



# MUSTANG MONTHLY™

VOLUME 23  
ISSUE 6  
February 2026

Empowering Students to Take Charge of Their Future.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Last week, while standing in line at the grocery store, I was asked a question for approximately the 1,653rd time this year. . . . Is the weather going to cancel school tomorrow? It was a fair question, because it was -5 outside!

I do think it's a great time to provide some additional information on the process we follow at DCG when it comes to weather-related decisions. As a reminder, this isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Without question, student and staff safety is the top priority.



**Snow/Wind/Ice Decisions** - I work closely with Jeff Wolfe in our Transportation Department and Travis Donahue and Sean Shatava from our Operations Department. Can our buses navigate our roads safely? Are the driveways, sidewalks and entryways shoveled and ready for students? Their input is essential in making the best decision.

**Cold Temperature Decisions** - We use the National Weather Service readings to inform our decisions. A wind chill of -30 has been established as our "standard" when it comes to delaying or canceling because of cold. But that isn't the only factor. Are the buses starting up? Are they warm? Are DCG buildings heated and ready for students? These are all essential questions to ask when making these decisions.

The timing of these decisions is also important. You've noticed in the last 4-5 years that a lot of districts are deciding the night before. (I remember watching TV in the morning and looking for my school district on the ticker at the bottom of the screen). If we have the information we need the night before, we make a decision then and get the information out to our stakeholders to help with their planning. We've received feedback that our parents appreciate the early heads up, even if the weather patterns shift overnight.

Of course, all of our alerts to staff, students and parents come out through ParentSquare. Here's to hoping we've called our last no-school day of the year, and we can continue with our schedule as normal! Thanks for making DCG a great place! - *Superintendent Blum*

## CALENDAR AT-A-GLANCE

February 4, 11, 18, 25 - Early Dismissal

Friday, February 27 - No School for Grades PK-6, School In-Session for Grades 7-12

March 16-20 - Spring Break

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Home of the Mustangs



[www.dcgschools.com](http://www.dcgschools.com)

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## DISTRICT UPDATES

**District Wide Registration** for the 2026-2027 school year opened on February 1. Registration can be completed on a home computer or cell phone. A kiosk is available at the DCG Administration Building located at 2405 W. 1st Street, Grimes.

**Families With Students Currently Enrolled at DCG:**

Use your Campus Portal Account to access Online Registration. You will be able to add a student to your account if you have a child that will be entering the district for the first time (preschool, kindergarten, or another grade level.)

**Families With Students New to the DCG District:**

Follow the steps listed on the district website: [www.dcschools.com](http://www.dcschools.com), "School Registration" tab or quick link.

- If your child will be 5 on or before September 15, 2026 register for kindergarten. - If your child will be 4 on or before September 15, 2026, register for 4-year-old preschool. - If your child will be 3 on or before September 15, 2026, register for 3-year-old preschool.

**Transitional Kindergarten Information:** Transitional Kindergarten will be shifting to a full-day schedule in 2026-27. Families interested in Transitional Kindergarten should select "Kindergarten" during enrollment, and then click yes on the interest tab. You will then receive communication from DCG educators on the next steps.

**Preschool Information:**

**4-year-old program:** Registrations are accepted on a first come first serve basis until all spots are filled. When the program is full, your child will be placed on a waiting list.

**3-year-old program:** To be eligible for a random selection to fill a preschool spot, register between Feb 1st and Feb 15th. If you register after Feb 15th, your child will be automatically placed on a waiting list.



**Lunchroom Reminders** - School lunch menus are available 24/7 online! Use the QR code (top right) to see the most up to date menus in all seven DCG cafeterias. Food availability may create menu updates, so check back often! We are having a great year in the lunchroom!

**Non-Discrimination Statement** - It is the policy of the Dallas Center-Grimes Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. In addition, the Dallas Center-Grimes Community School District is required by Title IX and its implementing regulations not to discriminate on the basis of sex and this requirement extends to admission and employment. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy contact Dr. Greg Carezza, Associate Superintendent of School Improvement, 2405 W. 1st Street, Grimes, IA 50111, Telephone: (515) 992-3866, Email: [greg.carenza@dcschools.com](mailto:greg.carenza@dcschools.com) Director of the Office for Civil Rights, Denver Office, U.S. Department of Education, Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Building, 1244 Speer Boulevard, Suite 310, Denver, CO 80204-3582. Telephone: (303) 844-5695, Facsimile: (303) 844-4303, TDD:(800) 877- 8339. Email: [OCR.Denver@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Denver@ed.gov)

# DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS



**Chamber Awards** - A special shout out to April Heitland and Kim Praska! April Heitland, Principal at North Elementary was name 2025 Educator of the Year. Kim Praska received the 2025 Grimes Citizen of the Year award. The Grimes Chamber & Economic Development

facilitate these annual awards! Heitland's service to DCG has been instrumental to our growth as a district! She's been the principal at North Ridge since 2012. We are also excited to celebrate with Kim Praska, a devoted volunteer in our district.

**DCG Duo Heads to Normandy** - DCG High School Social Studies Teacher Katy Forsythe and student Sharla Benning were selected for the Albert H. Small Normandy Institute, an intensive study of the Normandy Campaign of 1944.

Forsythe and Benning are one of only 15 student-teacher teams chosen from across the country. The group will meet bi-weekly with the other recipients to discuss project readings and lecture topics.



"I'm thrilled to deepen my understanding of one of the major turning points in WWII and to honor a local soldier by telling their story," shares Forsythe. "I'm very grateful that I get to share the power of place-based learning with one of our fantastic DCG students!"

After five months of in-depth study, the team will travel to Washington DC to expand their research work at George Washington University. Institute members will hear from experts in their field about topics like the American home front, antisemitism, the experience of African American soldiers and civilians during the war, the process of memorialization, and much more.

"I'm so excited to look into Normandy with deeper sources than what I can find online, as well as share my thoughts with people who are just as interested as I am," says Benning.

If your family has a connection to a soldier buried in the Normandy American Cemetery, our team would love to connect with you. Reach out to Katy at [katy.forsythe@dcschools.com](mailto:katy.forsythe@dcschools.com) to begin the conversation!



**Flag Essay Contest** - The Grimes and Dallas Center American Legions of Iowa sponsors a flag essay contest each year for our fifth grade class. The purpose of this contest is to help elementary students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the American flag. This contest helps students learn flag etiquette, respect, and citizenship.

Participants in the Grimes American Legion flag essay contest include Violet Curry, Oliver Palmer, Angus Gao and Tilly Lewis (top photo).

Participants in the Dallas Center American Legion Post 49's flag essay contest include Claire Overton, Cora Temple, Claire Heston, and Jonathan Fessehaye (bottom photo). Congratulations to Claire Heston and Tilly Lewis for winning the essay writing contest! Heston's essay received 1st place honors in the district contest!



## CELEBRATING LEADERS

### Education Foundation

**Update** - The Dallas Center-Grimes Education Foundation will be hosting a senior scholarship informational event near the end of February. This is a great opportunity for seniors to learn more about the DCGEF scholarship application process and get their questions answered ahead of the application opening date of March 1. Be on the lookout for an official date announcement.

**DCG eBackpack** - Looking for ways to get involved? The DCG eBackpack is a great community resource. Look for the link to DCG's Ebackpack on the homepage of DCG-schools.com.

### School Board Schedule

The next DCG School Board Meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 23 at 5:30. The meeting will be held in the DCG Administration Office. Agenda and livestream information will be available at DCGSchools.com

**Spring Break** - Grab your calendars! Spring Break is almost here. 2026 Spring Break at DCG is scheduled from March 16-20.



*Williamson and Cale Announce Retirement - Dallas Center-Grimes CSD is announcing the retirement of two dedicated educators. Diann Williamson and Deb Cale will be stepping down from their positions at DCG at the end of the 2025-26 school year. Williamson is the principal at Heritage Elementary. Cale is the principal at Dallas Center Elementary and the DCG Preschool Director. Cale started at DCG in 2017 as the Dallas Center Elementary Principal. Cale has been the DCG Preschool Director*

*since 2022.*

*"Dallas Center-Grimes was the perfect bookend to my career in public education," shares Cale. "The memories made. The lessons learned. The friendships created. I walk away from this district overflowing with joy and gratitude.*

*Williamson, the current principal at Heritage Elementary, started her educational career in 1991 as an elementary teacher in Houston, Texas. She's been with DCG for 13 years, serving as the Heritage Elementary Principal since 2017.*

*"DCG will always hold a special place in my heart," says Williamson. "There are so many incredible memories that I will take with me forever."*

*Williamson is the first and only principal in Heritage Elementary's history. She helped open the school in 2017.*

*Dallas Center-Grimes will share information in the coming weeks regarding these leadership transitions. Please join us in celebrating two incredible educators, Deb Cale and Diann Williamson! We are excited to continue the 2025-26 school year with them.*



## FROM THE BUILDING



**Maps of DCG** - First grade Gifted and Talented students at North Ridge Elementary are showcasing their map learning with a hallway display. Students were tasked with designing a map that features turn by turn directions to and from every building at DCG! With all due respect to

Google Maps, this is the best form of navigation! We are loving the creativity and passion shown by our students in this project!

# DISTRICT UPDATES

**National CTE Month** - February is National **CTE** (Career and Technical Education) Month. It's a chance for our district to showcase our career-connected learning strategies, while also giving our stakeholders a preview of what's coming next.

First, a little background on CTE. CTE prepares the workforce across a wide range of industries and occupations - construction, healthcare, public service, supply chain and hospitality, just to name a few. It's our goal to give our students a chance to learn the necessary skills to gain a deeper understanding of these potential careers. 8.6 million high school students participate in CTE. We are excited to be part of this growing trend.

The area of CTE lends itself to DCG High School. There's an obvious connection between career learning and students in 9-12. At DCG CSD, it's more than that. We want our students to start creating their dreams from their very first year in our district. Maybe that's the fire department coming to preschool, or visits to Junior Achievement's BizTown in middle school. Discovering and planning pathways to success is a vital part of this process.

CTE gains an added layer of emphasis as students reach Oak View in 7th & 8th grade and then on to DCG High School in grades 9-12. At Oak View students engage in learning through Family and Consumer Sciences, Computer Science and Tech and Future Ready classes. During high school, there's a wide range of pathway specific courses available to all 9-12 students.

Our district's plan added another layer with the hiring of Collin Lane as the CTE Teacher Leader. Collin joined the DCG team at the start of the 2025-26 school year and hit the ground running! From building connections to community partners to showcasing options for our students, this role is opening doors for our students. Collin works closely with our counselors, teachers and students, identifying ways we can prepare all CTE students for their next steps, helping to identify and create pathways for students to pursue real world experiences and earn industry recognized credentials in high school.

Passing the bond referendum in November of 2025 will also add opportunities for our students in CTE. From new course offerings to state-of-the-art technology, our CTE program has a bright future.

8.6 million high school students participate in CTE nationally, including hundreds right here at DCG. We join together to celebrate CTE Month throughout the month of February and we are eager to create new opportunities for our very own students every single day.

**Angel Account** - Looking for a way to help a neighbor in need? Consider giving to the DCG Angel Account. This fund helps students who do not qualify for free or reduced meals, but still have a need for our support. There is an Angel Account donation link in the School Store at DCGschools.com.

**Parkhill Honored** - DCG GT Teacher Kerri Parkhill received a shout out from Life 107.1! A parent submitted the recognition through an online form! Way to go, Kerri! The QR code below takes you to the radio station's website!



**Celebrating Team DCG** - Here's a quick shout out to several key members of Team DCG. February 2-6 is National School Counselor Week! We have 12 incredible counselors at DCG! February 15 is National School Resource Officer Appreciation Day! Thank you to Deputy Alan Loutzenhiser and Deputy Ben Spracklin for their continued support of our district!

# ACTIVITIES



## DCG Vocal Music Success

- DCG Vocal Music traveled to Onalaska to compete in the Onalaska Classic Concert Choir Contest. Both groups performed strong and brought home the following results:

- Treble Division Grand Champion: DCG Bella Voce
- Best Soprano Section: DCG Singers
- Best Alto Section: DCG Bella Voce
- Best Bass Section: DCG Singers
- 3rd Place: DCG Bella Voce
- Grand Champion: DCG Singers

Congratulations to the DCG Vocal Music Department on an incredible performance! Make time to check out their talent this winter!



**James Named Coach of the Year** - Congratulations to DCG Girls Soccer Coach, Dan James, for receiving the 2024-2025 Section 4 Girls Soccer Coach of the Year Award from the NFHS Coaches Association! This award is presented to the most elite and deserving coaches, and is chosen by their ability to lead their sport, shape their athletes, and contribute to their community. Coach James has been doing this at DCG for more than 25 years.

"I'm extremely thankful to receive this award, and I'm excited for our program to be recognized. This award is a credit to the coaches and players I'm surrounded with every day; their hard work and dedication are what continuously push me to be the best coach I can be," Coach James says. "The support of the DCG community has been a huge factor in our success over the years."

DCG is incredibly fortunate to have a coach like Dan James as a part of the athletic program. James has led the Mustangs to four consecutive state championships and will be in search of #5 this spring. He has more than 300 career wins and has appeared in the state tournament 16 times.

He is beloved by his students, peers, and players for being a friendly face to all. Kenna Knief, a senior at DCG and a soccer player on his team, says, "Coach James is a great coach and has done a lot for the girls' soccer team and program. He cares a lot about us and has put in a ton of time and effort into making us succeed. He pushes us to be our best and has grown my love for soccer, which is why I'm very grateful to have him as a coach."

"Coach James brings the best out of his athletes, both on the field and in the classroom," shares DCG CSD Activities Director Madison Melchert. "He is worthy of this recognition, and we are so excited to celebrate his accomplishments this season."



**Stratton Wins Award** - Congratulations to DCG Boys Wrestling Coach Cory Stratton on being named the Class 3A Central District Coach of the Year! Stratton qualifies for the statewide recognition later in the year. As of January 26, DCG is ranked #4 in Class 3A and qualified for the Class 3A Regional Dual Tournament in early February.

# ACTIVITIES



**Sportsmanship Profile in the Little Hawkeye Conference** - Thank you to our friends at Oskaloosa for hosting the 2026 Little Hawkeye Conference Student Section Training. These student leaders play a crucial role in demonstrating sportsmanship at school events. This group set a standard of respect that will be driven by our students. DCG sent a group of students representing different grades and activities who play a key role in participating and supporting our entire activities department.



**2026 Cake Auction** - The DCG Booster Club held their annual Cake Auction at a basketball game in January. As usual, the cakes were incredible! The support from our community was even better. The 2026 DCG Cake Auction raised \$11,555! All of this money will impact the student athletes at Dallas



Center-Grimes! Thanks to the Booster Club and everyone who bought a cake this year!

## 2026-27 SCHOOL CALENDAR

**DCG CSD's 2026-27 School Calendar is official!** Here are some important dates for our community!

**August 17-21** - Staff Professional Development

**Monday, August 24** - The first day of school at DCG (TK-12).

**Monday, August 31** - The first day of preschool at DCG.

**December 21-January 1** - Winter Break

**March 15-19** - Spring Break

**Friday, May 21** - Graduation Day \* Note\* Due to the way the calendar falls, DCG Graduation Day is a week ahead of Memorial Day this year.

**Friday, May 28** - Last Day of School for students

**Tuesday, June 2** - Last Day for DCG Teachers

**New in 2026-27** - DCG CSD Transitional Kindergarten will be shifting to a full-day schedule. The class will be taught by Gena Pierce at North Ridge Elementary. We've seen a shift in the Transitional Kindergarten approach across the state, and it's important to meet the needs of our students and families, who will be a great fit in this program.

The 2026-27 DCG CSD School Calendar is available at [DCGschoools.com](https://DCGschoools.com). It's also viewable by using the QR code (right). Don't forget, enrollment is now open!!



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## POSTAL CUSTOMER



[www.dcgschools.com](http://www.dcgschools.com)



**Art Spotlight** - Ceramics I students made unique and beautiful pieces this term while exploring various handbuilding techniques. The floral slab vase was created by Adaline DeDoncker (middle), the hollow sphere figure by Riley Tucker (right), and the carved slab container by Nessibeli Savet (left). Our art students continually impress us with their creativity and skills!

