



Friends of Johnston ELP
Supporting the needs of high ability students
in the Johnston Community School District

2020-2021 FJELP Board Members

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Friends of Johnston ELP Winter 2021 Newsletter

...from the desk of
Mandy Dummermuth
FJELP President



We have many great things happening throughout our district. Although the 2020/2021 academic year has been far from 'normal,' we have countless things to celebrate. Please join me in recognizing the great efforts of our ELP students and staff! As you'll see throughout this newsletter, students and staff are working hard and achieving great things, while collaborating in person and virtually.

If you missed the January 19th program, we invite you to listen to the recording, as the former Johnston ELP graduates provided authentic and helpful insights. We also invite you to tune in for the April 19th virtual program on "Developing Resilience, Grit & Finding Hope." A timely topic for all of us; details are on page 3.

Share your highlights and ideas for upcoming newsletters, FJELP Facebook page posts, and programs by emailing us at admin@friendsofjohnstonelp.org.

2020-2021 ELP Staff

Molly McConnell	JMS & Secondary ELP Coordinator	515-278-0476 molly.mcconnell@johnston.k12.ia.us
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General questions for the FJELP board?

Please contact us at admin@friendsofjohnstonelp.org

ELP Teacher Spotlight

Nikki Paradise-Williams

Lawson ELP Teacher

Elementary ELP
Coordinator



Mrs. Paradise-Williams and her family

Mrs. Paradise-Williams has been in education for 17 years. She has taught 6th, 1st and Kindergarten, in three different states. Her career at JCSD started with teaching 1st grade at Timber Ridge. She has been with the ELP team for the past six years.

Why do you enjoy working with ELP students?

Such a tough question; there are so many reasons to love my job!! I love the inquisitive nature of ELP students and that the autonomy our program allows for students to follow their curiosity. I was involved in "Challenge" as a student, so working in ELP feels like home. I can relate to students (sometimes too well) and their mixed feelings about school and learning.

What is one of your favorite ELP activities for students?

There are many things that I enjoy doing with students, but I most enjoy coming up with new things based on student interests. It gives me the opportunity to be creative alongside students and stretch myself while tailoring things to meet student needs/interests.

What are some of your favorite books?

I am not one for favorites— but if I'm forced to choose, Counting By 7's is probably my current favorite children's book – it helps that it's about a gifted girl. I also love reading The Phantom Tollbooth with students because each time I read it I find more ways Norton Juster was brilliant. As for adult fiction, I would have to say A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman, Dark Matter by Blake Crouch, and The Martian by Andy Weir top my list. Even choosing three is really hard! I'd rather give you the ins and outs of what makes them a great read than actually decide on a favorite.

What is your dream job?

To be perfectly honest, my current role really is a dream job for me. I get to work with amazing students and teachers who motivate me to be my best each and every day. I'm passionate about gifted education and can't imagine a job better suited for me. I tend to dream big. I have huge goals for myself, our students, and the program.

What advice do you give to parents of high achieving students?

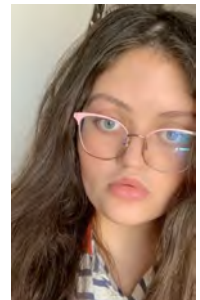
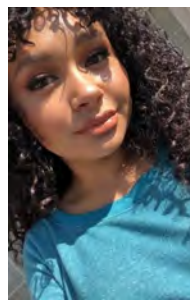
Let your child take the lead. If your child has an interest, foster it. If your child has a question, help them to find the answer. Please don't push your child beyond their natural drive. We want so much for our children, but sometimes we have to step back and let them find their own path.

January 19th Former ELP Student Panel

Did you miss this great program?

Navigating High School & Preparing for College

Click [HERE](#) for the Zoom Recording — Use Passcode: s#9%rT=z



Thank you again to our awesome collegiate panelists and Mrs. Cline, JHS ELP Teacher

Spring 2021 Virtual Program

**Developing Resilience, Grit
& Finding Hope**

***Monday, April 19th
7:00pm - 8:00pm***



Presenters:

Kathy Paul, Adjunct Instructor-Drake University, ITAG Board Member,
Former Johnston JCSD ELP Teacher & Coordinator

Karen Bazan, MA Education, MS, T-LMHC-Licensed Mental Health Counselor

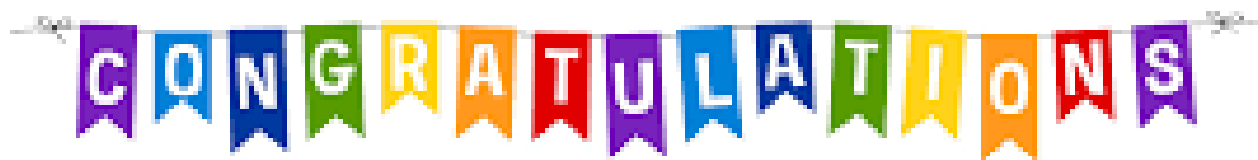
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84589753459?pwd=aDRiQVJUVVRqcmp4bGNiMmdRNjFSZz09>

Meeting ID: 845 8975 3459

Passcode: 153610

High School ELP News



Congratulations to the Johnston Academic Decathlon Team for winning their Regional Tournament last week! All team members won at least one award – it was a strong showing. The team has qualified to compete at State on March 5-6. We wish them well!

Honors Division:

Morgan Dunn: 2nd in Music, 1st in Math, 1st in Economics, 1st in Speech

Elise Henriksen: 3rd in Literature, 2nd in Art, 3rd in Math, 3rd In Speech, 2nd in Social Science, Second Place overall for Honors Players

Anna Larson: 1st in Literature, 3rd in Music, 3rd in Science, 2nd in Math, Third Place overall for Honors Players

Scholastic Division:

Will Anderson: 3rd in Music, 2nd in Math, Third Place overall for Scholastic Players

Fanuel Akakpo: 3rd in Social Science

Aarushi Gupta: 1st in Speech

Varsity Division:

Payton Blahut: 2nd in Literature, 1st in music, 1st in Art, 3rd in Social Science

Megan O'Brien: 3rd in Literature, 2nd in Music, 1st in Economics, 1st in Speech, 2nd in Social Science, Third Place overall for Varsity Players

Alternates:

Kristin To: 3rd in Lit, 3rd in Math

Katie Sweet: 3rd in Music, 3rd in Math, 3rd in Econ

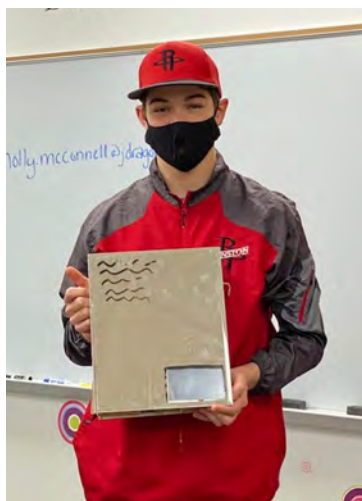
Audrey Renaud: 3rd in Social Science, 1st in Music, 2nd in Science, 2nd in Art

Adam Ehler: 3rd in Music, 1st in Lit, 1st in Social science, 1st in Science, 1st in Math, 1st in Econ, First Place overall Alternate

Johnston Middle School ELP News

ELP Class

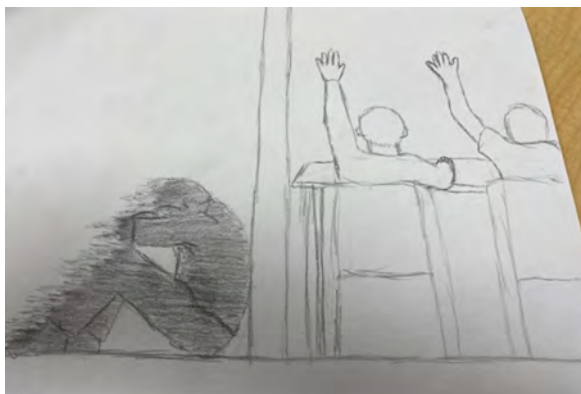
January saw the end of ELP classes for first semester. Students spent the last weeks of the semester presenting their projects to their peers. Projects were designed and started back in September and students have been spending class time each week progressing toward a final product to be submitted for evaluation. Projects ranged from story writing, to coding and robotics, to sewing and art. Students learned a lot about self-directed learning and time management during the ELP class. During the last days of class students completed a self-reflection essay evaluating themselves on their work ethic during the ELP class as well as giving feedback and suggestions on how to improve the ELP class. Congratulations to students on successfully completing their projects and their first semester classes!



JMS ELP Students Participate in Activities to Celebrate Black History Month

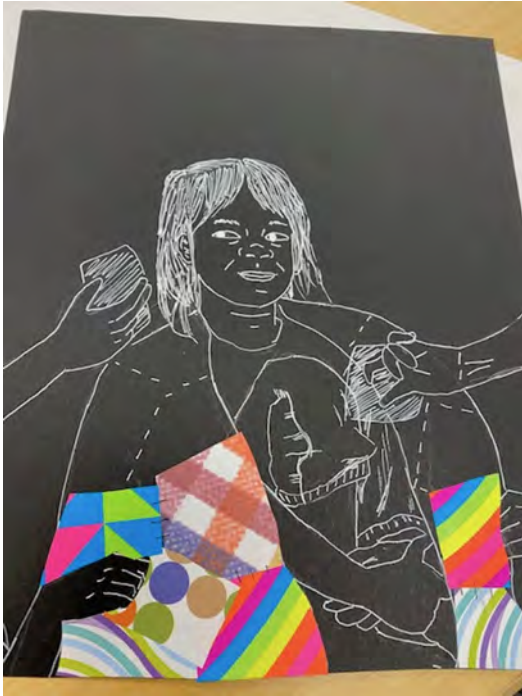
February is Black History Month. It celebrates achievements by African Americans and recognizes their role in U. S. History. It was started in 1926 as a national week of celebration that was sponsored by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Black History Month was officially recognized by President Gerald Ford in 1976.

JMS ELP students spent the month of February learning about the Civil Rights Movement and black artists and poets. They created posters, art, and poetry inspired by the artwork they viewed and the poems they read.

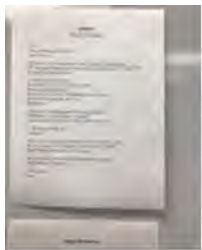


Artwork based on the poem
"We Real Cool" by Gwendolyn Brooks

Johnston Middle School ELP News



Artwork based on the poem "Quilts" by Nikki Giovanni



Artwork based on "Quilts" by Nikki Giovanni



No one watches me while I sway in the wind,
they all stare at the beauty above.
No one notices the faint sounds I make,
they all listen to the rushing stream below.
No one comes to feel my rough surface,
they all go feel the creatures below.
No one notices what I provide,
they just notice the space I take up.
No one notices the shade I provide in summer,
they just notice the leaves I drop in the winter.
No one notices things that aren't obvious and acknowledged.
Just the things that can be plainly seen.

Poem based on "Landscape with Rainbow" by Robert S. Duncanson

An idea starts to form,
you start grasping onto everything you have.
Piece by piece,
you think you start to understand.
Until you step back
and realize nothing came from all those jumbled thoughts.
You realize nothing came out the way you planned.
Some say that's ok
but deep down you feel it's not.
You try to re assess
to do it all again.
But all you can see
is your feeble first attempt.

Poem based on "Untitled" by Jean-Michel Basquiat

Links to the original poems and artwork can be found below:

Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series: <https://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org/the-migration-series>

Robert S. Duncanson: Landscape with Rainbow: <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/landscape-rainbow-7601>

Jean-Michel Basquiat: Untitled: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wJCjwTsuQg5F6Qs2BtpDoyNLHBmoNuE9/view?usp=sharing>

"Quilts" Nikki Giovanni: <https://poets.org/poem/quilts>

"We Real Cool" Gwendolyn Brooks: <https://poets.org/poem/we-real-cool>

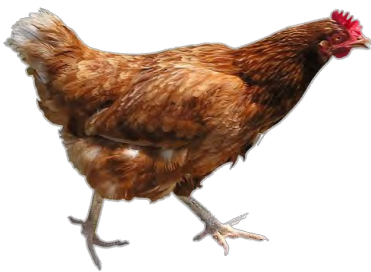
"The Giver" James Baldwin: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/88930/the-giver-for-berdis>

Summit Middle School ELP News

This winter ELP students presented a Digital Showcase of their passion projects with all the teachers in the building, as well as their families and any real-world experts who provided experience and expertise during the process. These were completed following a semester of the research process, and were displayed as Padlet creations in a variety of types: canvases, timelines, wall, and shelf. Students learned to hone and craft their research skills, to look for bias in a source, and how to develop a strong and well-supported thesis statement. Access the Digital Showcase [HERE](#)

During second semester ELP students have broken into content areas. 6th grade STEM students work with Ms. Ites, studying how the electromagnetic spectrum impacts the human experience, fractal geometry, how math and art intersect, and creating an art portfolio based on their own learning in the course. STEM students in 7th grade are investigating how to apply forensic argumentation to science and research. Students have begun research into genetics and have applied probability and statistical analysis to a robbery crime scene with Ms. Ites and her brother as suspects, where students must argue if they could or could not get a warrant for a blood sample based on evidence at the scene. Students will complete a zombie virus simulation, study how viruses help and hinder species populations, analyze the CDC process to prevent and find a treatment for a virus, study blood spatter analysis, and review how criminal forensics is an ever-evolving science.

7th grade STEM students use their knowledge of genetics to argue the question:
Which came first, the chicken or the egg?



Summit Middle School ELP News

Humanities students are working with Ms. Barlow or Ms. Ites as they complete **Greater Good projects** or entries for **National History Day**. Greater Good projects are a passion project the student develops using feedback from a variety of resources and real-world experts that will be to promote or benefit a group outside of our ELP classroom. National History Day projects are being prepared for the Merle Hay Regional Competition and are based on this year's theme of Communication in History: the Key to Understanding. Students will participate in peer feedback reviews throughout March & April, and will showcase their learning and projects May 17, 18, 20, and 21, likely in a digital format.

7th grade Greater Good and NHD students participate in a peer share of their topics and projected project development for the Spring semester.



CONGRATULATIONS to the Johnston Middle School Mock Trial Teams for a successful virtual season!

Results from the State Competition:

Harrison Burkhardt (7th grade) and Henry Zou (7th grade) both received awards for outstanding performances as witnesses.

Team Purple was runner up for the state finals!

Members of the team were:

Gabriella LaRota (8th grade)
Maraya Wiltfang (8th grade)
Kaylee Jones (8th grade)
Harrison Burkhardt (7th grade)
Jeffrey Becker (7th grade)
Lucy Kiekhaefer (7th grade)
Ella Prince (7th grade)
Zoe Zhang (7th grade)
Matthew Zhang (7th grade)

Special thanks to the team's coaches,
who are all seniors at JHS. Their commitment and
dedication to the Johnston mock trial program is
what made this year such a success!

Team coaches are:
Dylan McLaren
Chase McLaren

Rachel Winkler
Rachel Ruisch

Elementary ELP News

There are a variety of things happening at the elementary level across the district. These are just some of the wonderful learning opportunities in which students have been engaged. Ask your child about these activities!

Kindergarten:

- Whole-class lessons in classrooms to help identify gifted and talented behaviors in young children are coming to an end..
- Activities to develop convergent, divergent, visual, and evaluative thinking skills
- Try-A-Tiles and Logic Links

First grade:

- Whole-class lessons in classrooms to help identify gifted and talented behaviors in young children are coming to an end.
- Activities to develop convergent, divergent, visual, and evaluative thinking skills
- Math puzzles and number games, Try-A-Tiles, Logic puzzles and perplexors

Second grade:

- Logic puzzles with coins, Word Puzzles, Deductive reasoning, Perplexors, Insects & Spiders Challenge
- Number puzzles involving addition and subtraction as well as algebraic thinking, Dot-to-Dot Measurement puzzles
- Inquiry-based discussions around text, EstiMysteries and Reading & discussing *Mailing May*

Third grade:

- What's the ME in Measurement All About? Geometry and spatial reasoning, introducing long division, Pascal's Triangle, Mondrian Art Challenge, Designing and building tiny houses while applying area, perimeter, and geometry skills; Real-world multiplication scenarios; MoLi Stone
- Grammar, Advance Language Poetry Unit, word puzzles, *Mysterious Benedict Society* book study, *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library* and a virtual escape from Lawson's Library, Book pairing/unit on Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and *The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs*, Research project around Greek Mythology, Creative writing and Literature circles

Fourth grade:

- Caesar's English – a study of Latin stems and advanced vocabulary
- *Chasing Vermeer*
- Math Olympiads
- Problem-Solving strategies
- Advanced Language Unit- Fiction
- Reading *Blizzard!*, a nonfiction book about the blizzard of 1888
- Reading *The Phantom Tollbooth* with a focus on the use of language
- Various independent projects including: writing children's books (fiction and nonfiction), creating movie trailers of books, writing comics, and spoofing a Hamilton song to give more information about Aaron Burr

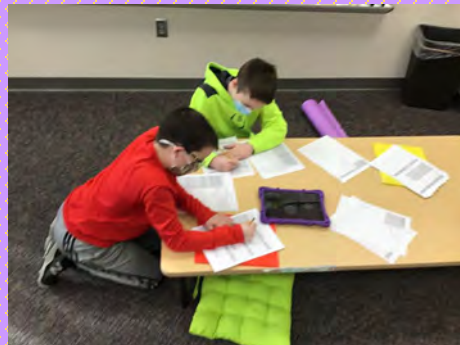
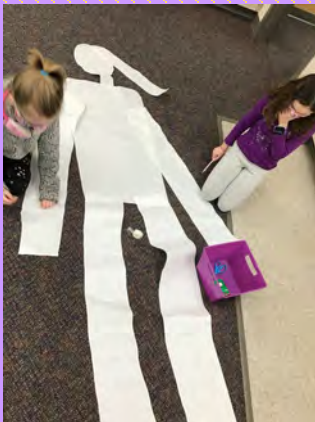
Fifth grade:

- Caesar's English – a study of Latin stems and advanced vocabulary
- Math Olympiads
- Stock Market Game
- Mysterious Circumstances genre study
- Fantasy writing project
- Writing and producing a podcast on books with gifted characters for NPR's Podcast Challenge
- Writing a mystery screenplay
- Designing mazes, cities, and bridges and coding Sphero to go through them.
- All About Business project
- Hawthorn Hill service project
- Reading & discussing *My Side of the Mountain*

Timber Ridge ELP



3rd grade students are in a Measuring Me Unit. In these photos they had to create a Yeti out of a student's body measurements and multiply by 2.



5th graders doing Coding projects



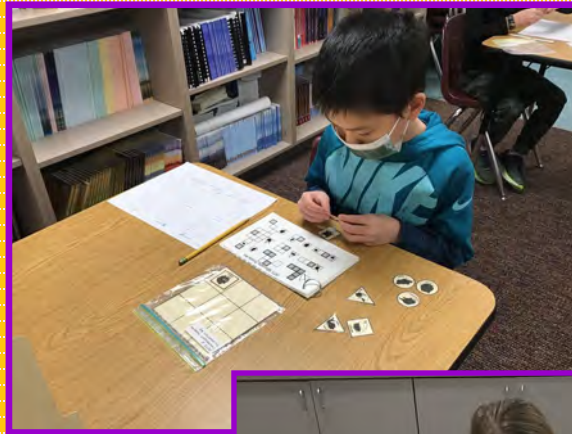
Service project for
Hawthorn Hill Homeless Shelter



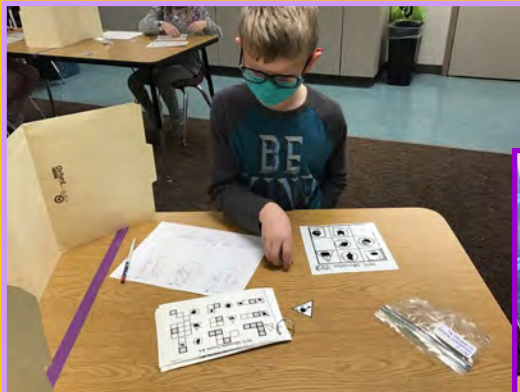
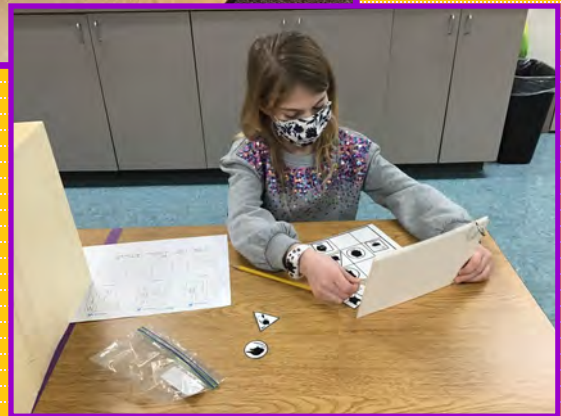
Beaver Creek ELP



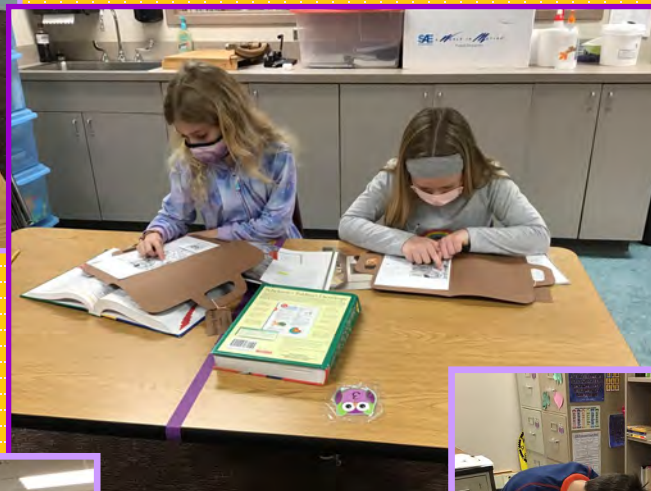
**Finding out what
flabbergasted
means**



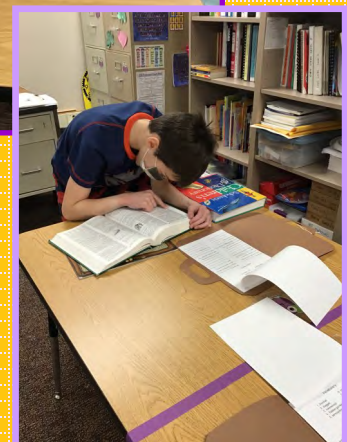
**Solving
puzzles**



**Using convergent thinking
to solve the puzzles**



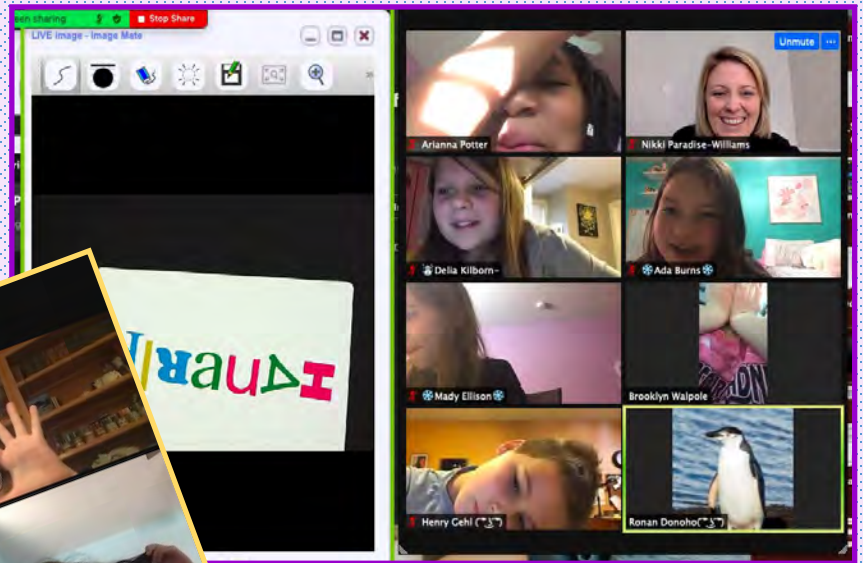
**Learning
Google
slides**



Using the dictionary to look up vocab words

Lawson ELP

Solving
puzzles



Zoom Silliness!



Word games



Recording
a podcast



Buying materials for tiny houses





The Need for Girls in Technology

Technology is impacting every facet of our lives. Our economy, for example, is becoming reliant on tech. Computer science jobs are estimated to grow by 19% by 2026. Financially, the largest publicly traded companies in the world are tech companies - e.g., Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Google and Facebook. Even mundane things like door locks, thermostats and light bulbs are controlled by computer programs. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are impacting our decision making. A simple Google search results in suggestions for what show you watch on Netflix and what to buy on Amazon. Most who are writing these computer programs and influencing the way our world operates, are men. I believe we need more women influencing these designs and decisions.

Why has computer science become such a male-dominated field?

When computer technology first emerged during World War II and continued into the 1960s, women made up a substantial portion of the computing workforce. In 1984, this number was 37% but has since declined to 18%. One potential reason is that personal computers were primarily marketed to young boys and by the time the girls took computer science classes, they were severely disadvantaged.

Tech is more compatible with motherhood than other professions

Many tech companies are at the forefront of progressive workplace policies. These companies support flexible work environments including video conferencing, working from home and flexible hours, allowing employees to work around their personal schedules to complete projects. While the average length of maternity leave in America is 6 weeks, many tech companies provide substantial paid leave policies for new parents. 16 weeks at Facebook, 18 weeks at Apple and 22 weeks at Google. Also of note, the computer science profession has one of the smallest pay gap between male and female professionals.

I am a female computer engineer and I have two kids, in 7th and 10th grade. I can attend their many school events because I am able to schedule my work around them. This is my 9th year working from home because my employer supported me working remotely when we relocated from Chicago to Johnston for my husband's job.

(continued on next page)

Special Feature by Binu Abraham, FJELP Board Member

(Continued from previous page)

How do we get girls interested in tech?

In my work with kids, I have found that by the time the girls come to middle school, many have already formed an opinion that they are not interested, even before they were given a chance to learn. By middle school, they are also already invested in other activities. Here are some things we can do to encourage girls to consider the technology field sooner:

- ♦ Introduce computer science in early elementary. Websites such as *code.org* and *scratch.mit.edu* are suitable for little kids.
- ♦ Introduce computer science as a core curriculum like literacy, math, or science and keep it fun and focused on creativity.
- ♦ Introduce girls to *First Lego League* programs that start in elementary school.
- ♦ Form clubs such as *Girls Who Code* or *SciGirls* in our community.
- ♦ Expose elementary school-aged girls to accomplished women mentors in computer science.

It concerns me to see girls reject a field that is going to dominate and shape our lives. **Let's level the playing field and let our daughters explore this influential field before stereotypes and misconceptions set in.**

If this topic interests you, or you have questions, please reach out to me at babraham999@gmail.com



LAW ★ DAY 2021
ADVANCING THE
RULE OF LAW NOW



The Polk County Bar Association partners with ARAG each year to give Polk County area students a chance to get creative with the law as part of our annual **Law Day** celebration. Students in grades K through 12 are invited to compete in the visual arts, music, essay and poetry categories. Entries due **March 31, 2021**. Click below for the materials for the 2021 competition.

[Information materials for grades K-12](#)

[Information materials for grades 6-12](#)

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Please support your ELP through your Amazon purchases with these easy steps:

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- *Find AmazonSmile Charity Lists*
- *Search for: Friends of Johnston ELP*

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Friends of Johnston ELP

Supporting the needs of high ability students
in the Johnston Community School District

Become **FJELP member and supporter** through a \$20 donation via [Revtrak](#).

These funds are used to provide annual grants to our ELP Teaching Team.

Connect with us!

Attend our
programs and
provide your
feedback!



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