

Date: February 5, 2026
To: LPSD School Board
From: Kacy Lou Leyba
Regarding: January / February Student Services Report

Our team was grateful for the winter break and opportunity to reset, because we jumped back in with both feet in January. January 13th through the 15th, Newhalen School partnered with PIC (Programs for Infants and Children) as they visited Newhalen / Iliamna to support future LPSD students ages birth through 3 who have potential developmental delays. Our team helped to facilitate a family play circle at the school with the PIC speech and occupational therapists, and we are looking forward to doing so for other sites throughout the spring semester. The following week Patty dove in with both feet supporting our secondary student athletes as they attended the North/ South Tournament. Her support came in many forms, but we were reminded throughout the tournament the importance of students having the opportunity to talk to trusted adults about some of the hard things in their lives that they are currently navigating.

Speaking of trusted adults and providing spaces for students to have conversations about mental health and wellness, Kacy Lou spent two days in January partnering with Kenai Peninsula Borough School District to see how they are currently implementing Sources of Strength, the upstream suicide prevention and peer leader program that LPSD will be rolling out to students at SNAP Meet in April. Our team is currently brainstorming adult advisors for each of our sites who would be willing to help oversee and implement a Sources of Strength team following SNAP and into the next school year. If you know of anyone in your community who would be a good fit to encourage our youth as they spread awareness about mental wellness and positivity, I would love to hear your suggestions! Patty and I will be heading to the Sources of Strength Train the Trainer at the end of February / early March to continue building out how our Sources implementation will look in the unique context of LPSD.

Our team is also excited to announce that we received a \$3,000 grant from the Alaska Children's Trust grant program. The purpose of this grant is to take student leaders to Juneau sometime this spring to advocate with legislators for the continued funding of social emotion, mental health, and career and technical education in our state. If you are interested in potentially joining our team and students on this trip, please let me know, as we are currently in the process of strategizing for that trip.

We have many more exciting things planned for the spring including our bi-annual Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire, continued partnership with VOA Alaska's Behavioral Health team for telehealth counseling for our students, and course, SNAP Meet.

I have also attached screenshots of our new monthly newsletter which is being put together by Elisabeth and Moon to help inform our families of practical social-emotional learning tips, ways to improve student attendance, home learning extension opportunities, and more. I am grateful for the hard work of our team and the ways we are seeking to involve families more in the work we are doing. Thank you for all the hard work you all do as well!

For the kids, always—

Kacy Lou Leyba

WHAT'S NEW ~ LPSD



January 2026

MENTAL Wellness

January is Mental Wellness Month. Alaskans are more susceptible to seasonal affective disorder. Common symptoms include: persistent low mood or sadness, low energy, feeling sluggish or tired, sleeping more or having trouble waking up, difficulty concentrating, irritability, appetite changes, eating too much or too little, little motivation to do things you usually enjoy, and an increase in unsafe coping skills. Support is available. Reach out to your local behavioral health consultants. If you or someone you know is struggling, call or text the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

BE Seen

Low light and snow-covered sidewalks make it hard for drivers to see people walking. Wearing reflective materials can help keep pedestrians safe. Someone wearing reflectors can be seen up to 500 feet away, while someone in dark clothing is only visible from 55 feet.

Reflective tape can be applied to jackets, backpacks, walkers, and other outdoor items.

Contact info@safealaskans.org if you need more help ordering reflective tape.

Order here:

<https://safealaskans.org/reflectivetape/>

BREATHING Techniques

Deep breathing is a great way to regulate your nervous system and calm your mind. Here's an example:

- Step 1: Breathe in, counting to four slowly. Feel the air enter your lungs.
- Step 2: Hold your breath for 4 seconds. Try to avoid inhaling or exhaling for 4 seconds.
- Step 3: Slowly exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- Step 4: Wait for another 4 seconds before you breathe in again.

Repeat this exercise until you feel re-centered.

Thirty seconds of deep breathing will help you feel more relaxed and in control.

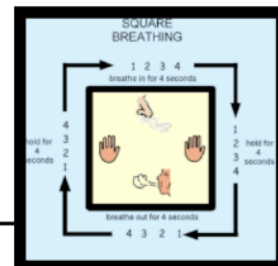
One Small Thing



One small thing families can do at home to support their child is reading for 20 minutes a night. This leads to improved learning in and out of school. It's exercise for the brain!

upcomingEVENTS

Jan. 12	First day of 3 Person Basketball
Jan. 20-24	No Name Calling Week
Jan. 21-24	Basketball Jamboree North & South
Feb. 2-6th	District Battle of the Books (K-12)
Feb. 23-26	State Battle of the Books (3-12)



WHAT'S NEW

LPSD



January 2026

READER Spotlight

Elisabeth Ludwig- LPSD Social Worker

My favorite thing to read is a good fantasy novel. I usually read in the evenings, or on the weekend. I would recommend The Harry Potter Full-Cast Audio Edition on Audible.

Matilda "Tilly" Ludwig- 2nd Grade

My favorite things to read are Amelia Bedelia books.

I read every night. I think everyone should read Rainbow Magic By: Daisy Meadows

LITERACY MYTH of the Month

Myth: Reading only counts when it is a book.

Truth: Reading comes in many forms, and they ALL count! Reading can include listening to books, reading directions and labels, looking at maps, charts, and weather reports, reading articles, graphic novels, and online reading.

Tips for getting out the door on time:

Establish a morning routine.

Adults, find your keys, wallet, and phone.

Gather any items that need to go to school and put them in your backpack

Choose and lay out clothes and shoes the night before.



GOOD ATTENDANCE Matters!

Your student can suffer academically if they miss 10% of school days - Just one day every TWO WEEKS! Set a great example for your student- Show them ATTENDANCE MATTERS!

Ask a TEACHER

Is it okay to read the same book again?

Yes! **Reading the same book again is a good thing.**

When children reread favorite books, they:

- Feel more confident
- Notice new details
- Better understand the story and words

Repetition helps children focus less on figuring out each word and more on meaning. It also makes reading feel safe and enjoyable, especially for younger readers.

WHAT'S
NEW

LPSD



MENTAL

Wellness

February 2026

February is International "Boost Self Esteem" Month. Also, Random Acts of Kindness week is the 16th-23rd. One easy way to boost your self esteem is by coming up with a positive phrase to say to yourself every day. Giving ourselves positive messages builds positive connections in our brain. Additionally, performing random acts of kindness can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, according to the American Psychiatric Association. These acts can increase happiness and self esteem in both the giver and receiver. This acts can be contagious. All the more reason to spread some kindness!

PROM Closet

Do you have old prom outfits collecting dust? Want us to take them off your hands?

We are in need of prom dresses, men's formal wear, & ties for our 2026 Prom!

Please mail donations to:

Patty McCasland

PO BOX 89

Iliamna, AK 99606

*Flat rate boxes work well to ship to Alaska!

EASY Random Acts of Kindness

1. Call someone you haven't talked to in a while.
2. Write a letter or card for someone.
3. Tell someone you are proud of them.
4. Listen to someone.
5. Say good morning.
6. Give a compliment.
7. Pick up litter.
8. Visit with an elder.
9. Return a lost item to its owner.
10. Make someone laugh.

For more ideas, visit:

<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/>

**One Small
Thing**



Reading aloud isn't just for little kids. Older kids still benefit from listening to stories, articles, or nonfiction. Reading together helps build understanding and keeps reading enjoyable.

**KINDNESS
CHANGES
EVERYTHING**

upcomingEVENTS

- Feb. 2-6** District Battle of the Books (K-12)
- Feb 15** BBRCTE Intensive Week 3 applications due
- Feb. 16-18** 3-Man Basketball Districts in Port Heiden
- Feb. 16-23** Random Acts of Kindness Week
- Feb. 25** 5-Man Basketball Regionals
- Feb. 23-26** State Battle of the Books (3-12)

WHAT'S NEW ~ LPSD

Reader Spotlight



February 2026

Diana Hejtmanek- Chignik Lake Secondary Teacher

There are so many different Genres that I love to read! Young Adult books are my favorite! I love being able to recommend a really good book to my students! I've recently started to get into suspense and thrillers. I have always been a big fan of fantasy books. Another genre I read a lot is romance. I love to read by listening to audiobooks during the evenings when I'm working out, doing chores around the house, before bed, traveling, and pretty much any chance I have. My recommendations are: That's not my name by: Megan Lally-- It's about a teenage girl who wakes up with amnesia and no memory of her identity, only to be claimed by a man who says he's her father! This book was the book that me into thrillers. It had me hooked from the very beginning. It had me guessing all the way until the very end and I had no idea how the book was going to end! Little White Lies by: Jennifer Lynn Barnes -- The main character, Sawyer, is given a lucrative offer from her estranged grandmother to join the world of Southern debutantes, hoping to discover the identity of her father. This book has it all! Secrets, Scandals, and Kidnapping!

Shay Sakoriya- 8th Grade

I like mystery books because they keep me engaged in the story. They challenge me to try and stay one step ahead of the author, and figure out what is going to happen next. I read during school when I have any extra free time. Project Hail Mary is my current favorite book because the alien was super funny to me. I liked that it took place in space and they had to try and save the universe.



LITERACY MYTH of the Month

Myth: "More books means better readers."

Truth: Time and connection matter more than the number of books. Children don't need shelves full of books to grow as readers. What helps most is:

- Time spent reading or listening to reading
- Talking about ideas together
- Feeling supported and encouraged.

Even a few well-loved books, read often and shared together, can make a big difference.

How do I know if my child understands what they read?

Ask a TEACHER

Understanding doesn't always mean getting every word right.

You can check for understanding by asking your child to:

- Retell the story in their own words
- Explain something they learned
- Share what surprised them or made them curious

If they can talk about the ideas, they're building strong reading skills, even if reading is still hard.