

Friends of Johnston ELP

FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER



...from the desk of
Mandy Dummermuth
FJELP President

On behalf of Friends of Johnston Extended Learning Program, we wish you a Happy New Year, and invite you to enjoy our newsletter featuring ELP highlights from across the district!

A recording of our January 4th program, Navigating High School and Preparing for College: Featuring a Panel of Johnston ELP Graduates, is now available. We also invite you to save the date for our spring program, Speed Spotlighting ELP Opportunities, on Monday, April 15th.

We encourage you to like us on Facebook to stay informed on updates and achievements throughout the year, and we wish you and your students the best in 2024!

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Staff Spotlight- Cheryl Smith JMS ELP



2023-24 2ELP Staff:

Kaitlin Lovell
K-2

Kristen Hartman
3rd

Kate Florer
4th

Mitzi Hetherton
5th

Colleen Ites
Summit

Cheryl Smith
JMS

Sue Cline
JHS

**Nikki Paradise-
Williams**
Instructional Coach/ELP
Specialist

How long have you been a teacher and how many years at JCSD? This is my 18th year teaching--12th year in ELP.

Why do you enjoy working with ELP students? I like to tell my friends that I have the best job in the building. There's something truly special about working with ELP students--I'm honestly amazed by their curiosity, enthusiasm, and depth of thought. I tell students that I'm not really a teacher of gifted students, but rather a cheerleader/motivator/or in some instances, a nag. My job is to encourage, support, and remind them about opportunities they can take advantage of to support their own interests and goals.

What is one of your favorite ELP activities for students? One of my favorite activities is "PowerPoint Party," where students choose a topic they're passionate about and make a powerpoint about it. They research their subject, create an engaging presentation, and lead a discussion with their classmates. This activity fosters self-directed learning, public speaking skills, and a deeper understanding of their chosen topic. It's always fascinating to see the diverse interests and expertise emerge from the students. Some past topics were rollercoasters, Swifties, bromances, and fantasy umpire leagues.

What is one of your favorite books/tv shows/podcast? As a teacher, I'm constantly seeking ways to spark curiosity and empathy in my students. That's why I adore "This American Life." Each week, it tackles a different theme, exploring diverse topics like current events, human relationships, and social issues.

Share a highlight of your teaching career. It's difficult to pick one highlight. What I've found most rewarding over the years is hearing from students after graduation. I love seeing what my students are doing and how they applied what they learned in school. I truly want my students to have joy in their futures, no matter what path they take.

What advice do you give to parents of high achieving students? As a parent and teacher of high achieving students, my advice to parents is to focus on recognizing that all children are unique. This can look like nurturing a child's love of learning and passion for exploration as well as providing the child with opportunities to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them. Most importantly, be a cheerleader and provide support to the whole child. As a parent, I sometimes struggle to remember that it's not just about academic achievement, but more about supporting my (adult) children to become confident and resilient individuals.

FJELP Programs & News

A BIG Thank you to all that attended the ELP fundraiser night at Panera Bread on November 16. FJELP earned over \$200!

Friends of Johnston ELP would like to thank all of the parents and staff that attended the November 6 program featuring Dr. Krista Brittain, PsyD "Embracing, Good Enough, and Managing Shame: Helping Students with Perfectionism." If you missed it you can access the slides and recording [HERE](#) on the FJELP web page.



Friends of Johnston Extended Learning Program (FJELP) Presents:

Navigating High School and Preparing for College
Join us for a panel of Johnston High School ELP graduates
January 4, 2024 7:00-8:30 PM
Johnston Middle School Media Center

Panel Host: Mandy Dammann, Friends of Johnston ELP President
Panel Moderation: Sue Cline, Johnston High School ELP Teacher

THE COLLEGE PANELISTS:

Esha Bolar Yale University	Eshaan Chandani Northwestern University	Brooklyn Dilley University of Northern Iowa	Alison Miner Iowa State University	Thomas Nerevko Cornell College
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For more info, visit FJELP.
SCAN QR CODE

All FJELP programs are free and open to the public.

Thank you to all those that attended our January 4 program "Navigating High School & Preparing For College." Special thanks to our student panel:

Esha Bolar-Yale
Eshaan Chandani-Northwestern
Brooklyn Dilley- UNI
Alison Miner-ISU

Because of your continued support to FJELP we were able to present this check to the ELP staff in November.



K-5 Elementary ELP

Beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, the Elementary ELP team revamped their service model to adjust to staffing needs and in hopes of increasing student contact time at grades 3-5.

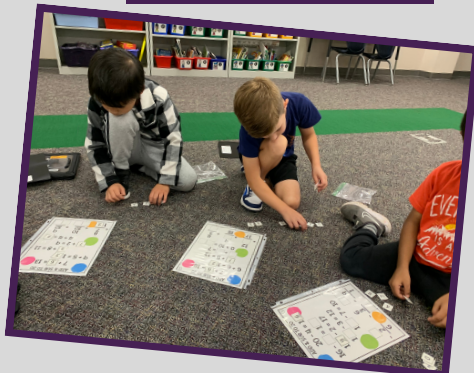
Each teacher is in a building one day per cycle to serve students.

K-2nd Collaboration Model
Kaitlin Lovell

Pull-out sessions for STEM and Humanities, flexible groupings based on needs and collaboration with classroom teachers.

3rd-5th Full-Day Service Model
1/2 day Humanities
1/2 day STEM

30-minute Sigma session (gifted-specific social-emotional topics) and common planning time with classroom teachers.



1st Grade:

Humanities students started off the year learning about similes and symbols from the book My Dog is as Smelly as Dirty Socks by Hanoch Piven. They brainstormed different similes to describe themselves, various family members, pets, friends, etc. In December, we started learning about inventors. We read about a variety of famous inventors and then each student selected an inventor they wanted to learn more about. They are using a variety of websites, books and videos to learn important information about their inventor. When we come back from winter break they will continue compiling that information into a book and then share their books with their group to teach others about their inventor's life and their contributions to our world.

STEM students have spent the past few months exploring addition and subtraction. They have engaged in a wide variety of math puzzles and challenges that require them to apply the addition and subtraction strategies in new or different ways, as well as utilize problem solving and critical thinking skills.

2nd Grade:

Humanities students spent the first few weeks learning about 11 different thinking tools we will be using throughout the year. In November we started our "A Deep and Complex Look at Milton Hershey" unit. We read Who Was Milton Hershey? and used many of the thinking tools to take notes during reading, have discussions after each chapter, and then write about his life and his important legacy (which many were surprised to learn goes beyond just chocolate!).

STEM students have learned many different addition and subtraction strategies that require flexible thinking and worked to apply those strategies when using larger numbers and in more complex situations that require them to often work backwards or incorporate problem solving.

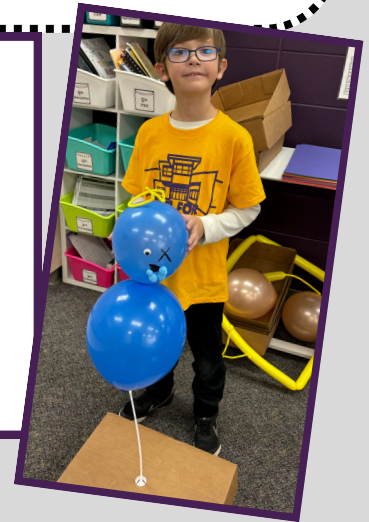
3rd Grade

Humanities: 3rd graders wrapped up their mystery unit with a Breakout box. A Breakout box is similar to an escape room. Students had to work together to find and solve clues that helped them figure out the combination of various locks. The clues students had to solve were connected to the books we read, The Book Scavenger or Escape From Mr. Lemoncello's Library. A big thank you to Mr. Kennelly, one of our technology coaches, for designing a fun culminating activity for our unit!

STEM: Students learned about the Macy's parade and how the big balloons are constructed. They then used the Engineering Design Process to design a prototype of a balloon character they'd like to see in the parade. Finally, students used green screen technology to make their balloons appear in the parade. 3rd graders have worked on two chapters from Beast Academy. The first chapter focused on skip-counting and patterns which will help students transition to multiplication. This chapter also laid the foundation for the commutative property of multiplication ($5 \times 3 = 3 \times 5$). Our second chapter focused on Perimeter & Area which reinforces and extends concepts introduced in the regular classroom.



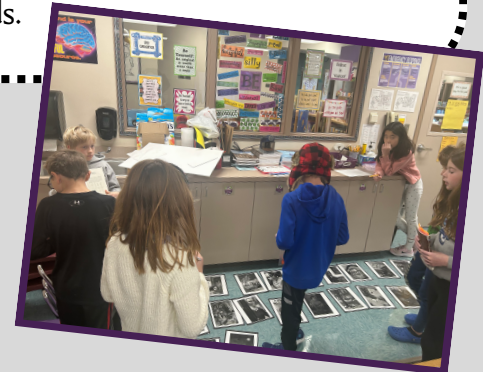
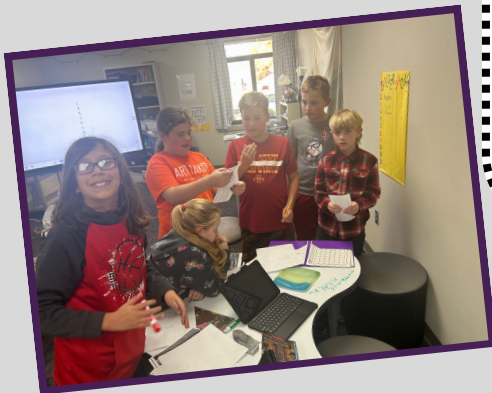
Lawson students broke out!

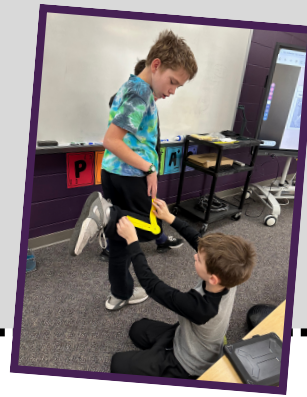


4th grade:

Humanities: Students have been working on Caesar's English, figurative language, grammar and novel studies. All schools are with different books and different places.

STEM: Students have been learning about the stock market and they apply that in a stock market game. They are also involved in Math Olympiads.



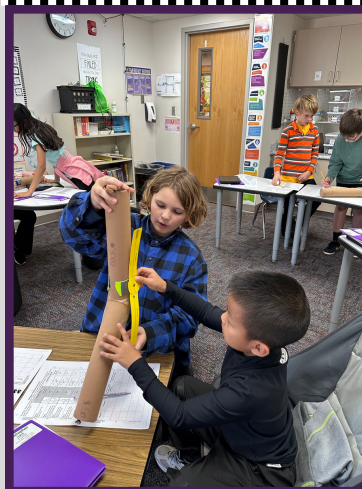


5th grade

Humanities- The first trimester of this year, we used the “Who Am I” anthology to kickstart both reading and SIGMA (socio-emotional learning). The culmination project was to create a Pecha Kucha- 10 slides, 10 seconds each, demonstrating who they are. It was the first time many used iMovie to create a project, and for some, it was their chance to be “resident experts” helping others. Each school voted on the genres they wanted to study for the rest of the school year. Some chose Mystery, some Survival, some Fantasy, some Humor, and some Science Fiction. We are wrapping up our second big unit and look forward to our next unit of study in January!

STEM- The 5th graders explored some engineering topics this fall. Most schools participated in the engineering design process for a biomedical engineering unit. We were lucky to have Dr. Chris Kim, a TR parent who is an orthopedic surgeon, come talk to students. He brought his knee brace representative who showed TR students how a knee brace functions, and let students experience an ice compression sleeve. Students from BC, Horizon and Lawson got to see the recording of Dr. Kim’s presentation. Wallace, who did the knee brace unit last year, dove into a study on environmental engineering. They pH tested soil samples and located the problem areas of a neighborhood based on the map of where soil samples were discrepant. Students also had to ask, imagine, and create a means to contain and clean up an oil spill. They looked at the cost of their clean-up method and evaluated the effectiveness of their plan, concluding by seeking ways to improve it. Students are two tests in for Math Olympiad. Three more to go! We have completed two units in Beast Academy so far- integers and factors & multiples. We are heading into fractions and decimals next to complement what is being learned in the regular classroom.

SIGMA- December concludes our deep dive into “who am I”? Students have had a lot of fun figuring out their “love language,” their creativity type, and their personality type. Next we will be looking at specific ILP areas they want to focus on- perfectionism, anxiety, organization, self advocacy...



Summit ELP News



ELP Humanities students in sixth and seventh grade have worked to develop their reading, writing, and presentation skills surrounding one of two (sixth grade) or three (seventh grade) project choices: researching a topic and developing a strong argument that would affect change for the greater good (Greater Good), developing their writer's craft by creating a story of their own choosing (Writer's Workshop), or further developing strong research, writing, and presentation skills through legal education (competitive Mock Trial for 7th grade). On January 5, 2024, all ELP Humanities students will be presenting their research and writing journey in the Summit LMC, Room 142, and the lower community frontage areas at our ELP Community Showcase. All members of the greater Johnston community are welcome to attend.

Greater Good students have crafted their skills with research utilizing Boolean operators, CRAAP tests (Cal State - Chico) and peer critiques regarding source reliability & veracity, NoodleTools for organization and integration of sources, GoogleCalendar to reinforce time management skills, GoogleDocs of sample business letters to real world experts (RWEs) and inviting members of the greater community, and a variety of apps and web-based sources for creation of their final presentations.

Writer's Workshop students have worked to improve their writer's craft through the creation of their own story. Students have been able to utilize creative writing and editing resources, as well as peer reviews, to craft their stories over the course of the semester. Several students and student groups are developing unique ways to present their stories utilizing technology, while others are option to go 'old school' and stick with paper copies. Students have created ways to provide an aesthetic or mood to their stories that are shared in their presentations along with book blurbs and their writer's thesis. Writer's Workshop works will be presented in an book tasting format with a twist: each author will present their thesis and blurb as a way to encourage attendees to 'taste' more of their story. For seventh graders who were a part of our competitive Mock Trial teams, they will be presenting different aspects of their Mock Trial journey in the community areas near the rotunda. Each seventh grade period will have at least one group presenting a sample mock trial of this year's case, while other groups are sharing their competitive Mock Trial journey through GoogleSlides, Canva presentations, and posterboards.

JMS ELP News

Knowledge Bowl

In October, 14 9th graders accepted the challenge to compete at the Iowa High School Knowledge Bowl. KB is a team-based academic competition where students compete to answer questions on a variety of topics, including history, science, literature, and current events and use buzzers just like on Jeopardy!

In order to compete in the Knowledge Bowl Competition, students formed a team of 4-6 students and took an online qualifying test consisting of 200 questions, taken online in the LMC as a team. After the initial test, two of our teams qualified for the finals at DMACC in Division II (9th grade and small schools). The teams placed 5th and 6th overall, separated by only one point.



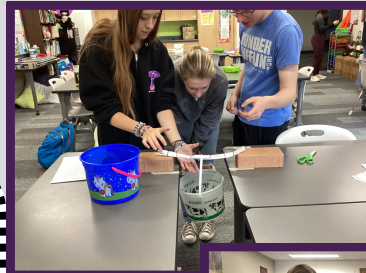
Back row: David Shi, Will Duster, Sophie Amspaugh, Ethan MacFarland, Syon Aggarwal
Front row: Kovidh Talluri, Niko Meshesha, Abe Prince, Zedric McCorkel, Derek Brown

JHS ELP News

High School ELP is having an exciting fall! ELP class is moving right along, and projects will be turned in for evaluation when we return from Winter Break. Everyone is compiling their semester of work, writing reflections, and gathering feedback from experts, as they fulfil their rubrics and earn their semester grade.

Projects this semester included favorite topics like National History Day work, creative writing, and college applications/essays. We also have some more unusual topics like board game and computer game creation, multiple projects researching psychology topics, and a student designing and constructing jewelry. It's been a good year so far.

Cline Choice activities have happened once a month. Our most recent involved an adapted bridge-building task, using straws, toothpicks, name labels and playdoh. Teams achieved varying levels of success with their structure, but fun was had by all.



We also have the opportunity in ELP class to periodically host a therapy dog. Ryker came to visit us in September. He's newly certified, and loves teenagers, so his owner has him visit my classes for "practice". The photo show how much joy Ryker brings to the room.

Knowledge Bowl competition results

October always features Knowledge Bowl competition. The first round is played in groups around a computer, and we had five different groups participate this year. The first round is a low-stress, collaborative quiz bowl. Then, the top teams in the region are invited to the Regional Finals at DMACC - which is a much more fast-paced, buzzer-driven Jeopardy-style Quiz Bowl.

We were lucky enough to have two high school teams and two middle school teams involved to the Finals, and we had a wonderful day. Team Dandelion, consisting of Peyton B., Reagan Z., Sophie W., Zak H. and Syd D. placed 4th, exactly where they wanted to land. This is the best possible finish since it meant they did not have to play a final round in front of the entire crowd - that felt like a lot of pressure!

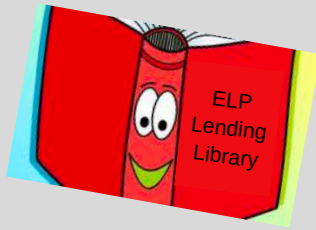
Our other team did very well, also, finishing in the top half of the pool. Team Bindweed included: Sydney M. James F., Jax S., Eduardo M., and Lauren T.



Resources



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



The ELP staff have a treasure trove of resource material on teaching and parenting gifted children. If you are interested in a specific topic, please reach out to any ELP staff. If they do not have a relevant title to lend, they likely have a title to recommend.

Examples: "When Gifted Kids Don't Have All The Answers", "Letting Go of Perfect", and "Raising Your Spirited Child."



West Des Moines Campus: Youth Tech Camps

Click [HERE](#) to see available programs.

IOWA

Scanlan Center for School Mental Health *We're on a mission to support school mental health*

Join us in reimagining a future where student, educator, and staff mental health is top of mind within schools and campus communities.

Subscribe to our newsletter <https://bit.ly/SCSMHNNewsletter>

Last but not least

We are looking to identify new FJELP board members since we have a few transitioning out of their volunteer roles. Huge Thank You to Fay and Binu and to all serving!

- Treasurer (replacing Fay Fei in Jan 2024)
- Fundraising (replacing Binu Abrahams for 2024/2025)
- Vice President (replacing Betsy Burkhardt for 2024/2025; Betsy will transition to President, and Mandy Dummermuth will serve as Past President)



SAVE THE DATE

FJELP Presents:
A Speed Spotighting
Program
April 15

FOR MORE INFO ON FJELP



SCAN ME