



Eye of the Tiger

District 879 Newsletter February-March 2019



John Fitzer is Delano's Teacher of the Year. See the story on Page 2.

At a glance

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Triple 'A' Award

Dates to remember

February

- 12.....ES PIE, 7 p.m.
- 15.....Workshop day, no school
- 18.....President's Day,
school is in session
- 19, 21...Kindergarten Round-Up,
5:30 to 8 p.m.
- 21.....HS band concert, 7 p.m.
- 25.....HS Conferences, 4-7 p.m.
- 25.....School board mtg., 7 p.m.
- 26.....Grade 4 concert, 7 p.m.
- 28.....Grade 2 concerts,
6:30 and 7:30 p.m. in PAC

March

- 4.....HS choir concert, 7 p.m.
- 5.....End of ES 2nd Trimester
- 5.....Jazz Festival, 10 a.m.
- 11.....HS PIE, 6 p.m.
- 11-15.....Spring Break
- 18.....IS PIE, 6 p.m.
- 18.....School board listening
session, 7 p.m.
- 19.....ES PIE, 6 p.m.
- 25.....School board mtg., 7 p.m.
- 29.....End of HS Quarter 3
- 30.....Tiger Fun Fair, noon



Winter hurdles

Extreme cold, followed by freezing rain and piles of snow, have left schools throughout the state scrambling with multiple closures, late starts and early releases. Delano has been no exception, and a few updates to the school calendar have resulted. Those updates are outlined in the Announcements section on Page 3.

It's halftime

Updating the district's roadmap for success

By Matthew Schoen
Superintendent

We are currently in the middle of our process to update the district's strategic plan for the next five years. Essentially, we are at the halfway point of a 10-year strategic plan journey.

The purpose of the strategic plan is to provide a roadmap for fulfilling the district's vision: "Systemic academic growth to promote educational excellence and continuous improvement for every learner in a digital society." It is extremely important that our school district revisits this plan on a regular basis to maintain alignment with our vision.



It is now the appropriate time to make certain adjustments to ensure the success of the second half of the strategic plan. In addition to our annual work plan updates in the areas of curriculum, professional development, technology and facilities, this more comprehensive update will continue to guide our pursuit of educational excellence.

We have already completed a parent, staff and student survey that has provided us with initial feedback information. Results show that our parents believe our strategic plan has been effective in all four areas. Between 77 and 89 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed about the plan's effectiveness, depending on the category.

Over the next few months we will gather valuable feedback from district staff regarding what is working, what needs to be adjusted and

See Schoen
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Fitzer is Teacher of the Year

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

For a second time, John Fitzer has been recognized as the Delano Teacher Association's Teacher of the Year.

The Spanish instructor is in his 30th year of teaching in Delano, but time has not eroded his enthusiasm for his subject or his students.

"I'm very passionate about what I do. I love what I do. I can't imagine doing anything else," said Fitzer. "I don't consider this a job. It's not work to me. I just love being with the kids and seeing their eyes open to new things."

His fellow teachers also named Fitzer the district's Teacher of the Year in 1996, but he said the honor is no less meaningful a second time around. Though representatives from each district are also evaluated at the state level as candidates to represent Minnesota, Fitzer said the local recognition was more than enough.

"I believe, and I think most people do around here, that we have a wonderful school," he said. "And to represent the district with all these other wonderful teachers, to me it could stop here and I would be thrilled."

Life's calling

Fitzer grew up in Crystal,



John Fitzer has taught Spanish for 30 years in Delano. Here, he stands in front of the Mexican and Spanish flags wearing a tie made for him by his students.

aside from a three-year stint in California, and was a member of the last class to graduate from Fridley Grace High School before it became Totino Grace. From the beginning, a career in education beckoned.

"I've known I wanted to be a teacher since I was 12 years old," said Fitzer. "It just always felt really good when people succeeded at something and I was able to help with that."

Fitzer came to Delano in 1989 and found his professional home. Though he had

completed his math degree the previous year from the University of Minnesota, he never doubted that Spanish was the right subject for him.

"I've never looked back," he said. "Culture, traveling with students and doing my summer hosting program -- it would be much more challenging to focus on those things as a math teacher. But as a world language teacher it's very easy to incorporate culture, get kids culturally sensitive and show them that the world around

them isn't just the bad they might see on the news. It's actually a wonderful place."

Experiential learning

Over the years, about 175 Delano students have enjoyed transformative learning experiences on 10 trips Fitzer has organized abroad to locations in Mexico, Costa Rica and Spain.

For the past 27 years Fitzer has also organized an annual summer program in which 12-15 Spanish students come to live with an American family for five weeks.

"The big picture is educating kids and getting them ready for real life," he said. "We educate the whole child here. Part of educating the whole child is giving them life experiences that are going to make a difference in the future."

Making a difference

In May of 2018 Fitzer suffered a near-fatal heart attack at home. He was back in the classroom a week later to finish out the school year.

"If I had died, I feel like I would have done what I wanted to do in my life, at least with my job," he said. "I feel like I would have completed what I was here to do. ... In the end you want to be able to look back and say, 'I was here, and I made a difference.'"

Delano School Board Rosenow steps in to give back

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

Jennie Rosenow is the newest member of the Delano School Board.

She was elected last November and was sworn in on Jan. 7 to replace 12-year board member Carolyn Milano, who did not seek re-election last year.

Rosenow has worked at General Mills for nearly 20 years, and her husband Ryan

is a paraprofessional at Delano Elementary. She currently has three children in Delano schools in 10th grade, seventh grade and third grade.

It has been a busy start for the new member, as she has attended training sessions, joined committees and participated in several meetings.

"I was interested in running for school board as an opportunity to give back to the school and community that

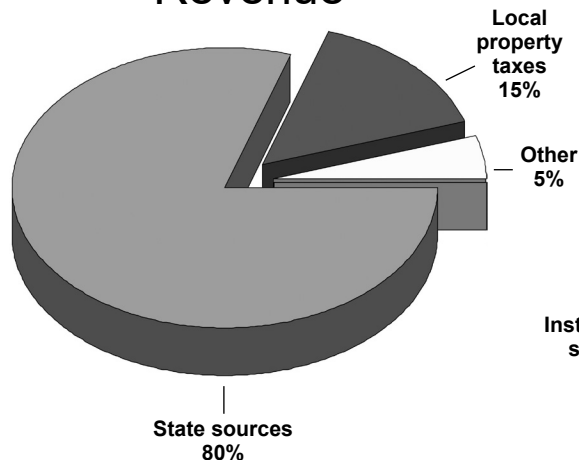
have provided so much for our family," said Rosenow. "(I am) hoping to help Delano continue its tradition of educational excellence. I will be a board member that is responsive and accessible to the community and hope to work towards improving communication from the district to residents. As your representative, I am an outlet to voice your concerns and praise about our school."



Jennie Rosenow takes the oath of office on Jan. 7.

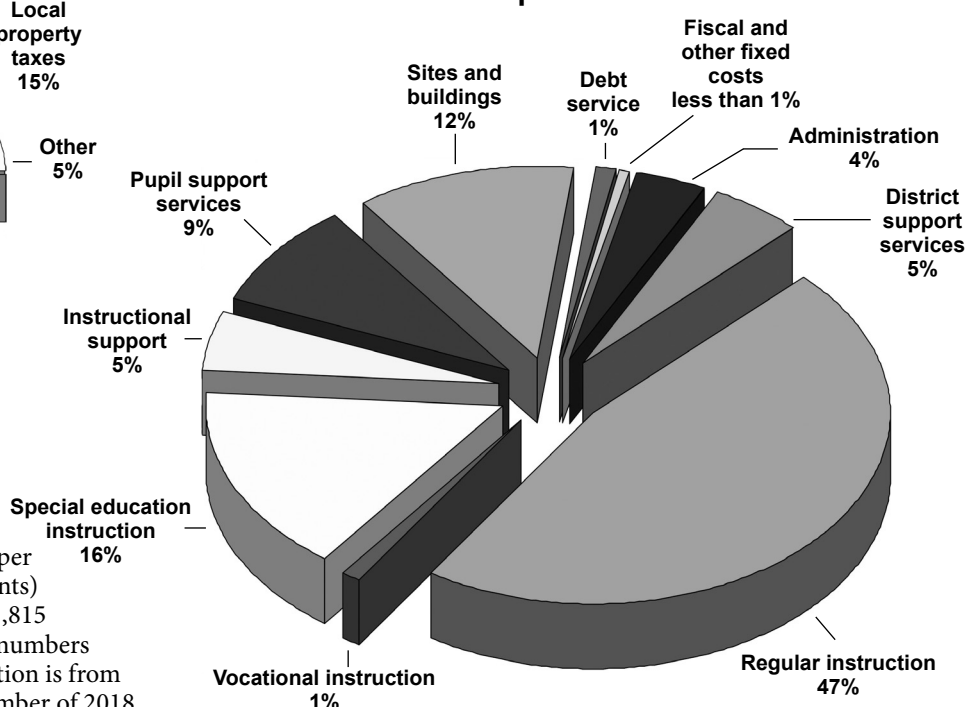
Sources of funding and uses

2018 General Fund
Revenue



In 2018 Delano Public Schools collected \$27.8 million in revenue and expended \$26.8 million. Revenue from property taxes per average daily membership (number of students) was \$1,456 compared to a state average of \$1,815 in 2017, the most recent year that statewide numbers were available for comparison. This information is from the district's annual audit presented in December of 2018.

2018 General Fund
Expenditures



Announcements

Preschool open house

The Wee Tiger and Tiger Kids Club preschool programs are combining to fit the needs of the growing Delano community. The new unified program is Delano Public Schools Preschool, "where educational excellence begins!"

An open house for Delano Public Schools Preschool will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 26, at Delano Community Education, 140 Elm Avenue East.

Early childhood screening dates

Community Education offers opportunities for families to do early childhood screenings free of charge. Staff members recommend completing a child's developmental and health screening at 3.5 years old.

The remaining dates for this school year are Friday, March 22, and Saturday, March 23; and Friday, April 5, and Saturday April 6. Call 763-972-6210 ext. 4 with questions or to schedule an appointment.

Weather make-up days

After extreme cold resulted in the cancellation of school Tuesday through Thursday, Jan. 29-31, make-up days will be in effect.

Make-up days set before the beginning of the school year include Monday, Feb. 18, which is President's Day, and Monday, April 22. In addition, one day has been added to the end of the school year, so class will be in session on Wednesday, June 5.

Schoen

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what we want to be known for in five years. The internal feedback sessions include a prioritization process to give the district further direction on its halftime adjustments. I will share more information as district leadership groups modify the strategic plan based on data provided.

Zero Hour

I would also like to share about a unique new initiative in our intermediate school.

Zero Hour Wednesdays involve starting classes an hour later than normal once a week. On a rotating basis, teachers either supervise optional student activities or spend that time collaborating with colleagues to examine their methods and results. Specific questions they consider are: 1) What do we want our students to know? 2) How will we know when they've learned it? 3) How will

we respond if they don't learn it? 4) How will we respond if they already know it?

This extra time devoted to professional development will result in more individualized student support, as well as improvements in programs and curriculum going forward.

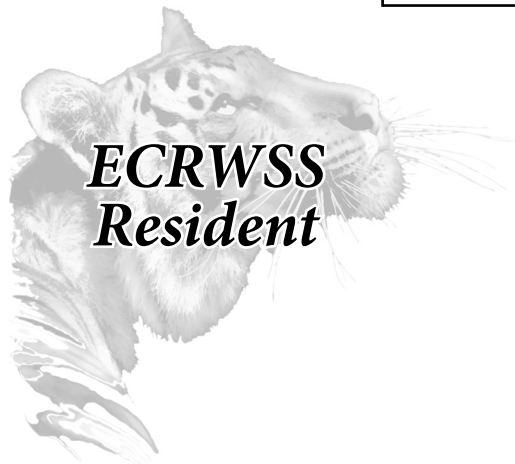
More immediately, students are also profiting from the opportunity to try activities during Zero Hour that would not otherwise fit into their schedule. Some of the current options include Newspaper Club, The Growl, Engineering Club, Math Club, Dance Club, Arts and Crafts, Team Sports, and more.

Student feedback, reported by representatives at school board meetings, has been overwhelmingly positive.

In short, this innovative arrangement has proved enriching to staff and students alike, and has become a valuable tool in our efforts to promote educational excellence and continuous improvement.

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Delano Public Schools Vision

Systemic academic growth to promote educational excellence and continuous improvement for every learner in a digital society.

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Educational Excellence is Our Foremost Goal

Ramstad, Sjomeling are Triple 'A' winners

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

Two outstanding seniors were recently named Delano High School's Triple "A" Award winners for 2018-19.

The Minnesota State High School League honor highlights students who excel in the arts, academics and athletics, and Lydia Ramstad and Reier Sjomeling certainly fit that description. Both will now represent Delano at the regional level as candidates to advance to state.

Lydia Ramstad

Ramstad, the daughter of David and Marcelle Ramstad of Delano, has already achieved what is only a pipe dream for most high school graduates.

"I applied to Harvard and I got accepted, which is crazy," she said. "Nothing can prepare you for that."

After most enjoying psychology and biology in high school, Ramstad plans to major in neuroscience. Before heading east, however, she will wrap up a remarkable Delano career that includes a weighted GPA of 4.21, a perfect ACT score of 36 and high performance in numerous Advanced



Reier Sjomeling, left, and Lydia Ramstad are this year's Triple 'A' Award representatives from DHS.

Placement or College in the Schools courses that have resulted in the designations of "AP Scholar with Distinction" and national "Commended Scholar."

"Lydia is one of the most intrinsically motivated and focused students that I have taught," said DHS science teacher Jessica Bahe in a letter of recommendation for the Triple "A" Award.

Ramstad has excelled in track and field,

tennis, drama, and as a flute player in band.

Reier Sjomeling

Sjomeling is the son of Mike and Darcy Sjomeling of Montrose. His weighted GPA of 4.09 has been earned through participation in numerous AP and CIS classes, and in March of 2018 he was one of just 28 wrestlers in the state named to the Minnesota Wrestling Coaches Association 2018 All-State Academic Wrestling Team.

Though he isn't sure which college he would like to attend yet, Sjomeling plans to continue playing tennis or wrestling while pursuing a degree in elementary education. His cross country coach and DES teacher Jackson Lindquist said Sjomeling has what it takes to excel wherever he ends up.

"Whether it be in class or on the court, Reier's peers look to him for leadership and motivation," said Lindquist in his letter of recommendation for the Triple "A" award. "His effort in everything he does is inspirational to his classmates and the adults around him."

Sjomeling also sings in choir and the select Sound Revolution ensemble.

• See www.delano.k12.mn.us for more.