

FEBRUARY STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEWS

February 1st, 2026

Seward Public Schools - a district rooted in excellence - in cooperation with family and community members is committed to the development of the whole student and affirms that all students will have the skills to become productive, resilient, and contributing members of their community.

A message from Matt

Every February, Valentine's Day brings a familiar sight: tiny candy hearts stamped with short, simple messages—*Be Mine, You Matter, Love You*. They're easy to overlook, but their power comes from their simplicity. Just a few words, clearly stated, can make someone feel seen and valued. In many ways, the feedback we give students works the same way. What we choose to say—and what we fail to say—can linger far longer than we realize.

As educators, we are intentional about academic feedback, but we should be just as intentional about the human messages we send. Do we tell students that we appreciate their effort? That we are proud of their growth? That we care about them as people, not just learners? These affirmations do not lower expectations; they strengthen them. When students believe that a trusted adult sees their potential, they are more willing to take risks, persevere, and rise to challenges.

I know this to be true because a few words from a teacher changed the trajectory of my life. As a fourth-grade student, Mrs. Mumm told me how smart I was and how proud she was of me. Those words mattered. I am certain that without her belief and her willingness to say it out loud, I would not have the life I have today. What felt like a small comment to her became a defining message for me.

This February, let's take the opportunity to share the messages that matter. Tell your students, your colleagues, your friends, and your family how much you appreciate them, how proud you are, and how deeply you care. Like those candy hearts, a few well-chosen words can seem small—but they might just change a life.

Jon Gordon- Create a Culture that People Feel

When I visited West Point, the USA Basketball Men's National Team happened to be visiting at the same time. Head coach Mike "Coach K" Krzyzewski brought the team there to understand what it truly means to represent the United States of America. Coach K knew the place was special. After all, he attended West Point, played basketball there under Bob Knight, returned as the head coach after his five years of military service, and coached there for five years before becoming the head coach of Duke University.

Coach K knew the players wouldn't fully understand how special the place was simply by hearing him talk about it. They had to experience and feel it. He said, "You can't talk about this place, see a movie about this place, you have to feel this place. You go to a place like this, you get it."

Coach K knew it was the same when talking about service and sacrifice. The players had to feel it, so at the beginning of their visit, Coach K brought the team to the West Point Cemetery, where they had a meeting with family members of fallen soldiers. The players on Team USA listened as the family members told them about their children and how they died serving their country.

The players may have understood the concepts of service and sacrifice before, but after seeing the graves of the fallen soldiers, listening to personal stories, and feeling the loss of the family members, they truly got it.

It's also a powerful lesson for all of us. **Feeling is more powerful than hearing.** You can't just create a culture where people hear about what's important. You must create a culture where people feel what's important.

You must create a culture where people don't just hear your talk but feel your walk.

When they feel the mission and also hear about the mission, they'll be on a mission.

-Jon



Secondary Students Are Struggling With Reading, Too. A Look at the Landscape

Exclusive survey findings outline how educators perceive the obstacles affecting older students' reading.

[edweek.org](https://www.edweek.org)



When it comes to developing policies on AI in K-12, schools are largely on their own

The current landscape of AI use in K-12 schools is highly varied because there's little specific policy guidance from the state and federal levels.

theconversation.com

Patriotic Holidays

Patriotic Holidays

Nebraska Revised Statute 79-724 requires the following:

Appropriate patriotic exercises suitable to the occasion shall be held under the direction of the superintendent in every public, private, denominational, and parochial school on **George Washington's birthday, Abraham Lincoln's birthday**, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Native American Heritage Day, Constitution Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Thanksgiving Day, or on the day or week preceding or following such holiday, if the school is in session.

George Washington's Birthday is February 22nd.

Abraham Lincoln's Birthday is February 12th.

President's Day is February 16th.



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