

Crazy Horse School

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Dear Families,

With less than two weeks left of instructional time for students for the 2023-24 school year, I continue to be amazed how quickly this school year has gone. It seems like only yesterday we were making plans for LNI and Christmas break. At this time of year, I like to reflect on what we have accomplished and what we need to do for the upcoming year to ensure quality learning experiences are provided to each of our students.

Graduations: First, I am excited for the upcoming students who will be graduating from Crazy Horse School as the **Class of 2024**. It was March 2020, when the first school lockdowns occurred in the United States. The Class of 2024 spent the remainder of their freshman year and all their sophomore year as online or virtual learners. The following year, as juniors, they wore masks everyday and finally, this year had a somewhat “normal” school year experience. Their graduation this year is a testament to their resilience, perseverance, and desire to successfully complete their high school career. I commend each of them for the work they have accomplished and their willingness to “Finish Strong!” High School Graduation is set for Wednesday, May 15 at 1:00; Kindergarten and 8th Grade Continuation ceremonies are Tuesday, May 14, at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. respectively.

Project AWARE and NYCP Grants: Our new Project AWARE and NYCP Grants are in full swing and providing multiple Lakota Lifeways classes and activities throughout the year. Staff will be meeting soon to determine what these programs will entail for the 2024-25 school year.

Wolakota Wednesdays: We implemented the Wolakota Wednesday program and incorporated various cultural activities on those afternoons. As the year went on, we were able enhance these days with more Lakota art, music, hand games, and language activities. Our hope is to build on this concept for next school year and involve more community members and elders as presenters.

Student Council, NHS, and NJHS: Our student council, National High School and Junior High School Honor Society members were involved in numerous projects and events this year. One highlight was sending a group of students to Washington, DC, to the Close-Up Native Youth Summit in April.

Student Play for the Community: Students continue to be involved in various sports and extra-curricular activities. We worked with the Dakota Players through Black Hills Playhouse and elementary and middle school students presented the play, “On the Road to Brentown” to the community in February. Plans are already in the works to present a different play next year.

All School Field Day and Family Picnic: Please join us for the student Field Day and Family Picnic on **Thursday, May 16 at 11:00 a.m.** for an end-of-the-year fun family day!

Summer School: In an effort to give students a “jump start” on the 2024-25 school year, we are hosting Summer School July 8-July 26 instead of immediately after school ends this school year. Classes will be held Monday-Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. All K-8 students are invited and encouraged to participate. High school students who need to recover credits from a failed course will have the option to complete a needed course also during the summer.

Summer Lakota Culture Class: We are offering a hands-on and interactive Lakota Culture class for high school students beginning May 22-June 15. Students will receive one elective credit for this course that will apply towards their high school transcripts as a completed class. This class includes classwork time and multiple opportunities for field trips to sacred sites included as part of the class.

Swimming Pool Opening and Lifeguard Training: We plan to have the pool opened shortly after the school year ends. If you are 20 years old or older and interested in obtaining your lifeguard certification, we will be offering lifeguard training May 11 and 12. This training is limited to 6 persons so if you're interested, please contact Ace Amiotte or Lynette Kleppin at the school.

Teacher & Paraprofessional Training: From May 28-June 13, we will be providing an in-depth professional development opportunity for certified teachers and paraprofessionals. This three-week training will target explicit questioning techniques, student engagement strategies, and classroom management skills as well as a variety of learning activities for students.

Strategic Planning Initiative: Staff and community members have been working on a long-term Strategic Planning process for the school. Later this summer we will be disseminating copies of the proposed Plan to parents and community members for input and feedback prior to its approval. The Plan includes 5 specific Strategies that require Action Plans for each one. The five Strategies and their purpose statements are:

- **Nation Building Curriculum:** We will embed Lakota thought, philosophy, and knowledge in all we do.
- **Health and Wellness:** We will empower the school Tiospaye (family) through education, support, and access to resources to foster a culture of well-being.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** We will advocate for equity and organizational unity and seek out partnerships to improve the students' experiences in education.
- **Communication:** We will communicate effectively with all our Tiospaye (family) to provide the best for our wakanyeja (children)
- **Student Achievement & Curriculum & Instruction:** We will offer a wider variety of classes, creating a deeper connection for willingness to learn.

Each of the Strategies involves much more than the simplicity of the purpose statement and will be researched and developed to ensure quality experiences and opportunities are provided for students, staff, parents and community members. I'm excited about the Strategic Planning process and hope it becomes a document we can all embrace as it helps prioritize our efforts, effectively allocates resources, and ensures our goals are met and maintained. I look forward to receiving your input when the Plan is disseminated later this summer.

As the summer goes on, we'll keep you posted concerning upcoming events and activities we'd like to provide for the children in our area. As always, your involvement as parents, guardians and community members is always welcomed and appreciated. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions of how we can improve the learning opportunities for the children we serve. There is quote from Kenneth Blanchard, noted author and speaker that says "None of Us is as smart as All of Us." To me, this means not a single one of us has all the answers; we each have our own unique strengths and talents. When we put them all together, we become unstoppable and are destined to create a bright future for our children.

In closing, thank you for the support you've shown me during my second year at Crazy Horse School. I truly enjoy working with your children and the CHS staff. I'm continuing to learn more about your community each year and am looking forward to an amazing 2024-25. As always, the coffee pot is on and my door is open so stop by anytime. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me and I'll do whatever I can to help. Have a great summer!