



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

September 2024,

As we welcome the fall season here in Great Falls, we are reminded of the beauty and change it brings. The vibrant colors of autumn will soon line our streets, and our students will walk through these hues on their way to school, bustling with excitement as their schedules fill with activities. From academics to athletics, it's a busy time for all. As a community, we continue to celebrate the things we hold in high regard—our military, who protect and serve with unwavering dedication, our teachers, who inspire and guide our future generations, and, of course, our incredible students, who bring so much promise and hope for the future. Together, let's embrace this season of change, and support each other through the many exciting moments that lie ahead. Welcome to the September edition of GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer.

Great Falls...

Hometown Pride – Celebrating the unique spirit and traditions of Great Falls.

- Great Falls Public Schools is proud to serve the men and women in our armed forces. Military appreciation nights have been set by the GFPS Athletic Department. Military members, including our veterans, and their families are invited to be guests at the following events, free of charge with proof of service. These dedicated individuals will also be recognized at the start of the event.
 1. CMR Football- Friday, September 20 vs. Gallatin
 2. CMR Volleyball- Thursday, September 26 vs. Bozeman
 3. CMR/GFH Soccer- Thursday, October 3 cross-town
 4. GFH Football- Friday, October 11 vs. West
 5. GFH Volleyball- Friday, October 17 vs. Skyview

Helping Hands – Working together to support our students and staff.

- This year, Great Falls Public Schools will recognize 23 distinct groups of employees who work hard for our students and community. On September 17th, we recognized our Data Center and Information Technology employees. This group of 18 individuals is led by the newest member of my Cabinet Team and is our Director of Information Technology, Mr. Jeff Williams. When asked about his team, Jeff shared, “These people are the backbone and first line of support that ensure that we can live and work using the levels of technology that make our lives possible.” Thank you to our comprehensive IT department for all they do, from the security systems that keep our kids safe, to the devices that enhance instruction, to the phone systems in all of our buildings, to the record keeping systems that secure student and employee records, and so much more. You are appreciated! To learn more about our IT department, please visit their webpage at <https://gfps.k12.mt.us/departments/technology/overview>

High Hopes – Setting ambitious goals for our District’s future.

- The District is kicking off a very important part of our 3-year Strategic Plan with a Comprehensive Communication Plan initiative. In a survey conducted last year, our staff and community highlighted the need to improve communication, both within and outbound from the District. This month, District and community leaders will be trained in consensus building and listening sessions as we prepare for community-wide conversations about shared priorities. As always, our written, visual, and social media partners and platforms continue to highlight notable events across our district and Great Falls. Follow our Facebook page for daily highlights!

Heroic Teachers – Applauding the dedication and hard work of our incredible educators.

- Congratulations to Mr. Craig Gaslow, Spanish and Social Studies teacher at Great Falls High School, who has received a Fulbright Teacher Exchange award for the 2024-2025 school year. When not in his GFHS classroom, Craig will teach, study, and/or conduct research abroad during the 2024-2025 academic year through the Fulbright Program.

Harmonious Communities – Fostering strong connections between our schools and the community.

- Congratulations to Cody Hoehn, a C.M. Russell High School Senior, who completed his Eagle Scout project to refresh and enhance Memorial Stadium. Cody is a highly involved student athlete (Football and Track/Field) who organized 30 volunteers and donors, to apply 21 gallons of paint over the course of 210 hours. If you have an opportunity to visit the Stadium, check out his great work. For more information on this impactful project, visit KRTV at <https://www.krtv.com/news/positively-montana/cmr-high-school-senior-spearheads-project-to-paint-memorial-stadium>

Healthy Minds and Bodies – Prioritizing mental and physical health and well-being for all.

- The health and safety of our students is an uncompromising focus for Great Falls Public Schools. While academic achievement is our chief priority, we realize that sometimes there are physiological concerns that impact a student’s ability to focus and learn. Together, with community partners, we provide the following annual screenings for students. These are “opt-in” opportunities for parents and families, who will receive results and be notified if any concerns arise that require their attention. For more information, contact your neighborhood school.
Dental Screening: 1st, 3rd, 5th grades
Vision Screening: K, 1st, 3rd, 6th grades
Hearing Screening: K, 1st, and students new to Montana
Mental Health Screening: 6th grade

Hands-On Learning – Embracing innovative and interactive educational experiences.

- In January of 2023 and 2024, a group of dedicated citizens came together, under the leadership of Mr. Anders Blewett, to take advantage of the Innovative Education Tax Credit

opportunity provided by our legislature. Through this program, taxpayers receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on their State of Montana income tax bill the following fiscal year. The money received by the district is directed to Innovative Education Programs, specifically outlined by the legislature. The district will utilize existing funds to provide/reinstitute grade level field trips, develop a districtwide Innovative Learning Center at Great Falls High School that will serve all students in grades K-12, and pilot an “Emotional Wellness for Athletes” program at our high schools. If you have questions about the Innovative Tax Credit program or would like to learn how to participate, please contact GFPS Director of Business Operations, Mr. Brian Patrick at (406) 268-6050 or at brian_patrick@gfps.k12.mt.us.

Historic Achievements – Building on the proud legacy of Great Falls Public Schools.

- Learning happens both in and out of the classroom and defines the comprehensive educational experience that Great Falls Public Schools is excited to provide. The following students are taking their hands-on-learning to Great (Falls) levels! GFHS student Harlee Barrow shared her passion for the fine arts and was this year’s *Arts On Fire* design winner. 20 CMR HOSA student volunteers helped with the “My Best 5K and Kids Dash”. GFPS welding classes are not only learning technical welding skills but are also channeling their inner creativity with their fire pit creations. Health Science students are gearing up for another year of MedAchieve with Touro School of Osteopathic Medicine. Our High School House students recently broke ground on their 47th neighborhood home for Great Falls. Students at Sunnyside Elementary celebrated Constitution Day learning how this document protects our freedoms, is integral to law development and application, and defines how citizens are active members of their community, state, and country when they “Stand Up, Use Their Voice, and Make a Difference”.

Heartfelt Commitment – Great Falls Public Schools is proud of the comprehensive opportunities we give our students. From high-quality academics to high-quality opportunities, to tomorrow’s high-quality leaders, we invite you to visit and learn with us!

Warm regards,

Heather Hoyer
Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools