

WELCOME TO OUR

# January Newsletter



### Thank You, Families!

We would like to thank our parents and guardians for calling or emailing the school before 2:30 PM when there is a change to their child's end-of-day transportation.

We also appreciate families notifying us when their child will be absent from school. Your timely communication helps us keep all students safe and ensures a smooth and organized school day. Thank you for your continued cooperation and support!

-Office Staff

Dear Lion Families,

Happy New Year and welcome to 2026! January is an active month as we reconnect with students after a restful break and prepare for the second half of the school year. **It's hard to believe that even as I type it!**

Also this month, you can look forward to receiving the first report card of the year as well as the second round of MAP testing data. These are both great tools to help understand how your child is progressing and what areas of growth to focus on for the next several weeks.

Please be sure to read through the additional articles for more information to help be informed and equipped!

Mr. Cox

### Important Dates:

Jan 12 Late Start Monday  
Jan 16 4<sup>th</sup> grade spelling bee  
Jan 16 Half-Day 11:45 dismissal  
Jan 19 No School MLK Day  
Jan 26 Late Start Monday

### OFFICE NOTES:

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

## New Report Cards Are Coming!

The end of the first semester (Jan 16<sup>th</sup>) brings the opportunity to reflect on student progress through report cards. This year, as you know, we have moved to PowerSchool as our main student information system. This platform also provides us with a new way to create report cards. That is just some of the background as to why you will see a very different format this year. You'll also notice that the scoring system is based off of a 1 through 4 scoring system. These scores simply mean the following:

- 1 Performing below grade level, Needs more support
- 2 Close to grade level, Needs just a little more practice
- 3 Performing at grade level, meeting expectations
- 4 Performing above grade level, is able to teach others or apply the skill in a wide variety of ways

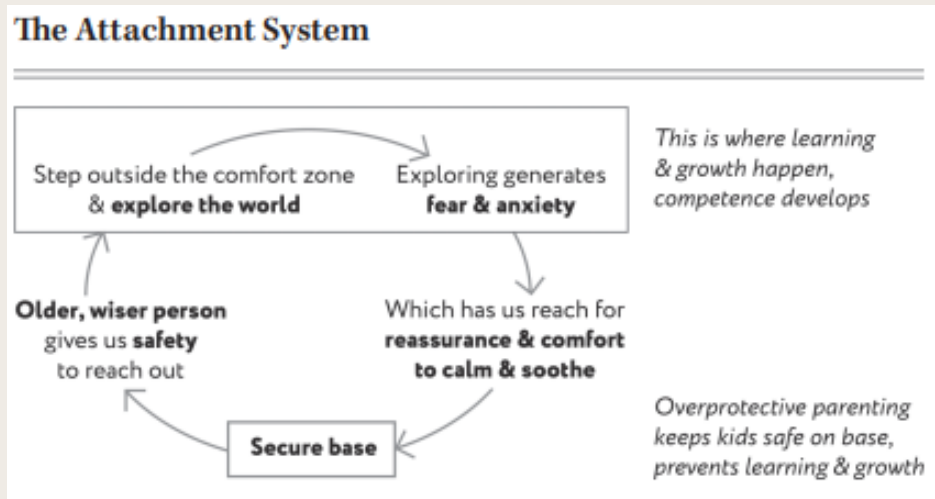
Each academic standard that appears on a report card will receive one of these scores. Our efforts and focus here at NES are always to keep a growth mindset and push students to continue to take a deeper level of ownership for their learning. This is a step forward on that journey as we attempt to help students more fully understand where they are on their learning progression.

We expect that report cards will be sent home on Friday, Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>. If you have any questions about your child's progress please feel comfortable to contact your child's teacher to seek clarification. The format may be new for all of us, but the goals and intentions of clearly communicating student progress to families has not changed.

# “Growing” our Kids!

In Chapter 3 of *The Anxious Generation*, author Jonathan Haidt explains why free play and independence are so important for children’s healthy development. Children build confidence, problem-solving skills, and social skills when they have time to play freely with others.

The chapter explains that many children today have fewer chances for independent play due to busy schedules and increased adult supervision. While adults want to keep children safe, too much protection can limit opportunities for kids to learn how to handle challenges on their own. Haidt emphasizes that outdoor play, imaginative play, and social play help children build resilience and manage stress. When children explore, take small risks, and work through disagreements during play, they gain skills that deepen attachments and support emotional well-being.



## What can we do?

- Encourage free play. Allow time for unstructured play without screens or planned activities. Try to allow this to be unsupervised play also!
- Support outdoor time. Playing outside helps children build confidence and creativity.
- Allow age-appropriate independence. Let children try things on their own, even if they make small mistakes.
- Limit overscheduling. Balance organized activities with downtime.
- Talk about play. Ask children what games they enjoy and what they learn while playing with others.

By supporting healthy play at home and school, we can help children grow into confident, capable, and resilient learners.



## **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
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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!

**Hello Parents of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders!**

**This year, your child is using Shoelace—an exciting online reading game designed to boost literacy and comprehension skills for students in Grades 3–8.**

### **☀️ What is Shoelace?**

**Shoelace is an award-winning, curriculum-aligned literacy game. It turns reading into an adventure through two engaging games: Dreamscape and Dreamseeker Drift. As your child plays, they'll read passages, answer questions, and build real reading skills—all while having fun!**

### **🏆 Dreamscape Tournament – Starting January 12**

**Get ready—our Dreamscape Tournament launches on January 12, and students are already buzzing with excitement! During the tournament, students will race through reading adventures, earn points by answering comprehension questions, and watch their classroom progress grow as they advance through the game. The tournament runs through February 4, 2026. The excitement continues with a Tournament Celebration on February 6, 2026, when we will proudly recognize our top classrooms! This is a fantastic opportunity to cheer on your child, celebrate their reading growth, and share in the adventure together at home.**

### **🏠 How to Play at Home**

**We've already set up your child's account!**

- **A login sheet has gone home with your child.**
- **You can Download the app from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store**
- **Use the login information that was sent home with your child**

**Thank you for supporting your child's reading journey. We're looking forward to a fun and motivating tournament!**

**Sincerely,**

**Mr. Wittenberger**



# Is your child a word caller?

By Mrs. Hreha

Last month, I briefly shared what a word caller is. Let's look more closely at what that might mean for your child. **Word callers are readers that can read a passage accurately, but cannot talk about what they have read.** They often go unnoticed because they sound like good readers. Their lack of vocabulary can prevent understanding. They often do not pass standardized tests because they struggle with higher order thinking skills.

How can this happen? Some students get the message that the best reading is when they get done reading first. "Quick get your 20 minutes of reading done before your game!" "Hurry and read your book before we go out and play!" This becomes their philosophy of reading: "The best readers get the words all right and finish first."

Word callers lack cognitive flexibility. That means the ability to think about 2 or more things at the same time. Reading is complex and requires the reader to think about multiple features at the same time. ie: text meaning, word meaning, sounds, word parts, print symbols and strategies. When the child only focuses on the reading, he/she is unable to reflect and guide their own thinking. They see the knowledge that they acquire as isolated facts and cannot make connections to other learning.

So what can you do to support your child's reading development so they do not become a word caller?

- Never make reading rushed. Take time to enjoy the book through a discussion. Enriching vocabulary along the way?
- Set a purpose for the reading. "When you are done, I want you to tell me what you learned."
- Discuss the connections you notice and have them make their own. Connections can be with another book, themselves or the world around them. "This reminds me of another book we read where the main character traveled to a new place by plane."

If you think you have a word caller at your house and would like to talk more, contact me!  
[mhreha@newaygo.net](mailto:mhreha@newaygo.net)



# **Helping Children Stay Safe Online**

The internet is a wonderful place for children to learn, play, and connect—but just like in the real world, kids need guidance to stay safe. Families and schools working together can make a big difference!

## **Tips for Protecting Children Online:**

- Keep devices in shared spaces. When tablets and computers are used in common areas, it's easier for adults to help and supervise.
- Set clear rules. Talk with children about which websites, games, and apps are allowed—and how long they can be used.
- Teach “Think Before You Click.” Remind kids not to click on pop-ups, ads, or links they don't recognize.
- Protect personal information. Children should never share their full name, address, school name, phone number, or passwords online.
- Encourage open communication. Let children know they can always tell a trusted adult if something online makes them uncomfortable or confused.
- Use parental controls. Many devices and apps offer settings to block inappropriate content and limit screen time.
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Most importantly, keep the conversation going. When children know adults are there to help—not judge—they are more likely to make safe and smart choices online.

Together, we can help our students enjoy the digital world safely and responsibly!

