

# Tiger Tracks

Delano Intermediate School Newsletter



March 2022



Sixth-graders presented their History Day work on Feb. 9. See Page 5.

## At a glance

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Food shelf project

## Dates to remember

### March

13.....Daylight Saving Time starts

16.....Two-hour late start

25.....End of Quarter 3

28-31.....Spring break, no school

### April

1.....Spring break, no school

4-6.....6th grade LLCC trip

15.....Good Friday, no school



## Sticky situation

Several DIS teachers, including Seth Potter, took turns being 'stuck for a buck' to the cafeteria wall during lunch as part of Give Back Week. Funds raised were donated to charity. See Page 4 for more about the school-wide service learning project.

## Measuring student progress

By Katie Thompson  
Principal

As we head into March at DIS we are looking forward to a time to focus our attitudes and efforts even more on learning.

The month of March can feel long as we work through the last few weeks of winter and look forward to Spring Break. Upon return from Spring Break, however, students and staff are already heading into a season of assessment. And while we view "testing season" as an opportunity celebrate the hard work we have done



Katie Thompson

this year, it is also a time that teachers and students alike take seriously and work very hard

to prepare for. We will share more about testing season as spring approaches, but for now I would like to highlight how we see our Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) efforts impacting student learning.

On Feb. 1 we introduced Tiger Tickets at DIS as a way to acknowledge expected behavior from our students. Specifically, we were hoping to draw focus to academic behaviors that make learning more effective and efficient in the class-

See Thompson  
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# Johnson named Teacher of the Year

## ELL instructor works with students across the district

By Paul Downer  
Communications Coordinator

Nothing is more foundational to learning than the ability to communicate, so it is fitting that English Language Learner instructor Ashley Johnson has been named Teacher of the Year for Delano Public Schools.

Johnson serves roughly 40 students from kindergarten through high school, spending time at all three schools on a regular basis. Her students come from a variety of backgrounds and speak Russian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Spanish, Hmong, French and Thai.

"Ashley continually looks for ways to support her students," said a nomination submitted by DHS language arts teacher Rachel Holms. "She works to provide her students with skills that will help them beyond the school walls. She manages a variety of skill levels and accommodates to the ever-changing schedule of adding new students. She is such a valuable asset to our district and our students."

Each year a handful of teachers are nominated, and the entire district teaching staff votes on a winner. Johnson said the recognition was such a surprise that she felt it must have been a mistake when she learned she had been nomi-



**Ashley Johnson works with about 40 students in all three schools. Their native languages include Russian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Spanish, Hmong, French and Thai.**

nated, and her selection as the finalist was even more surreal.

"I feel very humbled, but also undeserving because of everyone else who should be getting it," she said. "With how difficult things have been in the last three years, this feels like a reward that every teacher deserves. I'm the lucky one. I feel so lucky to work with a staff that is so dedicated to their profession and to my students and my program. I just want them to know how grateful and

thankful I am, because they're part of why I love my job."

### Foundation

The seeds of Johnson's career were planted during her high school years in Buffalo when she volunteered to tutor a student from Africa. She enjoyed the process so much that she began mentoring in the English Language Learner (ELL) program as a senior.

"I became very close with some of the students. Some were new to country, some had been in the program for three or four years and had acquired more English skills. I just really loved it," said Johnson. "I felt I had a passion for that. I've always loved languages. I took French all through high school and took Spanish and just loved learning about new cultures and people and where they were from."

After high school Johnson attended St. Cloud State University, intending to pursue a career as a French teacher.

"I didn't realize at the time that you could become an ELL teacher – that there was an

actual license for that specifically," said Johnson.

When she found out, however, she did not hesitate to shift majors. The pathway involved obtaining a degree in English with a concentration in linguistics and a minor in second language acquisition.

So great was the need for English language services that Johnson actually returned to Buffalo before her graduation to work part-time while finishing up her degree. After she graduated, Delano was her first opportunity for full-time employment.

"EL programs look a lot different depending on where you are," Johnson said. "I knew I liked being in a community and school that was big enough to allow opportunities for my students, to provide what was necessary to be successful with my program, but was also small enough where you feel like you're part of a family. Because I have a smaller population of students I am incredibly close with them. The relationship I'm



**Johnson enjoys building relationships with students over their years in the ELL program.**

**See Johnson**  
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# Screening shows students on track

By Paul Downer  
Communications Coordinator

Students at Delano Intermediate School are largely on track to meet grade-level standards despite the interference of COVID-19 over portions of the last three school years.

DIS Principal Katie Thompson gave school board members an update on recent screening results during their meeting on Monday, Feb. 28, and the news was good.

FAST testing in December revealed that 76% of fourth-graders, 85% of fifth-graders and 88% of sixth-graders were meeting grade-level standards in math.

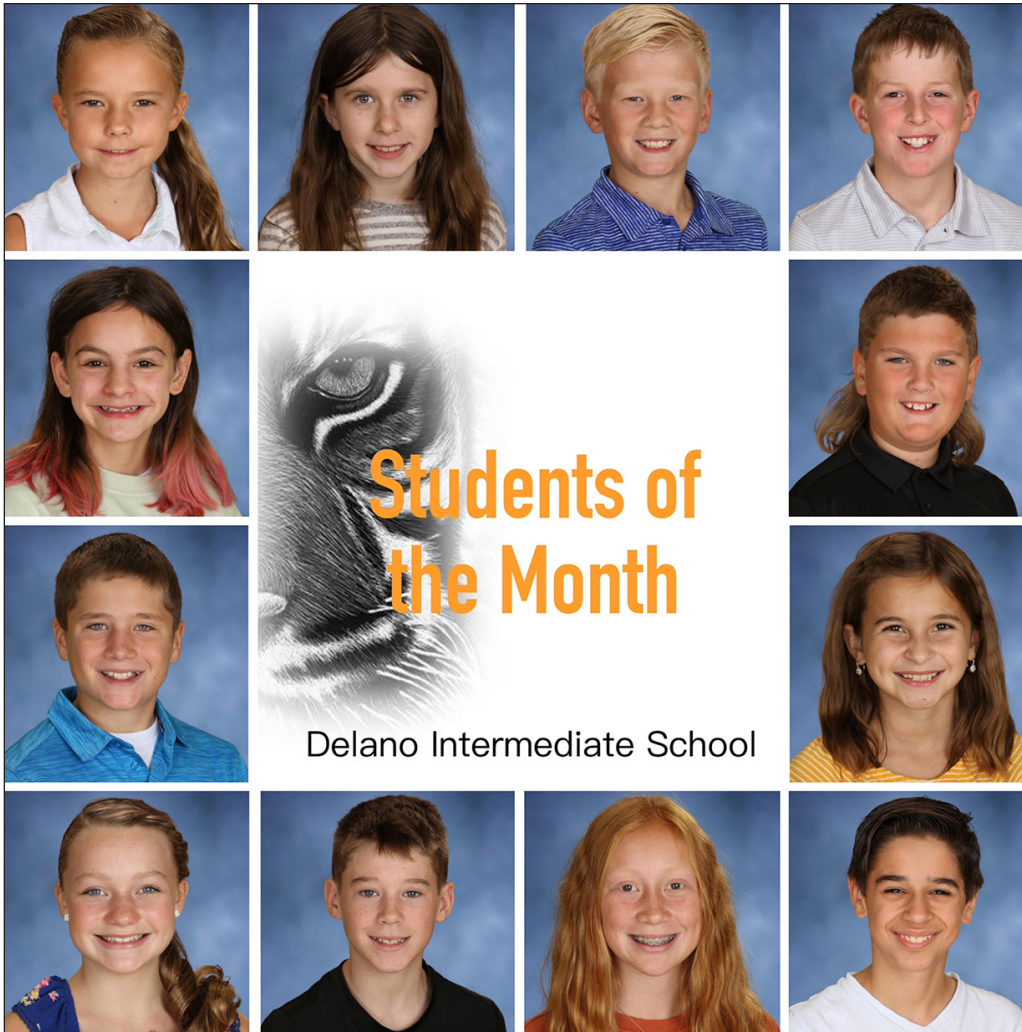
In reading, 80% of fourth-graders, 82% of fifth-graders and 93% of sixth-graders were on track to meet the standards.

"Those numbers are really impressive, I think, considering everything kids have been through and teachers have been working through," said Thompson. "I especially look at our sixth grade - being 93% on track in December is outstanding."

Thompson also shared about a variety of professional development efforts that have been undertaken by staff members in order to ensure students are receiving the proper instruction.

"One of the things that I think has led to these really pretty impressive scores at this point is that our staff is really committed to focusing on rigor when they're teaching the standards to our students," said Thompson.

FAST testing occurs multiple times during the school year to identify students in need of intervention or enrichment, and to assess student progress.



**Students of the Month for January were recognized for being dependable. Those honored included the following:**

**4th grade - Mila Green, Frances Lins, Liam Olson, Evan Roff**

**5th grade - Riley Barcenas, Cale Marshall, Brady VanBeusekom, Avery Vieau**

**6th grade - Lily Anderson, Brody Barnes, Cecilia Jaunich, Nathan Mullen**

## Thompson

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room. The research behind positive behavior reinforcement shows that behavior can be improved by 80% simply by pointing out the positive in a person's current behaviors.

The acknowledgment needs to go beyond the act of delivering a ticket, however. In our practice as a staff we also are committed to using behavior-specific praise with our students, either on its own or in conjunction with a Tiger Ticket. The idea is that students need to know exactly why they were rewarded in or-

der to use that information to inform their future behavior.

As I walk around and ask students about why they were given their Tiger Ticket, every single one of them can point to the specific behavior they did that led to their reward. They are proud of the work they are doing, and so am I!

Tickets can be collected and used by students at our Tiger Store to purchase items or activities (DIS pens and pencils, for example, or a "front of the lunch line" pass).

Our first Tiger Store will be happening during the first week of March, and not only gives students the opportunity to celebrate their own hard

work, but also serves as a data collection tool for us as a staff.

As we implement any new program, we want to always consider, "Is it having the desired impact?" and "How do we know?" By looking at the number of tickets distributed and by whom, we can start to tighten up our PBIS practices as a building.

Please encourage your students to continue to give their best effort in March, during this highly focused academic time of the year.

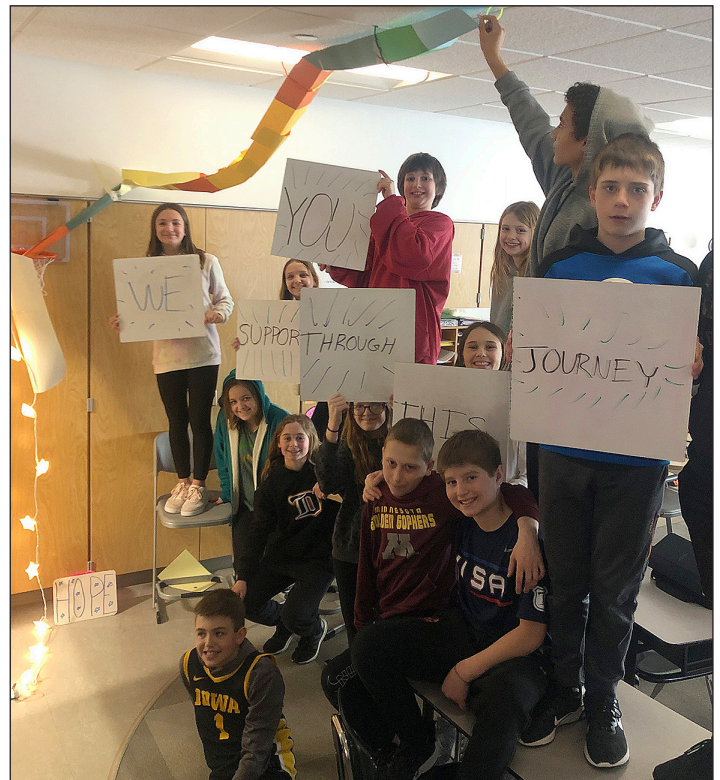
We believe we will see incredible success this year with continued partnership from our families.





# Give Back Week

Delano Intermediate held its first Give Back Week at the end of February. The school-wide service learning project to benefit the Ronald McDonald House and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society included a variety of fun events, including the 'penny luge,' pop tab sculptures, the coin tower competition, and various teachers getting 'stuck for a buck' to the cafeteria wall during lunch hours. DIS students and families collectively raised \$2,407.86 for LLS. They also collected 53,880.5 grams of pop tabs and 1,650 food items for the Ronald McDonald House Charities. The school theme for the month was empathy, and the projects aimed to help others dealing with difficult situations.





# History Day projects challenge students

By Paul Downer  
Communications Coordinator

The annual History Day competition on Wednesday, Feb. 9, had a more typical flavor this time around after COVID restrictions led to a hybrid event last year.

Students and almost all judges were present in person, a welcome change from the 2020-21 experience.

"We were excited to hold in-person judging again, as this is the only competition that will be conducted that way this year," said Gifted and Talented Coordinator Heidi O'Donnell. "The regional, state and national competitions will be virtual, so receiving live feedback and having the opportunity to present their projects in person was invaluable to our students."

Singly or in groups, sixth- and eighth-grade students in the accelerated language arts program conducted historical research and presented their findings via documentary videos, websites or exhibits during the local competition. A total of 27 projects focused on the theme "Debate and Diplomacy: Success, Failures, Consequences," and 17 of those projects will advance to regional competition against projects from other schools in March.

"The judges were impressed by the wide variety of topics for this year's theme," said O'Donnell, adding that judges also remarked on the overall quality of the presentations. "The day ran as smoothly as possible and students did an amazing job presenting to the judges!"

## Building skills

Sixth-graders Maria Droogsma, Nathan Heckman and Emma Ristau focused their exhibit on the White Rose resistance consisting primarily of German students against Nazi Germany.

Although they were concerned that language might be a barrier in terms of finding primary sources, the group



Emma Ristau explains aspects of the White Rose resistance movement in Nazi Germany to judges during the History Day competition on Wednesday, Feb. 9.

was able to find many quality secondary sources during trips to the Delano and Minneapolis libraries, as well as online. The students also conducted interviews with authors of two books they read as sources.

"We found a lot of secondary sources, and those secondary sources really spoke for themselves," said Heckman.

Crafting their eye-catching display was the students' favorite aspect of the project.

"Designing our board was really fun," said Ristau. "I liked the challenge of having to keep the script under 500 words,

even though it got frustrating at times."

The White Rose resistance may not be familiar to most in America, but Droogsma said the members are hailed as heroes by modern Germans.

"In Germany there is a whole school named after them. There are memorials everywhere in Munich. Students learn about it every year. So bringing that to Delano was kind of cool," she said. "(History Day) is a really cool experience because you can learn a lot about topics you would usually never hear about, and

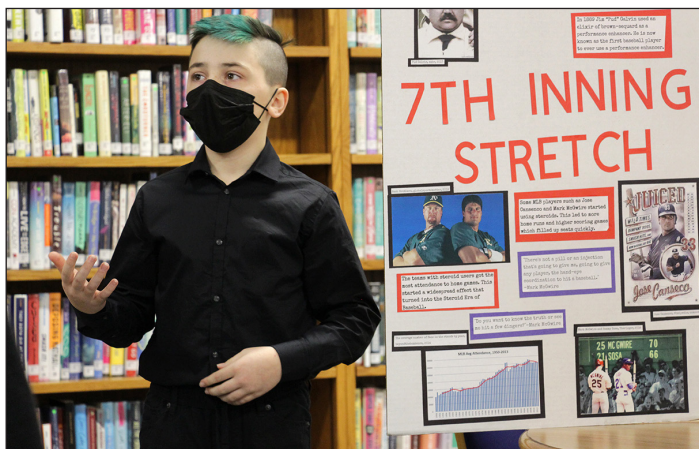
you get to learn how to do stuff that will be helpful later in many other areas."

"From citing and annotating resources to presenting in front of judges, I learned many things during this project," agreed Ristau.

## Growth opportunity

O'Donnell said that allowing students freedom to choose an area of focus under the umbrella of a broad theme is one of the many benefits of History Day. Research began in October.

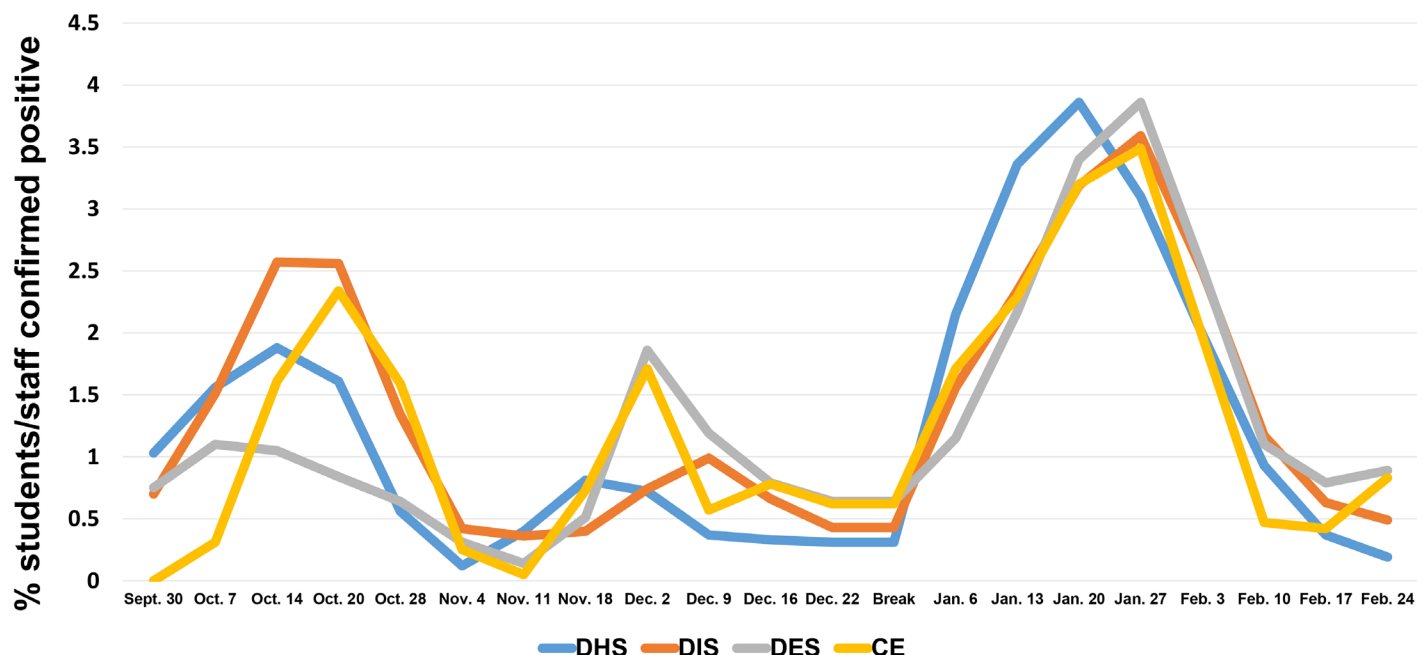
"They can build on their interests in addition to learning a new skill, or build on their previous knowledge at a deeper level," she said. "Working in groups on an extensive project also gives them real-world learning experiences in collaboration and compromise. I'm sure by the end of the project they are ready to be done, but they get to reflect back on how far they have come in the process from start to finish and feel a sense of accomplishment. It's great to see that growth from beginning to end, but also from sixth grade to eighth grade. We are so proud of them!"



Quinn Sowada explains an exhibit about the steroid era of baseball.



# COVID cases 2021-22 (14-day case rate)



<div>LUNCH</div> <div>MARCH 2022</div> <div>Delano Intermediate School</div>				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Chicken Gravy A) Polish Sausage Mashed Potatoes Peas / Roll Lettuce Salad Orange Wedges	Italian Dunks Marinara Sauce Corn Lettuce Salad Fresh Fruit	Pizza Green Beans Lettuce Salad Pears	Grilled Cheese Sandwich Tomato Soup Cheddar Goldfish Crackers Veggies Applesauce
Chicken Tenders Mashed Potatoes / Co Gravy Broccoli / Roll Lettuce Salad Pineapple / Mand Oranges	Corn Dog Potato Smiles Baked Beans Veggies Rosy Applesauce	Chicken Nuggets Hashbrown Green Beans Veggies Roll Fruit Cocktail	Chicken Patty – Bun A) PBJ Sandwich Chicken Noodle Soup / Crackers Lettuce Salad Veggies Peaches	Cheesy Breadsticks Marinara Sauce Corn Lettuce Salad Fresh Fruit Cookie
Nachos – Beef / Cheese Lettuce / Onions / Salsa Refried Beans OJ Cup Fresh Fruit	Cinnamon Roll Cheese Omelet Steamed Broccoli Hashbrown Baked Apple Slices	Spaghetti – Meat Sauce Green Beans Lettuce Salad Garlic Bread Pears	Chicken Nuggets Hashbrown Corn Veggies Roll Fruit Cocktail	Hamburger A) Fish Sandwich Sun Chips Lettuce / Tomatoes Pickles / Onions Orange Wedges
Domino's Pizza Green Beans Lettuce Salad Pears	Chicken Patty Mashed Potatoes / Co Gravy Steamed Carrots / Roll Lettuce Salad Orange Wedges	Tacos Lettuce / Cheese / Salsa Refried Beans OJ Cup Fresh Fruit	Teriyaki Chicken Brown Rice Stir Fry Vegetables Lettuce Salad Pineapple	Cheese Quesadilla Corn Salsa Lettuce Salad Fresh Fruit
No School Spring Break	No School Spring Break	No School Spring Break	No School Spring Break	

This Institution is an equal opportunity provider  
Menu subject to change based on product availability

# DIS book fair open

The DIS Book Fair is underway this week, running from Feb. 28 through March 4. The online book store remains open until Thursday, March 10. All sales in the fair earn rewards for DIS. See more information on the book fair website at [bit.ly/DISbookfair22](http://bit.ly/DISbookfair22). At right, students peruse the inventory on Monday, Feb. 28.



## Johnson

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able to have with each one is truly unique and individual because of how much time I can spend with them, and how they stay with me as they move through our buildings.”

### *Forging connections*

Although one might not think of Delano as an international destination, it has become home to many nationalities.

“There is a wide variety,” said Johnson. “That’s something that continues to surprise me since we’re a small town, but their families come from all over.”

How does she go about connecting with students who speak languages she doesn’t know?

“We use Google translate if we need to, but I try my hardest to learn something in their language to make that connection with them, because it makes a huge difference,” Johnson said. “I think that builds rapport.”

Non-verbal communication is also key to establishing a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

“You have to make it fun for them, because they might be in a position where they understand 10-15% of what I’m saying, but if I use different body language and facial expressions to make things understood, it really helps,” said Johnson. “I have a ton of fun with my newcomers. Those are some of my most challenging days, but also some of the most rewarding.”

Good relationships are essential to enabling progress when students find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings.

“A lot of students come from situations where classrooms were not white walls

with posters. It was different, or maybe they didn’t go to school, or school was outside,” said Johnson. “In order to learn language you need to be able to take risks, and to take risks you need to be comfortable. I’ve had students who are very anxious and don’t feel comfortable doing that right away, and that makes it very difficult to learn English. I just make sure my classroom is a very welcoming and open space, and a space where they can take language risks and start the language acquisition process to be proficient in English.”

From the point when those initial connections are made, English instruction commences with the basics of the alphabet, letter sounds, vocabulary and conversational English. Although there are a many variables in how quickly a student progresses, a typical timeline for new students to fully acquire English proficiency is five to seven years.

“You start with some of those things that almost seem like kindergarten basics and go from there,” said Johnson. “At the end of the day I just want to make sure I fulfill all the needs of my students. Whether that’s academic, linguistic, social-emotional or any other need they may have, I just want to make sure that I am there for them.”

### *Broader learning*

English language learners spend more or less time with Johnson depending on their needs, but they also participate in many other classes with accommodations that Johnson establishes with their regular education teachers. When she is not directly engaged with students herself, she is often providing support to other teachers who have English language learners in their classroom.

“A lot of my students come to Delano

and they’re smart. In their native language they do well in school, so it’s just the language that needs to be modified,” said Johnson. “So it’s important to re-frame our thinking to say that EL is enrichment, not intervention. Modifying for language takes time and can be difficult, but when we focus on that we can really see them do well and succeed.”

### *World traveler*

When she isn’t in the classroom, Johnson’s affinity for unfamiliar cultures naturally leads to a lot of travel.

“If I could spend every weekend on an airplane to somewhere new and uncomfortable for me, pushing myself, that would be my dream,” she said with a laugh.

Some of her favorite trips have been to South Africa, Croatia and Egypt. In addition to travel on her personal time, Johnson has led spring break trips for Delano students to Washington, D.C., and New York. She also organizes international ventures to China or, later this year, Costa Rica.

“Every time I take a trip I learn something new about the world and I can bring it back to my students,” she said. “I’m not saying I can put myself in their shoes because I absolutely cannot. But it changes my perspective of this small town. The people out there in the world – even if you can’t speak the same language – you can still have meaningful interactions.”

And when she’s not traveling herself, Johnson said that engaging with her students and their varied backgrounds is her favorite aspect of the job.

“I’m continually learning from my kids because of the experiences they bring into my classroom, and the perspective that they give,” she said. “It has made me a better teacher, and a better person.”



# It's a good time to become a substitute teacher

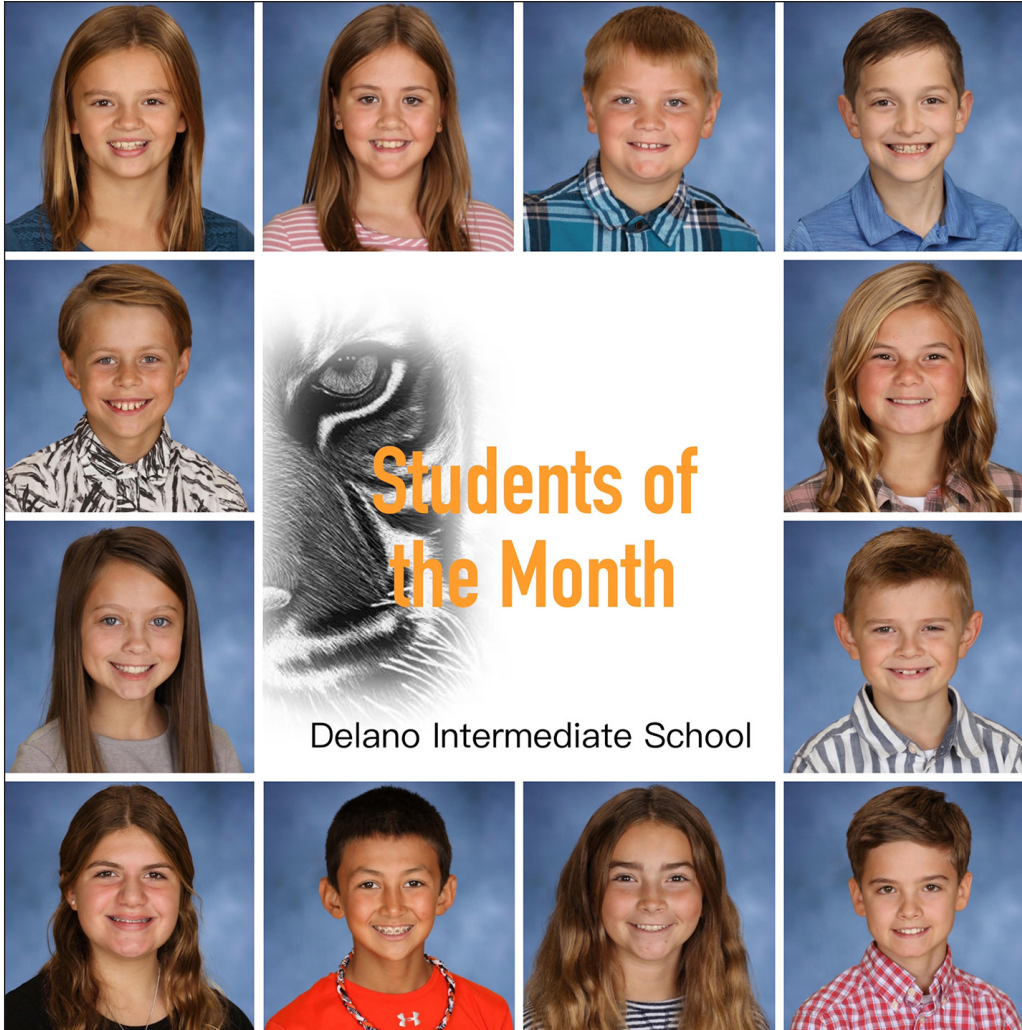
Have you ever thought about serving as a substitute teacher? Delano Public Schools is seeking substitutes to help cover gaps in staffing.

Teachers on Call is the agency that provides substitute teachers in Delano. You can apply with Teachers on Call by visiting [www.teachersoncall.com](http://www.teachersoncall.com), or calling 952-346-1656.

Substitute teachers can:

- Choose their own schedule.
- Choose to work close to home or experience many different schools and districts.
- Find jobs through easy online job scheduling.
- Work short- or long-term positions.
- Explore a variety of classroom settings, from primary to secondary levels.

The hiring process is relatively simple, and free training is provided to new substitute teachers.



**Students of the Month for February were recognized for being empathetic. Those honored included the following:**

**4th grade - Sophia Huotari, Teagan Spanier, Nolan Thorstad, Julian Vanderheiden**

**5th grade - Oliver Berg, Kinlee Jensen, Grace Techam, Gavin Van Allen**

**6th grade - Mia Dongoske, Jackson Eickhoff, Taylor Keen, Whitaker Pieper**

## Candy gram project supports Delano food shelf

The DIS Student Council planned and hosted a fundraiser for the Delano Helping Hands Food Shelf by selling candy grams Feb. 7-9. Each candy gram sold for \$1 or one food shelf item.

Student Council members delivered the candy grams to students and teachers on Monday, Feb. 14.

This successful fundraiser brought in two large boxes of food items and \$154 for the food shelf.

Deb Ingle came to DIS on Thursday, Feb. 10, to talk with the students about the impact of their collection efforts and share more information about how the food shelf helps people in our community.



This e-newsletter is published by District Communications Coordinator Paul Downer. Contact Paul at 763.972.3365, x1911, or [paul.downer@delanoschools.org](mailto:paul.downer@delanoschools.org).



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