



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues,

Happy fall, y'all. It has been another great week of learning and fun in D51. I am humbled that I get to be a part of the many exciting experiences that our students take part in each week, and I enjoy getting to share some of the best parts of the week with y'all through this update. Shoutout to Thunder Mountain Elementary for holding their Pinwheels for Peace assembly this week. I was honored to get to be a part of the celebration and share why peace is important to me in the work I do. I loved hearing the students share why peace is important to them, and I left the assembly encouraged about the future and the peaceful impact our students will have on it. Shoutout to Principal Frazier and her team for putting on such an important event.

National Merit Finalists

District 51 has five National Merit Semifinalists for the National Merit Scholarship Program. These high school seniors will have the opportunity to be among the 15,000 finalists which will then be narrowed down to 7,250 National Merit Scholars with scholarships worth a total of nearly \$28 million. As juniors, these D51 students entered the program by taking the 2021 Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The nationwide pool of semifinalists includes the highest-scoring entrants from each state, representing less than 1% of high school seniors.

Congratulations to Cailan McKim (GJHS), Autumn Lloyd (FMHS), Emma Aubert (PHS), Hudson Seeman (PHS) and Maya Znamacek (PHS). Your hard work and dedication to your studies shows, and we are proud to have y'all as part of the D51 Family.

Grand Junction High School Workforce Day

Thanks to the efforts of the staff at Grand Junction High School, spearheaded by two GJHS teachers in particular (Jen Campbell-Wilson and Brenda Pomeroy), the first ever Workforce Development Day at GJHS launched on Tuesday. The purpose of Workforce Development Day was for students to explore how their interests and abilities align with postsecondary education and career options.

In the morning the students developed ICAP's (Individual Career and Academic Plan), and listened to Keynote speaker Brooks Harper who helped them discover, develop, market and sell their talents, skills and abilities in order to bring tangible value to the marketplace. There was the opportunity for students to tour CMU, attend the College Day/Night fair at PHS, or hear from a military panel. Juniors and Seniors also heard from experts on employability skills from the Mesa County Workforce Center and Western Colorado Human Resource Association.

In the afternoon local businesses provided an opportunity for the GJHS students to explore career pathways, network, and practice interviewing with employers currently hiring. Freshmen were able to participate in team building activities with their advisory teachers and all students had the opportunity to reflect on their day and their future goals. This is a prime example of how we can better prepare and support our students, which is a Focus Area in our new D51 Strategic Plan.

Seeing Beyond: *Seven Summits*

Today R-5 High school students had the opportunity to participate in a presentation from Scott Lehmann and Shayna Unger. Scott and Shayna have climbed some of the world's highest mountains like Kilimanjaro, Aconcagua, Denali, Mont Blanc, and Matterhorn without the ability to hear sound or utter intelligible words. They were both born to multigenerational deaf families and raised by the deaf community. Scott and Shayna picked up mountaineering skills mostly by watching YouTube videos and asking others through paper and pen because of the lack of accessibility in outdoor education.

In their presentation, Scott and Shayna recounted their experience climbing North America's tallest mountain, Denali and what it is like to be Deaf mountaineers. They discussed with the students the importance of discovering and pursuing their own passions. They just launched a new project, *Seeing Beyond: Seven Summits* that aims to raise awareness, improve accessibility to information and education, and increase deaf and disability representation in the outdoors. Scott and Shayna are currently climbing towards being the first deaf individuals to reach the highest peaks on each of the seven continents. What an unique experience for our students. One that shows how overcoming obstacles will take you to the highest peaks.

Thanks to Scott and Shayna for speaking with our D51 students, and thanks to Principal Steinmetz for providing this opportunity for our R-5 students.

Homecoming Weeks

HOCO continued this week for GJHS, and tomorrow is the kick off for FMHS homecoming week. I was invited to join the GJHS Class of 2023 during the parade, and it was so much fun! The theme of their float was "Senior Things," which was a play on Stranger Things, one of my favorite shows! The students were great, and I enjoyed throwing out candy to the families, students, and staff who showed up to support GJHS. GJ All Day!

Fruita Monument High School kicks off their homecoming week on Saturday at 10:00 a.m. in downtown Fruita for their parade. The FMHS homecoming football game will take place next Friday at Stocker Stadium at 6:00 p.m.

Superintendent Listening Sessions

This week we went virtual for our listening session and next week we will be hosting a Spanish listening session to give our D51 families, staff, and community an opportunity to hear more about the Strategic Plan and answer questions on how we can better serve our students. I am asking four questions at each of the listening sessions in order to gain a better understanding of what families and staff are looking for. Those questions are:

- What are some ways we could help students find academic success?
- How can we improve academic options for students?
- How can we improve student mental and physical well-being?
- How can we engage more community partners?

If you are unable to attend any of the listening sessions and would like to answer these questions online, you can do so [here](#). I am using the feedback to help guide my work moving forward.

Rocky Mountain PBS Kids Fest

Next Saturday, October 1, District 51 will be participating in the Rocky Mountain PBS Kids Fest along with other local organizations to provide a fun time for our community and families. This event will be held at Long Family Memorial Park (near Central High School) from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be fun games and activities for you to enjoy along with food trucks and even a special appearance from *Daniel Tiger*.

D51 will have one of our Lunch Lizard trucks there with special treats made by our Nutrition Services department, a bean bag toss where you can earn D51 swag, and we will even have a dunk tank where you can dunk teachers and administrators. I will be seated on the dunk tank from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m., so come out and *Sink the Superintendent!*

Western Colorado Community Foundation Donations

The Western Colorado Community Foundation (WCCF) works with community-minded donors who share a connection with Western Colorado and is a collection of over 300 charitable funds. Through these funds, WCCF annually awards over \$5 million in grants and scholarships throughout the seven counties we serve. District 51 has recently been awarded two generous donations through these charitable funds.

The first donation was received on Tuesday at a [check presentation](#) at Central High School from the Pat and Tillie Bishop Legacy Initiative. That generous donation was for \$100,000 to be awarded to all five District 51 high schools to go towards extracurricular activities for the clubs and organizations within the schools. This is the first donation that District 51 will receive annually over the next twenty years. We support and encourage extracurricular activities in D51, and these funds will go a long way to help support some of those costs for our students.

Our second donation helped to ["Complete our Fleet"](#) with a donation from the Ferris Family Fund to purchase a much needed Lunch Lizard truck just in time for the summer Lunch Lizard program. Our Lunch Lizard program is a creative way to provide healthy meal options to our students, and we are excited to have the support of WCCF to be able to better provide this service.

We can't thank these charitable funds and WCCF enough for their support of District 51 and our students. Thanks to Anne Wenzel and her team at WCCF for being engaged and supportive community partners with D51.

D51 Foundation Board Meetings

Every month I get to participate in the District 51 Foundation Board meetings. The board is made up of community members who are volunteering their time to ensure that D51 is even stronger tomorrow than it is today. I am so thankful that we have such supportive community members who give back so generously not only to our students, but to our staff and community, as well.

If you have not heard about the D51 Foundation, they raise money to support our local schools, prioritizing funding for professional learning for D51 staff and technology for students. Their mission is to raise funds for academic growth and achievement while promoting outreach to benefit kids and our community. And they know how to throw a great celebration, which they do every year at the White Iced Celebration in the winter. This event is held with the goal of recognizing our schools who show academic growth, staff who go above and beyond, and community partners who have a huge impact on D51.

If you would like to learn more about the [D51 Foundation](#), find a way to help out, or if you or your business would like to donate to help students and staff in our district, please reach out to Dr. Angela Christensen, Executive Director of the foundation, at angela.christensen@d51schools.org.

Board News

In lieu of a separate letter summarizing the monthly meetings of our Board of Education, we thought we would highlight the events of the meetings in this letter each week after a board meeting is held. I will give a brief account of what happened at the meetings and also provide you a link to watch the meeting from the week. As always our BOE meeting details can be found on our [website](#).

At this week's Board Business Meeting, we heard a great presentation from Mr. Whiteford and his GJHS students about their trip to Eastern Europe, we received an update on the progress of the GJHS building projects from DPM, FCI, and BG+co, action team leads presented an update on Strategic Plan Focus Area 1: Prepared and Supported Students, and the board adopted updates to some of our many district policies.

The Board will also be starting up their Board Coffees again. These are opportunities for the Board to hear from members of the community in a format that better lends itself to open discussion. The dates of those coffees are:

- October 1- Rocky Mountain Elementary Cafeteria
- November 5- Lincoln Orchard Mesa Elementary Cafeteria
- December 17- Broadway Elementary Cafeteria
- January- No coffee due to holiday break
- February 4- Shelledy Elementary Library
- March 4- Tope Elementary Cafeteria
- April 1- Nisley Elementary Cafeteria

To find out more about the meeting this week you can watch the meeting by clicking on this [link](#). We will also continue to highlight the Note From School Board President Haitz. Click [here](#) to read her message following this week's Board Meeting.

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