



Eye of the Tiger

District 879 Newsletter February 2021

At a glance

Page 2

Teacher awards
Transition timeline

Page 3

Budget breakdown
Audit highlights

Page 4

Triple A winners

Dates to remember

February

3.....Two-hour late start
8.....ES, IS virtual conferences
8.....9-12 registration assistance
9.....ES, IS virtual conferences
10.....Two-hour late start
15.....President's Day, no school
17.....Two-hour late start
22.....HS virtual conferences
22.....School board meeting
24.....Two-hour late start

March

3.....Two-hour late start
10.....Two-hour late start
14.....Daylight Saving Time starts
17.....Two-hour late start
22.....School board meeting
24.....Two-hour late start
26.....End of Quarter 3
29-31.....Spring break, no school

April

1-2.....Spring break, no school
7.....Two-hour late start



Delano High School seniors Sophie Stevens and Carter Tool have been named Triple A Award winners for the 2020-21 school year. See Page 4.



Second start

After moving to hybrid or distance learning around the beginning of December, many students returned to greater levels of in-person learning on Tuesday, Jan. 19.

Bringing our students back

By Matthew Schoen
Superintendent

As you all are aware, a few weeks ago the Delano Public Schools School Board approved a transition to bring students back to in-person and hybrid learning models. Currently, students in grades K-5 are in person, and students in grades 6-12 are in a hybrid learning model.



Over the next few weeks we will continue to monitor our school data, in conjunction with our community data, in order to make a decision regarding the next learning model for grades 6-12. This will take a little bit more time, as we want to make sure to facilitate the next transi-

tion appropriately and to optimize our plans to maintain more in-person and hybrid learning.

We are excited to have our students back in person in grades K-5, allowing staff members to facilitate educational excellence in the optimal mode. This has been a long journey, and we are, for many reasons, not finished. We will continue to be diligent with our safety mitigation measures to maintain a safe learning environment for all our students and staff, and will continue to follow all guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Education. Our staff members have been working very hard in multiple areas to meet new safety guidelines designed to keep students and staff in schools, allowing them to carry on with their important work.

As the district has transitioned into these new learning models, I encourage families to stay connected with their individual schools for

See Schoen
Page 4

Teachers recognized for leadership

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

Four members of the Delano Public Schools staff have been recognized by their peers with Leadership in Educational Excellence Awards.

Those honored include second-grade teacher Theresa Swan from Delano Elementary, sixth-grade teacher Natalie Palmer from Delano Intermediate, special education teacher Lora Voight from Delano High School, and Ashley Johnson, who helps English language learners across multiple grade levels.

"Ashley is an invaluable asset to the Delano Schools community, ensuring that our English language learners can be successful in the classroom," said an anonymous nomination statement.

Johnson also fills leadership positions in the Quality Compensation and literacy initiative programs, aids teachers with license renewals, and heads up the China exchange program



Ashley Johnson

and the Washington, D.C., trips.

Palmer is known among colleagues for her fun-loving personality and work ethic.

"Natalie consistently demonstrates a positive attitude, loves and embraces all kids," said the nomination for her award. "She has single handedly reworked her math curriculum, developed an intervention program for struggling learners, and is helping other grade levels do the same. Natalie has done all of this with great effectiveness and results for our learners. Natalie truly embodies the



Natalie Palmer

'we're all in this together' spirit."

Swan heads up the Q Comp program at the second-grade level, works hard to make standards accessible for students, and has proved particularly helpful to her peers in distance learning.

"Theresa was the go-to person when we went to online learning and using Seesaw as a school," said the nomination. "She provided countless one-on-one tutorials during the pandemic to ensure everyone was successful and comfortable using Seesaw. I cannot thank



Theresa Swan

her enough for her leadership during this unique time of learning."

Voight's nomination called her a leader and mentor among the special education team.

"Mrs. Voight works tirelessly to help each student find success academically, socially and emotionally," the nomination said. "She uses these successes to help students gain confidence in themselves and their abilities. She addresses the needs of each student on an individual level, meets them where they are at, and helps them move forward."



Lora Voight

Transition timeline

Learning model shifts mark first semester

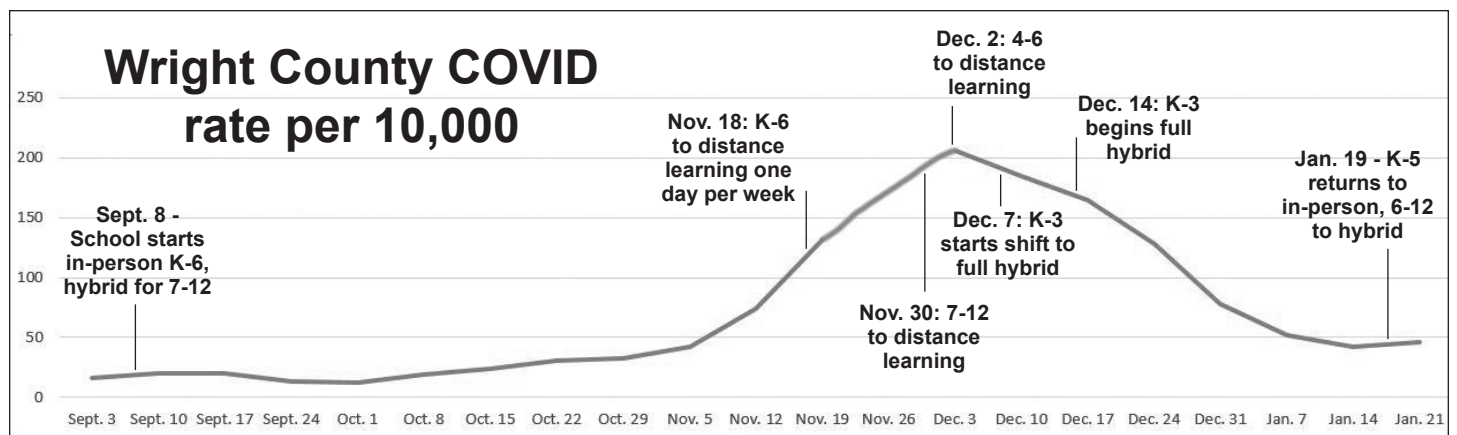
After a stable start to the school year, with K-6 students in person and 7-12 students in a hybrid model for approximately three months, district staff and families were forced to make some of the adjustments that had been planned for over the summer.

Wright County, and Minnesota overall, began to experience a spike in COVID-19 infections during the month of November into December, prompting Delano Public Schools, in consultation

with public health officials, to enact a number of learning model changes that are outlined in the graph below.

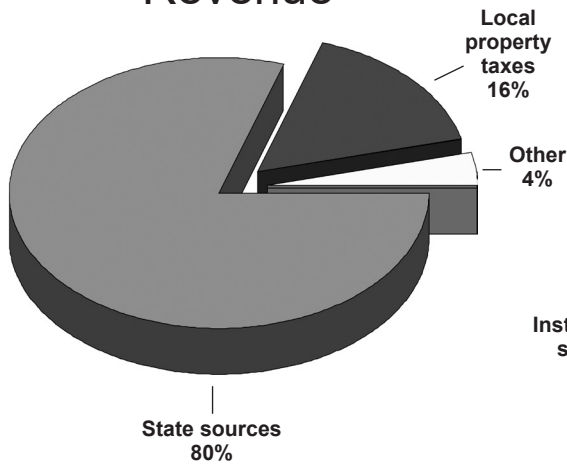
The line represents county case rates and the dates on which those numbers were announced. Each weekly number was compiled using the numbers from the previous two weeks of data.

If case rates remain stable in the weeks ahead, the goal is to return 6-12 students to in-person learning as soon as safely possible.



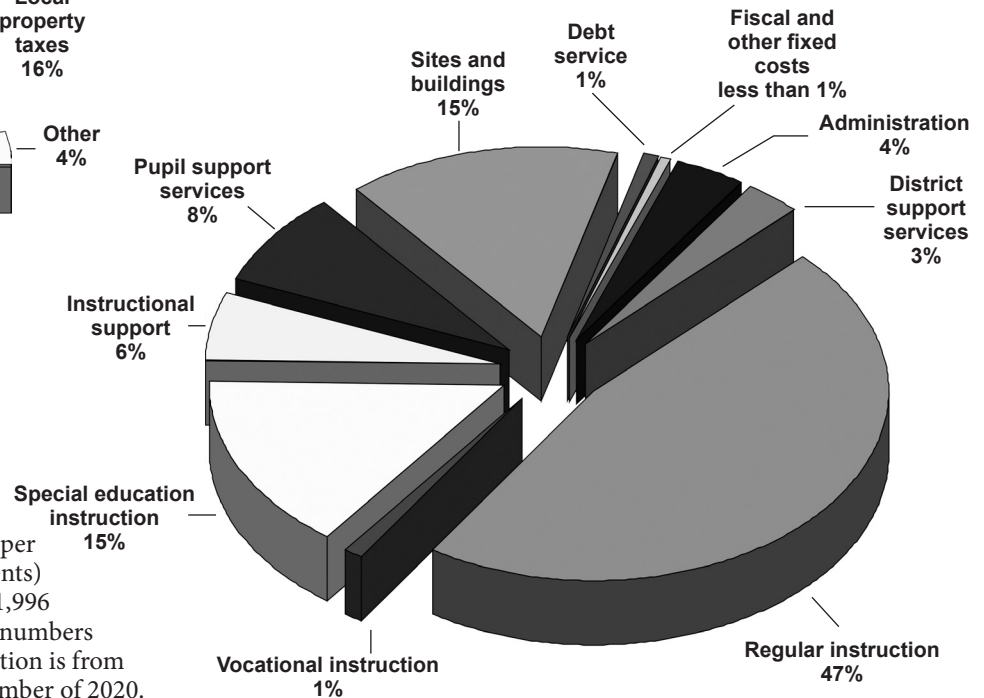
Sources of funding and uses

2020 General Fund
Revenue



In 2020 Delano Public Schools collected \$28.7 million in revenue and expended \$29.6 million. Revenue from property taxes per average daily membership (number of students) was \$1,832 compared to a state average of \$1,996 in 2019, the most recent year that statewide numbers were available for comparison. This information is from the district's annual audit presented in December of 2020.

2020 General Fund
Expenditures



Audit reveals 'healthy' financial management

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

Delano School Board members heard a number of encouraging observations during the annual audit presentation on Thursday, Dec. 3.

Janel Bitzan of BerganK-DV told board members that the district received a clean opinion for 2020, and that it outperformed its budget by a significant margin.

While the plan had been to spend down about \$1.3 million of the district's fund balance, program expenditures came in about \$333,000 under budget, and other revenue meant that the district actually spent down only about \$900,000.

Items of note

- State sources make up about 80 percent of the district's revenue, and in 2019 the district's revenue per average daily membership was \$11,604,

significantly lower than the state average of \$13,148. Revenue from local property taxes was also \$164 lower than the state average of \$1,996.

"Historically you've been below that state average. You can look at the different categories and you've been below the average in all the categories presented: property taxes, state aid and other," said Bitzan.

- In 2019 Delano spent about \$1,400 less per student than the state average, and about \$788 less per student than districts of similar size.

"You've been below the average when comparing to the state as a whole, and then also districts of similar size," said Bitzan. "Largely that's due to the fact that, since you're bringing in less revenues per average daily membership, you have less dollars per average daily membership to spend."

- About 63 percent of the district's budget goes directly to

the classroom for general, special and vocational education.

"That's a very solid number, when almost two-thirds of the dollars coming in actually get directly to the classroom," said auditor Matt Mayer about the same percentage during last year's audit.

'You really have built a nice, healthy fund balance, and that's ... going to benefit the district.'

Janel Bitzan
BerganKDV

- The distribution of spending has also been essentially unchanged from year to year, a trend that Mayer said was a sign of good management.

"That indicates to us that you, as a board, have a good plan on where you want the

dollars to be spent on a year-to-year basis," he said.

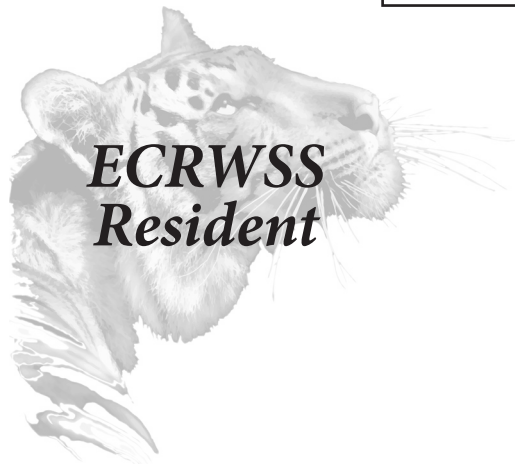
- Another comparison point for auditors in terms of a district's financial health is its general fund in relation to expenditures. Over the last five years of data presented, Delano has always maintained a relatively robust fund balance.

"You really have built a nice, healthy fund balance, and that's something that's going to benefit the district," said Bitzan, adding that auditors expect the state to make adjustments to state aid in the coming years, which could cause other districts with lower reserves to resort to cash flow borrowing "because they're not in as healthy of a position."

"We just wanted you guys to be aware that that's potentially coming down the pike in the next year or two, and you really have set yourself up nicely for that, if and when that does happen," Bitzan said.

Delano School District
700 Elm Avenue East
Delano, MN 55328

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Delano, MN 55328
Permit #13



ECRWSS
Resident

Delano Public Schools Vision

*Systemic growth toward educational
excellence for every learner.*

2019 Board of Education

Lisa Seguin, Chair
Corey Black, Vice Chair
Rachel Depa, Clerk
Jennie Rosenow, Treasurer
Amy Johnson, Director
Susan Roeser, Director
Jim Gierke, Director

Eye of the Tiger is published by Delano
Public Schools, 700 Elm Avenue East,
Delano, MN, 55328. Editor, Paul Downer,
Communications Coordinator, 763.972.3365,
ext. 1911, paul.downer@delanoschools.org

Follow us online at:



Stevens, Tool earn honors

By Paul Downer
Communications Coordinator

The COVID-19 era has posed additional challenges to students in the areas of academics, arts and athletics, but two Delano High School seniors were recently honored for continuing to excel in all three arenas.

Sophie Stevens and Carter Tool are the school's Triple A Award winners for 2020-21, and will now represent Delano at the regional level as candidates to advance to state.

"I was definitely pleasantly surprised to win this award," said Stevens. "There are so many talented seniors who excel academically and are leaders in both fine arts and athletics. Over the years, so many seniors I looked up to have won the Triple A Award, so it is a huge honor to have achieved this accomplishment."

Tool is a second-generation award winner. His father, Ryan, who is currently the activities administrator for Delano High School, also earned the honor as a DHS senior in the 1990s.



Sophie Stevens

"It feels great to win," said Carter Tool.

Stevens is the daughter of Curtis and Laura Stevens of Delano. Her weighted grade point average of 4.16 has been earned while taking some of the most rigorous courses Delano High School has to offer.

She has been a standout on the soccer field, playing every minute of every game as a senior defender, and on the stage, where she sings in choir and Sound Revolution, and where she also is a talented actor in theatrical productions.



Carter Tool

Carter Tool, the son of Ryan and Anna Tool of Delano, has thrived since coming to Delano High School from Dassel-Cokato as a sophomore in 2018.

He carries a grade point average of 3.65 while challenging himself academically, was a member of the boys basketball team that qualified for state last spring, and has also been active as a singer in choir and Sound Revolution.

A more complete feature on these students is available at www.delano.k12.mn.us.

Schoen

from Page 1

updates. The support of our parent community has been invaluable and, quite frankly, it would have been extremely difficult to facilitate each learning model without our parents' support. Your patience and flexibility are truly appreciated, and will be needed in the future as we facilitate additional transitions.

Finally, I believe that we are entering the final phase of our school year with regard to the COVID pandemic. We are moving in the right direction to bring normalcy back to the educational environment in all of our schools and programs.

It is exciting that we have been able to begin the process of vaccinating our staff members. This has been an extremely slow process at the outset, and I hope the pace of vaccine distributions to all of us quickens soon.

Again, thank you all for your support during this most difficult school year and time in our community, our state, our nation and the world.