



Eye of the Tiger

District 879 Newsletter October/November 2017

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District DPIE

Dates to remember

October

25.....Unity Day
26...HS band/choir concert, 7 p.m.
31...Halloween parade, 1:45 p.m.

November

2-3.....Fall play, 7 p.m.
3.....End of Quarter 1
4.....Fall play, 1 p.m.
10...Vets Day program, 9:30 a.m.
13.....HS PIE, 6 p.m.
13.....District PIE, 7 p.m.
14.....ES PIE, 6 p.m.
20.....Financial aid night, 7 p.m.
23, 24.....Thanksgiving break
28.....MS choir concert, 7 p.m.
29.....End of ES/MS trimester



Community members are welcome to attend the annual Veterans Day program at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 10, in the Tiger Activity Center.



The new main high school entrance is expected to open in November, and additional construction will continue throughout the school year.

Unique year underway

By Dr. Matthew Schoen
Superintendent

The district is in a year of pause with regards to our strategic plan. The 2017-18 school year is a transitional period due to our construction projects and preparations to reconfigure how we organize ourselves by grade.

Starting next school year we will have grades K-3 in the elementary, grades 4-6 in the new intermediate building, and grades 7-12 in our newly redesigned secondary building.

With the new grade configuration in our school district, our staff will be required to work on a number of transitional logistics that will require significant planning time during this school year – thus the need for the district to pause with regards to the four main initiatives of our strategic plan.



A positive environment

In addition to preparing for the transition, the district has placed an emphasis on creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students, staff and community members.

The district has taken the initiative to increase training

for our staff to establish a learning environment that is safe for all students, regardless of their background.

Earlier this month the district also partnered with our community to facilitate the Kindness in Chalk event. During this day all students and staff district-wide participated in a national effort that gave our students an opportunity to draw or write kind messages on sidewalks and pathways throughout Delano. This showed unity in maintaining a positive and welcoming community.

Construction update

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to give an update regarding the status and progress of our construction projects.

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Strong marks in ACT, MCA

While any educator will acknowledge that test scores paint an incomplete picture of student achievement, standardized tests do help to quantify some important dimensions of learning.

And by those measures, Delano students are excelling beyond many of their peers around the state. Results of the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments and the ACT, released in August and September, proved it.

MCA III

Delano students substantially exceeded the state averages in math, science and reading scores in the 2017 MCA III exams.

In math, 82.2 percent of Delano students met or exceeded standards, while the statewide rate was 59 percent. In science, 68.2 percent of Delano's students were proficient compared to 54 percent statewide. And in reading, 78.7 percent of Delano students met or exceeded the standards compared to 60 percent statewide.

The science and reading scores also marked Delano's highest proficiency rates since



Delano students substantially exceeded state averages in the two major tests.

the current versions of the tests were introduced in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

ACT

In addition, Delano students who graduated in 2017 posted an average composite score of 23.5 in the ACT, widening the district's customary lead on the state average, which was 21.5. That gap is significant, because Minnesota ranked No. 1 for

test scores among the 17 states that give the ACT to all students, and students nationwide posted an average composite score of 21.

"Scores like this just represent the full picture: the commitment to academics that our families have, that the students have, that the staff has, and the administration has," said Delano High School Principal Steve Heil. "Preschool to 12th

grade, all the way through, it just shows a full community commitment to academics."

In terms of college readiness, 43 percent of Delano students met all four benchmarks, compared to 31 percent statewide and 27 percent nationally.

More details are available at the Delano Public Schools website, www.delano.k12.mn.us.

Refinancing bonds brings big savings

Shortly before classes began this fall the Delano School Board received good news that should make taxpayers happy in the years ahead.

In July the district had decided to refinance \$3.4 million in general obligation alternative facilities bonds from 2008, hoping to attract between three and six bids and save about \$431,000 in interest over the next 10 years.

When bidding was completed in August, however, an extremely competitive process that included 10 bidders resulted in actual savings of \$508,441.50, or over \$50,000 per year. The interest rate on the existing bonds dropped from between 4 and 4.625 percent to 1.74 percent.

"All in all, I would say this is a very successful savings and a good thing for your taxpayers," said Gary Olsen of Ehlers & Associates, Inc. at the board's August

workshop. "It's basically like if you as an individual went back and refinanced your mortgage."

Olsen said the total savings was about double what Ehlers typically wants to see in order to make a refinancing worthwhile,

'This is a very successful savings and a good thing for your taxpayers.'

Gary Olsen

and that bids came in from all over the country, including New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Ohio and more.

Delano Public Schools has a strong rating of Aa3, which Olsen said contrib-

uted to the large number of bidders. He explained that school districts outside of the immediate metro area typically have a difficult time earning a rating in the Aa range because of smaller tax bases and overall economies of size.

"You had bids from all over the country. I think that has to do with the fact that you have a very high rating," said Olsen. "It's hard to get that rating, and there are a lot of things outside a district's control, but you are just close enough to the metro. The better rating you get from the rating agency, the lower your interest rates are going to be."

School board member Corey Black said the district's high rating is also confirmation of good management.

"If you have a rating that high, it shows very well that your school district is run properly," he said.



Sydney Sinnott



Mary Ludwig

DHS theater presents 'Hiding in the Open'

Delano High School will present its fall play, "Hiding in the Open," at 7 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, Nov. 2-3, and at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 4.

Based on a true story, "Hiding in the Open" is about Sabina and Helka, two Jewish sisters who pretend to

be Catholic Polish girls in order to survive the Holocaust. The production is by Kira Oblensky from the memoir by Sabina Zemerling.

The cast is led by Sydney Sinnott as Sabina and Mary Ludwig as Helka. Tickets for the show are \$7 for adults and \$5 for students.

DES earns national award

It's no secret that physical activity helps improve focus in the classroom, and Delano Elementary was recognized as a leader in that area with a national award last month.

DES was among just four schools in Minnesota to receive a Let's Move! Active Schools National Award for 2017, an honor reserved for schools that demonstrate a commitment to at least 60 minutes of physical activity before, during or after each school day.

"We commend Delano Elementary School's model work around enhancing physical education and physical activity opportunities," said Charlene R. Burgeson, Active Schools Executive Director. "Delano Elementary School is leading the

way in this generation-changing movement that is transforming our nation's schools into active and healthy hubs."

Physical education teacher Tim Lyngen said the award is not about recognition for staff, but about doing what is best for students.

"We're trying to create a culture where movement is enjoyable and kids want to be active for life," he said.

Innovations in Delano have included team teaching, the incorporation of music with activities, and the use of wristwatch heart rate monitors to spur students on to more enthusiastic efforts.

See more details about the award at www.delano.k12.mn.us.

Announcements

Join the wellness committee

Delano Public Schools is seeking parents and community members to participate in a district-wide wellness committee.

The committee will identify general goals, evaluate current efforts and more during two meetings per year, one in early December and another in April.

Three areas of focus will be nutritional education for students and staff, physical activity programming for students and staff, and student/family wellness.

Delano Middle School Assistant Principal Steve Schauburger is the district wellness coordinator. He would like the committee to include parents or community members, students, and a variety of staff members, including food service personnel, health and physical education staff, social workers, teachers and administrators.

New school rewards program

Support for a school district can come in many forms, but anyone who wishes to aid the Delano schools through the Coborn's school rewards program should be aware of a change in how the program works this fall. Coborn's is starting its new paperless MORE School Rewards program, which replaces the former Labels for Learning. There are three steps to participate.

1. Designate your preferred school (DHS, DMS or DES) by logging into moreRewards.com or the MORE Rewards mobile app. Click the Rewards tab at the top of the page, then the School Rewards tab.

2. Shop Coborn's for the store brands (Food Club, Full Circle,

Top Care, Paws, Tippy Toes and more) to earn points for your preferred school.

3. The points your school earns will increase its share of a total available pot of \$150,000 that is distributed among participating schools. The more points a school earns, the larger its piece of the pie will be. See moreRewards.com/school for more information.

Clothing drive for veterans

Delano Public Schools is conducting a clothing drive for veterans in need. The drive will begin on Monday, Oct. 23, and will end on Friday, Nov. 10. All donated items must be newly purchased. Previously worn items will not be accepted.

The donated clothing will be given to the St. Cloud Veterans Affairs Hospital to assist with veterans' needs. These veterans, many of whom are homeless at admission, typically are hospitalized for 60 to 80 days.

When they are well enough for discharge, the hospital staff works to ensure that their basic needs are met. Please consider donating one of the following items:

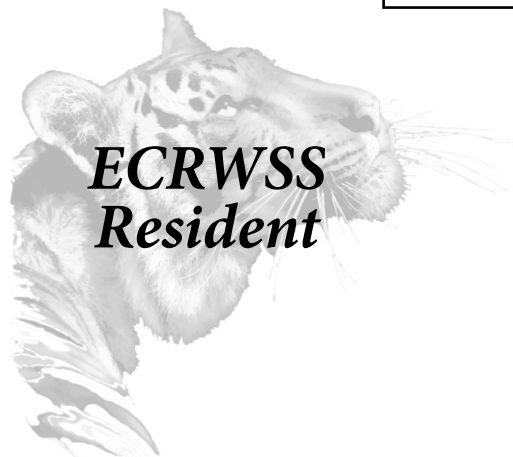
For men: Socks, boxers, undershirts, T-shirts, sweatpants or sweatshirts, jeans (waist 28-32, length 30-34), winter boots, flip flops, slippers with rubber bottoms.

For women: Socks, underwear, pajamas, shirts, sweatpants, jeans of any size, winter boots, flip flops, slippers with rubber bottoms.

If you would like to make a monetary donation, collected funds will be used to purchase winter coats, hats and gloves. Make your check payable to Delano Public Schools, and note Veterans Clothing Drive in the memo.

Delano School District
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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

A piece of the PIE

All area residents who wish to help promote quality education opportunities in Delano are encouraged to contribute to or join Delano Partners in Education.

The district-level DPIE is separate from the each of the individual school PIE groups and is focused on building an endowment to help support the school district's traditional funding sources.

"Our focus is more global, at the district level, to be able to create this endowment for the school to draw upon for whatever needs it might have," said DPIE member Natasha Werner. "Technology has been one of the focuses we have talked about, but it is not limited to technology."

The District DPIE's goal is to build a \$1 million endowment, and a stretch goal is to reach \$10 million in 10 years to help

fund various needs. The group has currently raised about \$200,000.

Get involved

Anyone interested in the District DPIE's work can help in two ways. The first is to get involved as a member and attend regular meetings on the second Monday of each month at the school. A second way is to contribute to the group, which generates revenue through fundraisers, corporate donations and gifts through its website.

An informational gathering about the District DPIE and its work is planned for Wednesday, Nov. 1. Watch the Delano Public Schools Facebook page and website for details on the time and location.

For more information, or to donate, see <http://delanopie.org>.



Schoen

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As stated in a previous article, the following projects were completed by the beginning of this school year:

- Eight renovated science classrooms
- Family and Consumer Science classroom
- Special Education classrooms
- Redesigned bathrooms
- Two turf fields, along with stadium upgrades
- Two additional tennis courts

In a few short weeks the locker rooms adjacent to the ice arena will be completed in time for the girls' hockey season to begin.

The new front entrance of the high school will be completed later on in November, and the high school office staff will move into their new offices by the end of that month. The new district office location will be completed by

the end of December. In addition, the new intermediate school remains on schedule. The building itself is almost completely enclosed, and preparations are underway for winter construction on the interior. It may also still be possible to begin landscape work on the site prior to the winter. This will help in maintaining a clean work site in the future.

I would like to thank all students, staff, parents and community members for a successful start to our school year. This has been a very unique start, mainly due to the construction projects on all portions of our campus. The flexibility and patience of all our stakeholders makes this transition that much more seamless and successful.

Multiple phases of construction will continue throughout the course of this school year, and I will take the opportunity to update you on progress in future newsletters.