lessons learned and identities formed in this period are likely to stick more so than during other periods. These are the crucial sensitive years of puberty. Unfortunately, these are also the years that most kids now days get their own phone and move their social lives online instead of engaging in face to face connections where social learning happens best.

# CHARACTER CHAMPIONS

NES has partnered with Camp Newaygo to provide unique experiences for our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. Once each month during gym class students will engage with a trained Camp Newaygo staff member who leads them through a variety of activities that aim to teach students social skills through games, teambuilding activities, and group challenges. Skills that are practiced include problem solving, listening, collaborating, and teamwork.



## **2nd and 3rd Grade Christmas Program Information!**

Thursday, Dec. 11  
Newaygo High School Gym  
Program starts at 7:00

Parents, please have your child at the  
High School **no later than 6:45!**

Students: Dress to Impress!  
Christmas or holiday clothing is totally  
appropriate!  
(No pajamas or play clothes, please!)

## **Capturing Kids' Hearts Survey**

**Parents/Guardians, please take just a couple of minutes to submit this brief survey about our school and the use of Capturing Kids' Hearts. Your input will help guide our next steps and areas to focus in on for further growth. If you have students in more than one building in the district, you may get a separate survey from that building also. Please fill out each survey based on your experiences with that specific building. Thank you so much!!**

**<https://app.ckh.org/public-survey/w5cqg2bu>**

## **Attendance Policy Reminder for Elementary Families**

Regular attendance is an important part of your child's success at school. To help keep families informed and support students, our school follows the procedures below:

### **Unexcused Absence Notifications**

- Families will receive an email on the 4th day of unexcused absences.
- After that, an email will be sent for each additional unexcused day.
- Attendance records are reviewed once per week by the school.

### **Attendance Meetings**

- If a student reaches 9 days of unexcused absences, the school will schedule an attendance meeting with the family to discuss next steps and support.

### **What Counts as an Excused Absence?**

The following are considered excused with proper documentation:

- Family vacations (must be submitted in writing to the office before the trip)
- Medical appointments or illness (requires a doctor's note)
- Court attendance
- 

If you have questions, need clarification, or would like support, please contact Allison Hug at [ahug@newaygo.net](mailto:ahug@newaygo.net).

Thank you for helping us ensure every student has the opportunity to learn and grow!

# Parent Guidance

## Mental Health Resources

### Avoid Holiday Stress

Newaygo Elementary School and Parent Guidance.org are partnering to bring families resources to help with parenting, mental health, navigating school and more. This month NES will be focusing on helping families and students through the holidays.

#### **Supporting Your Family Through the Holidays**

The holiday season can be joyful, but it can also bring stress—from gift-giving and family dynamics to winter weather and pressure to make everything “perfect.” These challenges can affect both adults and children, sometimes increasing anxiety, sadness, or other mental health struggles. The good news: simple strategies can help families enjoy a calmer, more manageable season.

#### **Healthy Holiday Expectations**

- Set a realistic budget. Give generously, but stay within your limits.
- Plan ahead. Shop at less busy times or online to reduce overwhelm.
- Let go of perfection. You don’t have to do everything. Choose what matters most for your family.

#### **Coping With Seasonal Stress & Winter Blues**

Shorter, darker days can affect mood for both kids and adults. Try these habits together:

- Stay hydrated. Water (and even lotion for dry winter skin) can help boost overall well-being.
- Move your body. Exercise releases endorphins that lift mood—sledding, skating, or indoor movement all count.
- Create cozy moments. Warm baths, favorite activities, or special treats can bring comfort.
- Stay connected. Time with loved ones helps reduce feelings of loneliness.

#### **When to Reach Out for Extra Support**

Consider contacting a mental health professional if you or your child are experiencing:

- Ongoing irritability or sadness
- Trouble focusing
- Big changes in sleep or appetite
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Thoughts of self-harm

You’re not alone, and support is available.

The holidays can bring many emotions. Checking in with yourself—and encouraging children to do the same—is one of the best ways to manage stress and take care of your family.

Families can access additional [parentguidance.org](https://parentguidance.org) resources on our school website [newaygo.net](https://newaygo.net)



## Tips for Developing Fluent Readers By Mrs. Hreha

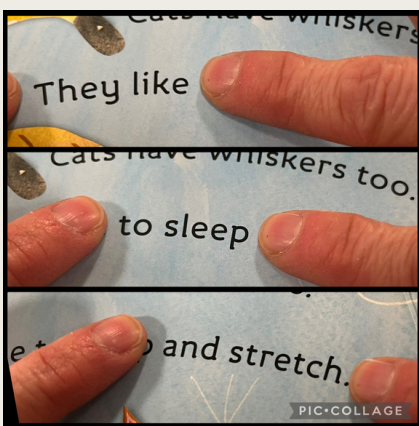
What is fluent reading? Fluent reading isn't just reading words quickly. It is reading words accurately with phrasing and expression. Fluent reading carries meaning. Ultimately, a child should be able to read a book and be able to talk about what he/she has read.

Students that read word by word struggle to hear the message in the book. Students that read fast also struggle to hear the message and are known as word callers. Word callers can read a book, not make a single mistake, yet cannot tell you details about what they just read.

Both types of readers can benefit from fluency practice. Don't expect things to sound perfect at first. Reading with phrasing and expression takes practice with old favorite books.

Here are a few tips to support your child in developing fluency.

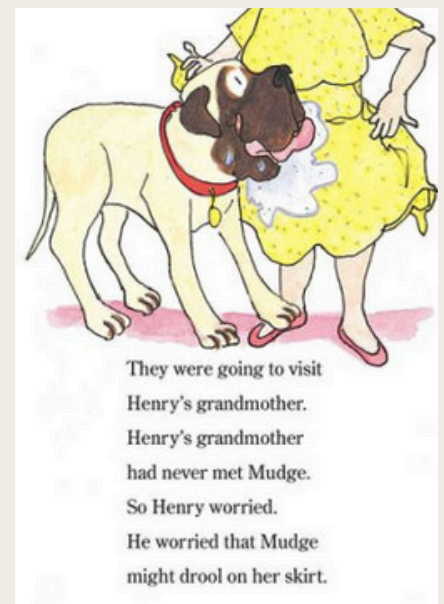
- When working on phrasing, encourage your child to make his/her reading "sound like talking." This simple act of reading 2-5 words smoothly together will seem awkward at first. It will get better with practice!



- Framing phrases with pointer fingers is a great way to support your child in seeing each phrase.

They like  
to sleep  
and stretch.

- Pick a book that is set up to read in phrases. Henry and Mudge books are a good example of phrased writing. Model phrasing and expression. Have your child echo you!



They were going to visit  
Henry's grandmother.  
Henry's grandmother  
had never met Mudge.  
So Henry worried.  
He worried that Mudge  
might drool on her skirt.



