



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues,

This week was our last full week of school in D51, and it was definitely a fun one! We celebrated seven graduation ceremonies this week, and we have one remaining next week! This week we handed out diplomas to our hard working students from Palisade HS, R-5 HS, Fruita Monument HS, the InSTEPS Program at the D51 Career Center, Central HS, Grand River Academy, and Grand Junction HS! Over 1,400 students are graduating from D51 this year, and we just celebrated the highest graduation rate in D51 in the last 17 years. We had the highest number ever of seniors earning the Superintendent Scholar Award, maintaining a 4.0 or higher GPA all four years. And, this year alone, we had over 1,000 D51 students earn close to 11,000 college credits giving them an educational and financial leg up after graduation! Those are free college courses paid for by D51 through our strong partnership with CMU and CMU Tech. Shoutout to this amazing Class of 2024 for all that they have accomplished! And thank you to our hard working D51 staff, and to our amazing family members, who have guided these students over their 12+ year education journey.

This week, I was also able to have some fun visiting with students. Tuesday I was able to make it out to the 29th Annual Western Colorado Children's Water Festival, which is always fun. You can read more about it below. Today, I was able to visit Broadway Elementary School for their 4th grade Market Day! Entrepreneurial-minded students created handmade and 3D printed goods to sell at the market, and all of the proceeds are going to the Palisade High School fish hatchery! I might have gone a little overboard and left with a bag full of goodies! Shoutout to Ms. Sanchez and the 4th grade team at Broadway for the invite and for their hard work. And shoutout to Principal Westbrook for creating this opportunity for our kids!

We also had some fun this week, with it being graduation week, by posting Graduation Flashbacks of D51 staff and Board Members. You can check them out on my [Instagram](#) page and take a walk down memory lane with some favorite songs and movies!

Speaking of social media, with this being our last Friday Update of the year, it gives me one more opportunity to highlight the work we are doing as a district to learn more about tech use and its impact on students, and how we can work together to create engaging spaces in D51 schools that foster sustained attention and maximize learning. As summer approaches, let's take a moment to reflect on how technology impacts us. Ever felt tired, lethargic, and grouchy after spending too much time on screens? It's similar to how we feel after eating too many donuts (mmmmm...donuts). That's not the way we want to spend our summer break.

This summer, I challenge all of us to have fun with less technology. Here are some ways to stay busy and make the most of your break:

- Play with family and friends, especially outdoors.
- Read lots of books. Encourage your kids to join the Mesa County Library Summer Reading Program.
- Go on a family bike ride along the Riverfront Trail.
- Learn a new skill or make something creative.
- Play outdoor games like freeze tag and kickball.
- Laugh a lot and stay cool.

Not only will these activities help us have a memorable summer, but they will also set the stage for a great school year. This coming school year, District 51 is committed to reducing the negative impacts of technology on our learning, sense of belonging, and community. We're introducing a new Cell Phone Use Policy next year, aimed at promoting healthier and more productive online habits. We need everyone's help—students, educators, and families—to make this a success. More information will be sent out once that policy update has been approved by the Board of Education.

Your summer homework assignment is simple: spend more time having fun in real life than online. More social...less media. We can't wait to hear all about your adventures when school starts again in August!

All-Conference Athletes/Teams

As we wrap up the year and our spring sports season comes to an end, I want to give one last shoutout to our amazing student-athletes. Every season, our athletes dedicate themselves to their respective sports, committing hours to practice and honing their skills. Although spring sports continue over the next few weeks, and this is not a complete list, I want to shout out the following athletes and teams who have been named All-Conference so far this season. Read more [here](#).

Western Colorado Children's Water Festival

On Monday and Tuesday, Ute Water Conservancy District and various community partners held the 29th Annual Western Colorado Children's Water Festival. This has grown to be the largest Children's Water Festival in the state of Colorado and hosts over 1,500 5th graders from across the valley to learn about and engage in all things water. Read more [here](#).

Service Learning Capstone Project at GJHS

On Thursday, GJHS Junior Kayla Jakopic presented Pathways Family Shelter with a check for the construction of a new playground at their shelter. Read more [here](#).

West Middle School Color Run

This week, West Middle School hosted its end-of-year Color Run and Concert, organized by the PTA. This "colorful" and exciting event brought students together for an afternoon of fun and fitness. Read more [here](#).

Chatfield Growth Goals Awards Assembly

Today, our Chatfield Cheetahs partnered with Alpine Bank to present students with Outstanding Growth Awards and a \$100 prize! Read more [here](#).

D51 Schools Earn CDE Awards

In addition to our amazing students, several of our D51 schools have been acknowledged for their academic excellence and growth. I'd like to take some time to recognize those schools that have been awarded Colorado Department of Education Awards for the 2023-24 academic year. These awards recognize our schools' outstanding achievements and the hard work they put in each day. Read more [here](#).

Project SEARCH Graduating Interns

I'm excited to share the incredible success of one of our new collaborative programs, Project SEARCH. Yesterday marked a major milestone as Project SEARCH celebrated the graduation of the inaugural class of interns. Read more [here](#).

CMU Upward Bound Graduates

As we come to the end of another impactful year with our partners at CMU and the Upward Bound program, this week marked a significant milestone for the program. Upward Bound at Colorado Mesa University is a federally funded college preparatory program designed to support local first-generation, income-eligible students at Central High School and Grand Junction High School as they prepare to enter and succeed in college. We celebrated the graduation of 20 first-year generation seniors from Grand Junction HS and Central HS who were members of the Upward Bound program. I continue to be impressed with the resilience and dedication of our first-gen students, and I encourage you to read the [end-of-year newsletter](#), which is filled with exciting celebrations, program updates, and details about the upcoming Upward Bound Summer Academy and the new [Summer Bridge Program](#) for seniors. Thank you to CMU and the Upward Bound program for supporting our students and for your continued partnership with D51.

D51 Launches New Website

This morning, we announced the launch of our brand-new website, a key milestone in our three-year, community-driven strategic plan to enhance and streamline communication avenues. Designed with our community in mind, this site offers a fresh, modern look and improved functionality to enhance your digital experience. Whether you're seeking the latest news, exploring upcoming events, or looking for resources and information, our new website makes it easier than ever to find what you need. The user-friendly navigation, updated content, and responsive design ensure that you can access all features regardless of whether you're on a desktop, tablet, or mobile device. We invite you to explore the [new site](#) and discover all the exciting updates and features we have to offer!

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