



January Staff Development News

January 1st, 2026

SPS Mission

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.

Message From Matt

As we step into a new year, I find myself reflecting on the way I approach New Year's resolutions. Like many of us, I tend to set goals that are meaningful and well-intentioned—but often a bit too grand. When I look at them through the lens of the SMART goal criteria, I realize they usually fall short on the “realistic” component. While the vision is there, the path forward can sometimes feel overwhelming rather than motivating.



This year, instead of chasing an oversized resolution, I am focusing on something that has consistently brought me the greatest sense of fulfillment: living a life of service. Serving others—our students, our families, our colleagues, and our community—is where I feel most grounded and complete. It reminds me why I chose education and why the work we do together matters so deeply, even on the most challenging days.

As you think about your own New Year's resolution, I encourage you to pause and reflect. How does your goal fit within the SMART criteria? What smaller, more attainable steps could you take that might reignite your passion and bring excitement as we move into 2026? Sometimes it is those manageable, meaningful actions that lead to the most lasting impact.

As always, I am incredibly grateful for each of you—for who you are, for the care you show, and for the service you provide every day to our students, parents, and community. It is a privilege to work

alongside such dedicated professionals, and I look forward to continuing this journey together in the year ahead.

A New Year Story

The last cracker had been pulled, the last flute of sparkling cider drained, and the quiet hum of midnight had settled over the little farmhouse. January 1st, bright and crisp with fresh snow, had begun.

Elara sat at the kitchen table, a blank journal open before her. For years, her New Year's resolutions had been grand pronouncements: "Run a marathon," "Learn a new language," "Organize the entire barn." They usually lasted until about January 12th. This year, she decided, would be different. No grand gestures, just a whisper of a promise to herself: to make each day a little better than the last, starting with the quiet, simple things.

She grabbed her coat and walked to the barn. The air was cold, but the sky was a brilliant, promising blue. Inside, her old horse, Jasper, nickered a soft greeting. Elara took the brush and began a slow, steady grooming. In the past, this was a chore to rush through. Today, she savored the rhythm, the soft swish of bristles, the scent of hay and horse. She felt a lightness she hadn't felt in a long time. It wasn't about the grand plan; it was about the present moment, done with care.

Afterward, she walked back, the snow crunching under her boots. As she passed Mrs. Gable's house, she noticed the older woman struggling with a heavy bag of birdseed. Elara didn't hesitate. "Let me get that for you, Mrs. Gable!"

The older woman smiled, her eyes crinkling. "Why, thank you, dear. Starting the new year with kindness, I see."

"Just trying," Elara replied, the words feeling true in a way her resolutions never had.

Back home, she made herself a simple breakfast of pancakes and fruit, taking time to do the dishes right away instead of leaving them to pile up. When her neighbor, Mark, called, struggling with a flat tire on the icy road, she offered to bring him a hot coffee and some help. It was just a small thing, but she felt a warmth spreading through her chest.

As the sun began to set, painting the snow in shades of pink and orange, Elara sat back at the table. The journal was still mostly empty. She picked up her pen and wrote a single line for January 1st:

Resolved: To help someone every day.

She hadn't even realized she was doing it, but her actions had already written her resolution. It wasn't about self-improvement in a grand, public way, but about small, consistent acts of kindness and presence. She smiled. This year, the resolution felt less like a heavy promise and more like a quiet joy. The year had begun not with a bang, but with a series of small, steady moments, and that felt right.

January Staff Development Day

We are pleased to share with you that Tim Elmore will be our keynote speaker on our January Staff Development Day. Please see the information below to learn more about Tim:

Tim is Founder of Growing Leaders, an Atlanta-based non-profit organization created to develop emerging leaders. His work grew out of 20 years of serving alongside Dr. John C. Maxwell. Elmore has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, USA Today, Psychology Today, and been featured on CNN's Headline News, Fox Business, Newsmax TV and Fox & Friends to talk about leading multiple generations in the marketplace. He has written 40 books, including *Habitudes: Images That Form Leadership Habits and Attitudes*, and *Eight Paradoxes of Great Leadership*. His latest book, *The Future Begins with Z: Nine Strategies to Lead Generation Z As They Disrupt the Workplace*, releases fall of 2025. You can find his work at: TimElmore.com.

Turn Frustration into Fascination with Dr. Tim Elmore



Tier I Instruction- Perky Pace

Anita Archer emphasizes *perky pace* as a critical component of effective instruction, particularly during explicit teaching. Perky pace does not mean rushing through lessons or sacrificing depth; rather, it means maintaining strong instructional momentum so students remain engaged, attentive, and successful. When lessons move with purpose, students have fewer opportunities to disengage, and learning time is maximized. A lesson with perky pace feels intentional—clear objectives, concise explanations, and frequent opportunities for students to respond.

Perky pace is closely tied to high rates of student engagement. Archer highlights the importance of brisk transitions, clear routines, and frequent checks for understanding to keep learning moving forward. Teachers using perky pace often rely on strategies such as choral responses, partner talk, and quick practice opportunities to ensure all students are actively participating. When students

experience repeated success through guided practice and immediate feedback, confidence increases and behavior issues often decrease, creating a positive learning environment.

Ultimately, perky pace supports equity and access for all learners. When instruction is efficient and well-structured, teachers have more time to provide corrective feedback, reteach when necessary, and deepen understanding. A perky pace communicates high expectations: we value instructional time, we believe students can learn, and we are committed to keeping lessons engaging and purposeful. By intentionally planning for perky pace, teachers can strengthen both student achievement and classroom culture.

Why Explicit Instruction?



AN EXPERT MINUTE WITH DR. ANITA ARCHER:



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.

Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday is January 15th and recognized on January 19th



Seward Public Schools

