



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

Friends of Johnston ELP

Fall 2022 Newsletter

2022-2023 FJELP Board Members

Mandy Dummermuth

President

JMS

mandy.dummermuth@gmail.com

Betsy Burkhardt

Vice President

SMS, JMS

eburkhardt@cognitivecoop.com

Aihua (Fay) Fei

Treasurer

SMS, JMS

usafay@yahoo.com

Kavitha Kalyanaraman

Assistant Treasurer

JHS

kalyankavitha@gmail.com

Kristin Urness

Database Coordinator

TRE, JMS

kmurness@gmail.com

Carolyn Miner

Communications

SMS, JHS

cminer321@gmail.com

Hena Guo

New Member Liaison

JMS, JHS

hena_guo@hotmail.com

Binu Abraham

Fundraising

JMS, JHS

babraham999@gmail.com

Jenny Lashier

Past President

ajlashier@gmail.com

SMS, JMS

Val Thacker

Beloved Historian

valnmatt@msn.com

JHS

Molly McConnell (non-voting)

ELP Coordinator/FJELP Staff Liaison

molly.mcconnell@johnston.k12.ia.us

...from the desk of

Mandy Dummermuth

FJELP President



On behalf of Friends of Johnston Extended Learning Program, I welcome and invite you to peruse our Fall 2022 newsletter. As you will see, many exciting things are happening throughout our district!

Friends of Johnston ELP advocates for gifted education in our district, and our group is a great source of support for our ELP teachers through the funds we provide for classroom resources. We also strive to offer support for parents through our programming and building connections with each other. Join today and demonstrate your support for our district ELP services by joining Friends of Johnston ELP.

We thank you for your ongoing support and wish you and your students a great rest of the year!

Mandy Dummermuth, FJELP President

2022-2023 ELP Staff

Kristen Hartman	Beaver Creek	515-278-6228 kristen.hartman@johnston.k12.ia.us
Kate Florer	Horizon	515-986-1121 kate.florer@johnston.k12.ia.us
Nikki Paradise-Williams	Lawson & Elementary ELP Coordinator	515-278-0478 nparadise-williams@johnston.k12.ia.us
Kaitlin Koch	Timber Ridge	515-331-4379 kaitlin.koch@johnston.k12.ia.us
Mitzi Hetherton	Wallace	515-278-0476 mhetherton@johnston.k12.ia.us
Colleen Ites	Summit	515-986-0318 colleen.ites@johnston.k12.ia.us
Molly McConnell	JMS & Secondary ELP Coordinator	515-278-0476 molly.mcconnell@johnston.k12.ia.us
Sue Cline	JHS ELP	515-278-0449 scline@johnston.k12.ia.us

General questions for the FJELP board?

Please contact us at admin@friendsofjohnstonelp.org

ELP Teacher Spotlight

Kaitlin Koch

Timber Ridge
ELP Teacher



How long have you been a teacher and how many years at JCSD?

This is my 6th year teaching. I previously taught 4th, 1st and 2nd grades and this is my second year teaching ELP and at JCSD.

Why do you enjoy working with ELP students?

I love working with ELP students because of the way that they think—much of what we do doesn't have a "right" or "wrong" answer and it is so cool that we can look at one problem or ask one question and get many different responses and perspectives. I also love that "lightbulb moment" when students get really excited because they learned something new or did something they thought would be too hard.

What is one of your favorite ELP activities for students?

It's so hard to choose because each grade and group does so many different but awesome things. One of my favorite things last year was the 5th grade Humanities Podcast Challenge. The group wanted to create their own podcast and it ended up involving so many different learning opportunities. They learned about podcast structure and elements, listened to examples, and then created their own podcast. They chose to do a debate on the pros and cons of online and in person learning and had to interview teachers and students, research, and use technology to add recordings and sound effects. It was amazing to see how much hard work went into the 7 minute final podcast!

Share a highlight of your teaching career

During the 2020-2021 school year, I taught 2nd grade and due to the pandemic we were in a hybrid model for about half of the school year. I only had 10 students each day and it was the best teaching experience I've ever had! I really got to know each of my students as people and learners on a deeper level and was able to provide much more individualized instruction and learning experiences. While it definitely was a crazy year with all of the learning model changes (back and forth between in person, online and hybrid) we really made the best of it, and my students learned so much despite all of the external circumstances.

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

High achieving students deserve to have their unique learning needs met--advocate for your kids and help teach them to advocate for themselves! Also, encourage your children to pursue their passions and interests.

Jack H. and Brayden M.

Fall 2022 FJELP Programs and Fundraisers

Friends of Johnston ELP thanks all of the parents and staff that attended the **October 24th program featuring Dr. Krista Brittain, PsyD** who presented on student well-being.

Did you miss this engaging presentation that was full of great tips and book recommendations? Access the slides and recording [HERE](#) on the Friends of Johnston ELP web page.

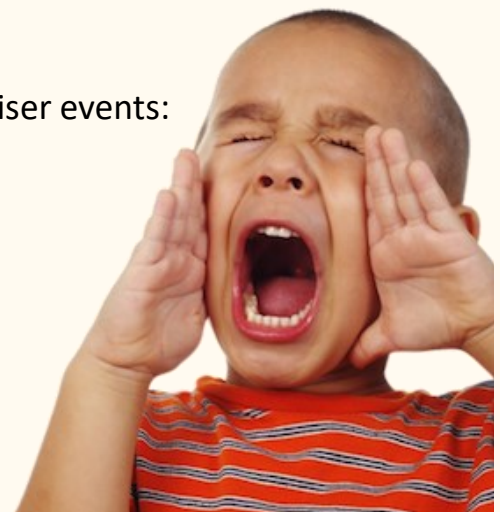


Also at the program FJELP President, Mandy Dummermuth, presented ELP Staff with a \$6000 contribution to the ELP teacher grants account.

Huge **SHOUT OUT** to the following FJELP supporters who volunteered their time at our FJELP Concession Stand fundraiser events:

Emily Beckett	Mandy Dummermuth	Lisa Morlock
Mandy Brown	Nick McCleish	Staci Randall
Michelle Bryngelson	Carolyn Miner	

And, **THANK YOU** to those who made it a priority to purchase dinner from Panera on November 15th. **We earned \$192 from that fundraiser which will support our district ELP programs and resources.**



Jack H. and Brayden M.

January 2023 FJELP Program

Navigating High School and Preparing for College *Join us for a panel of Johnston High School ELP graduates*

January 5, 2023 7:00pm - 8:30pm
Johnston Middle School Media Center

PANEL HOST

Mandy Dummermuth
Friends of Johnston ELP President

PANEL MODERATOR

Sue Cline
Johnston High School ELP Teacher

**COLLEGIATE
PANELISTS**

- **Brooklyn Dilley**, University of Northern Iowa
- **Morgan Dunn**, Colorado State University
- **Emma Erdoes**, Georgetown University
- **Rachel Ruisch**, Cornell College
- **Christopher Tu**, University of California-Davis
- **Brian Zhang**, University of Iowa



ELP Staff Professional Development

JCSD ELP Teachers attended the **National Association for Gifted Children 2022 Annual Convention** in Indianapolis! This was an excellent opportunity for our team to connect with experts and fellow colleagues across the US and other countries on the topic of gifted education.



*Visit the [NAGC site](#) to learn how to advocate for gifted children
Parents can become supporting members of this organization for \$59/year*

High School ELP News

ELP Class

The new school year meant new ELP classes and projects. This year has been focused mainly on students taking care of academic and personal goals. Many seniors are spending this semester working on a myriad of college and scholarship applications, or working to develop skills that will be needed next year as they continue their education, no matter what type of institution the student will be attending. Several students are researching criminal psychology, and working on their presentation skills. Another is learning origami, and then working on creating dynamic and instructional videos to share.

This semester the spotlight is on a student working to attend an Art and Design program. **Abby Arick** is a ceramics specialist, although she works in all media. Below is a photo of the pieces she has completed for ELP class so far this semester. Although they are not fired yet, it is apparent she has great talent!



Alumni Spotlight: Tyler Buller

Tyler Buller, 2006 Johnston ELP alumnus , was recently appointed to the Iowa Court of Appeals. Tyler was a very active member of the JHS family. He was editor of the Black and White newspaper, leader of a State Semi-Finalist Mock Trial team, and pursued a challenging academic career focusing in the Humanities.

Tyler then attended Drake University, graduating in three years with a major in Politics and minors in Psychology and Sociology. He also competed on the college Mock Trial team. His senior year in college, 2008-2009, Tyler served on the Johnston School Board, the youngest member to have ever been elected.

After Drake, Tyler attended Iowa Law School, and graduated in 2012, honored with the Order of the Coif. He also worked on the Law Review, competed in Mock Trial and in Moot Court. Overall, **Tyler competed in Mock Trial for twelve years!** It's no wonder he became a lawyer!

Tyler has been employed by the Office of the Attorney General since his law school graduation, and will be seated on the Appellate Court early in the new year. **FJELP recognizes and congratulates Tyler's accomplishments!**



High School ELP News

Knowledge Bowl



This year's [Knowledge Bowl](#) competition was very successful, as we had three teams compete in the local round. All three would have qualified for the Regional Finals if schools were allowed to enter more than two groups. The following students played in the local rounds:

Team Ampersand

Eshaan Chandani
Catherine Reiher
Ani Soni
Zach Hodson
Sophie Ruddy

Team Interrobang

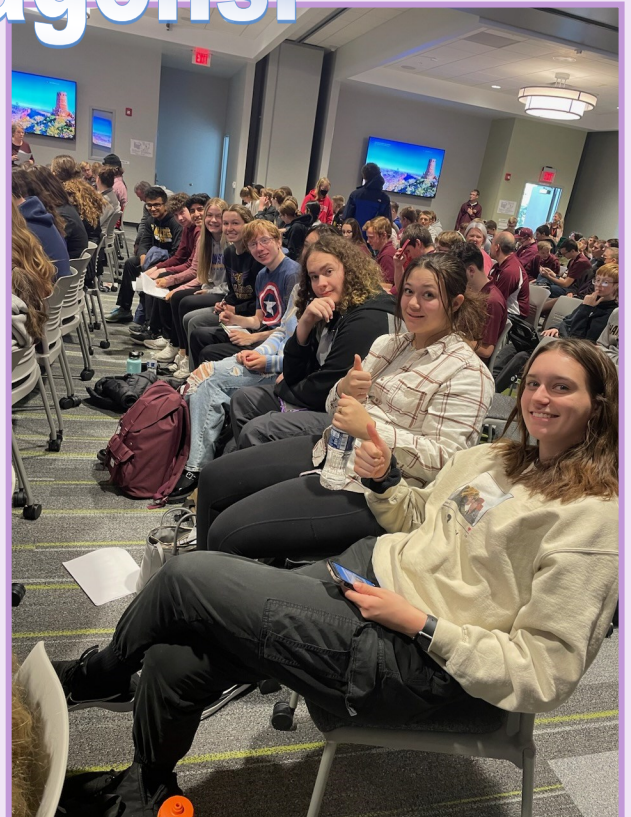
Riona Butler
Aravind Balaji
Peyton Brown
Mikayla Jensen

Team Exclamation

Reagan Zierke
Emma Jackovin
Thor Lehman
Rose Freeman
Riesa Kongshaug

Way to Go Dragons!

Unfortunately, we could only take two groups to DMACC for the buzzer rounds, but they had a great day and performed well. Coach Kyla Burns took everyone to DMACC and kept them happy and healthy while they went through 10 buzzer rounds of competition. Team Ampersand placed 5th overall, which is quite a feat. To the right is a photo of all 10 competitors, strung out in a line, awaiting the beginning of the competition. Those easiest to identify are Riesa on the far right, and then Emma, Thor, and Reagan, but everyone was there!



Mock Trial

It has been an outstanding mock trial season for Johnston 7th and 8th grade students! JCSD Middle School Mock Trial teams had an excellent showing at the Des Moines Regional Competition in November! Team Purple had the highest score at the event, winning an automatic qualification to State. Teams Gold, Dragon, and Firestorm continued on the Play-Off Rounds, with Teams Dragon and Firestorm also qualifying for the State Competition.

This year's mock trial case was a civil case in which the plaintiff, Jesse Jayne, was suing the Fjerberger-herder's restaurant for negligence after they slipped and fell down the restaurant's stairs. Our students did an amazing job in learning the case and creating their parts for competition. **Team Dragon was crowned the STATE CHAMPION, beating out 127 other schools who competed across the state this year! This is the first time in 16 years that a Johnston team has won the state mock trial competition.**

OTHER NOTABLE HONORS

REGIONAL OUTSTANDING ATTORNEYS

Kalida Tchaprazova (7th grade)

REGIONAL OUTSTANDING WITNESSES

Caitlyn Robertson (8th grade)

Abbie Tu (8th grade)

David Shi (8th grade)

Manasvi Dhanekula (8th grade)

STATE OUTSTANDING ATTORNEYS

**student must be nominated in the number 1 position by both judges in a round*

David Shi (8th grade)

Quinnlyn Schulte (8th grade)

Hailey Conard (7th grade)

STATE OUTSTANDING WITNESSES

Abbie Tu (8th grade)

Elizabeth Hilliard (8th grade)

FJELP congratulates all the team members, their student and staff coaches and families who supported them during the months of preparation!

Mock Trial



Regionals—All 4 Teams



State Qualifying Teams



Witnesses Being Sworn In



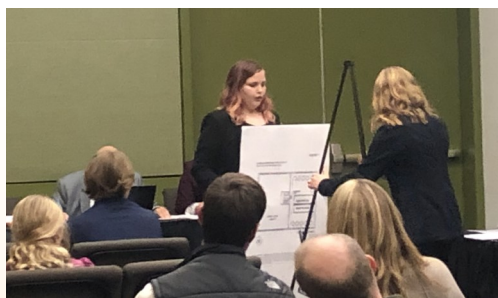
Ms. Ites and Ms. McConnell,
ELP Staff Coaches, with the
State Championship Trophy!



Team Purple



Team Gold



Demonstrative Set-Up



Team Firestorm

#mockon



Team Dragon—State Champions!

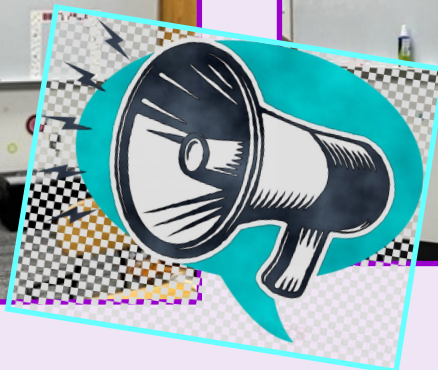


It's tradition for JCSD state final 4 teams to take this
photo on the Iowa Judicial Branch Building floor.

Johnston Middle School ELP

ELP Class

The JMS ELP students are finishing up the final touches to their semester in-depth study projects. This year added some new aspects to the ELP elective course, namely, **Coffee House**. On Wednesdays and Thursdays when class is on a block schedule, students spend the first half of the period discussing their projects with their peers. They share celebrations, frustrations, and offer suggestions and guidance to each other. Students may also use the “**soapbox**” to make announcements, poll the class, or ask questions.



Jack H. and Brayden M.

Summit ELP

Both 6th and 7th graders in **Humanities ELP** have chosen a passion topic and are developing research skills while affecting change for the greater good.

Individuals and student groups have been researching a variety of topics, from how to develop student interest clubs to informational campaigns, to establishing fundraisers for a variety of causes. Students have been working off the framework of our district **Portrait of a Learner**, choosing four standards to fulfill throughout the research process and product.

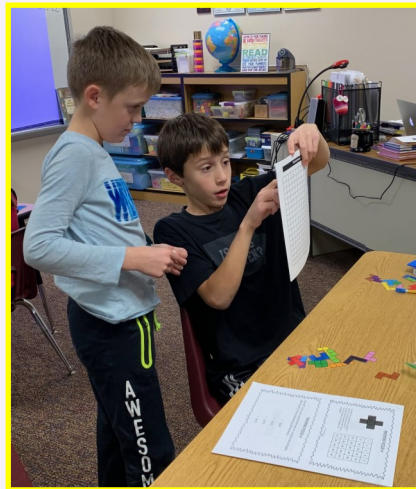
Up through Thanksgiving, students have worked on the research process, learning how to critically analyze factual resources, how to collect content from each resource, how to develop and adapt a thesis, and how to organize all of it using the NoodleTools app. Students also have researched real world experts (RWE's) to contact for assistance in their research process or product.

From Thanksgiving through December 15 students developed a product showing how they grew in their **metacognition and research skills**, as well as how they have adapted their chosen topic to affect change for the greater good. Students present their research products at an **ELP Community Showcase hosted at Summit on December 20, 2022. Some of the topics chosen by students:**



Elementary ELP

Thank you to Mrs. Hartman for sharing these photos of Beaver Creek students using their own set of pentominoes to explore and solve a variety of puzzles.



Families can find more photos of elementary ELP students in action on their Seesaw sites.

Ways to Support Friends of Johnston ELP

Message from Ms. Cline, High School ELP Teacher:

The FJELP parent group has always been a great supporter of the ELP classes, and this year we have really enjoyed the opportunity to work with jigsaw puzzles, purchased by the parents. Since multiple students do their ELP classwork at home, they may use ELP class time as a brief respite from pressure and do some puzzling.

We also have students who drop-in during the day, to puzzle, rest, or study. There are documented mental health benefits of puzzling, as long as the process is not perceived as frustrating or stress producing by the puzzler. The collection contains a wide variety of subjects and complexity, ranging from 100 pieces up to 1000 piece puzzles. To the right, is a photo of our growing ELP puzzle cabinet. We appreciate the support of the parents as students search for strategies to assist them with social and emotional needs.



Make an impact while you shop! Please support FJELP through your Amazon purchases with these easy steps:

- Log into your Amazon account
- Click on your Account & Lists
- Find AmazonSmile Charity Lists
- Search for: Friends of Johnston ELP

Does your employer have a matching donation program?

Consider making your contribution to Friends of Johnston ELP!

You can also support FJELP by becoming a member!

Dues are only \$20 per family, and all dues and donations go directly to our ELP staff to supplement their classroom curricula and professional development.

[CLICK HERE](#) to go to Infinite Campus:

Select Fees —> Optional Payments —> ELP Friends Membership



[FJELP Email](#)



[FJELP Facebook](#)



[FJELP Website](#)