



# Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

October 2024,

*Fall is in full swing and with it provides a great opportunity to reflect on the progress we've made and the work still ahead of us. In our schools, we're settling into routines, deepening our learning, and finding new ways to grow. October brings us moments to pause and celebrate achievements, while planning for the path forward. With parent-teacher conferences on the horizon, I encourage families to take advantage of this time to connect with educators, share insights about their children's learning, and set goals for the rest of the year. Communication between home and school is key to student success, and we value the partnership that strengthens our school community. October is also a time to reflect on safety, as our beautiful fall colors will soon give way to snowfall. Please be safe. Welcome to the October edition of GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer.*

Great Falls...

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

- It is with great pride and excitement that we share the wonderful news that Chief Joseph Elementary School has been named a *National Blue Ribbon School!* Only two schools earned this award in the entire state of Montana in 2024. This prestigious recognition is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the students, staff, and families at Chief Joseph Elementary. The *National Blue Ribbon Schools* program honors schools for their overall academic excellence or progress in closing achievement gaps, and Chief Joseph's commitment to providing a high-quality education for every student is truly something to celebrate. It also highlights the strong partnership between the school and the families and community members who support its success. Congratulations to Chief Joseph Elementary on this outstanding achievement!

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

- As we approach the heart of the school year, many families begin looking ahead to one of the most exciting milestones—graduation. Let me explain how graduation dates are calculated in Montana to ensure everyone understands the process and timeline. In Montana, graduation dates are determined by state regulations that set the required number of instructional hours for students to complete before they can graduate. For high school students, this means accumulating a minimum of 1,080 hours of instructional time over the course of the year, with the exception of seniors who can have 1050 hours of instruction (the difference of 5 days at the end of the year). Counting backwards 5 days from the last day of school, seniors will graduate the weekend before other students recess for summer. I hope this helps clarify how graduation dates are calculated, and as always, we are here to answer any questions you may have as we prepare to celebrate the Class of 2025.

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

- Great Falls Public Schools is proud of our student-athletes representing both the blue and white of Great Falls High and the green and gold of C.M. Russell High. Recently, eight talented

golfers qualified for the state tournament, with Hanna Boyd (GFHS) and Jack Pinski (CMR) emerging as divisional champions. Congratulations to our top 10 finishers who received All-State recognition, at the state meet in Kalispell. Hanna Boyd (GFH) placed 2<sup>nd</sup>, Quincy Weymouth (CMR) placed 6th, and Jack Pinski (CMR) placed 9th. Our athletes continue to embody sportsmanship, dedication, and excellence, both on and off the field. Whether they're competing on the green or representing our schools in other sports and academics, they are a source of pride for our entire community.

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

- At Great Falls Public Schools, we believe that our collective strength lies in the voices of our community. To ensure we continue to meet the needs of our students, families, and staff, we are excited to announce a series of **listening sessions**, to be held on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>, where we invite YOU to share your thoughts, concerns, and ideas. These sessions are an important opportunity for us to come together and identify shared priorities as we look toward the future of our schools. Your input will help shape the direction of our district, ensuring that we remain focused on what matters most to our community. For mor information, please contact Executive Director Jackie Mainwaring at [jackie\\_mainwaring@gfps.k12.mt.us](mailto:jackie_mainwaring@gfps.k12.mt.us) or at (406) 268-6006.

**Heroic Employees** – Applauding the dedication and hard work of our incredible employees.

- Please help me recognize and celebrate the amazing individuals who contribute so much to the success of our schools. During the month of October, we have the opportunity to honor outstanding team members during National Custodian Day, National Boss's Day, and Treasure Our Teachers Week. The impact these employees make is profound, and we appreciate each of them for their unwavering commitment to shaping the future. Each group plays a vital role in the Great Falls Public Schools, and I encourage everyone in the community to join me in expressing appreciation for all that they do. It is with their help that our schools continue to thrive and provide a quality education for our students.

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

- I am excited to share a heartfelt thank you to Candice English, whose incredible generosity has made a profound difference in the lives of our students. Candice recently provided a generous gift to support several of our school food pantries, ensuring that students in need have access to healthy meals when they leave school for the day. For many of our students, the availability of nutritious food is critical to their well-being and success in the classroom. Candice's contribution will help stock our food pantries and provide an essential resource for those who may face food insecurity. Her kindness embodies the spirit of community and reminds us of the powerful impact that one person can make.

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

- Great Falls Public Schools is implementing several proactive safety measures designed to protect our students, staff, and visitors, as part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring *Healthy, Safe, and Secure Schools*. One important action step within our strategic plan is the provision of Armed Intruder Training in every school. In order to accommodate this training, our

school campuses will be closed to visitors on Friday, November 1<sup>st</sup>. The safety of our schools is our top priority. While we hope to never face an armed intruder situation, we believe in being prepared for any emergency. This training is a key part of ensuring that our staff and students know how to respond effectively if such a situation were ever to occur. The training will focus on empowering our staff with knowledge and strategies for protecting students, as well as working closely with law enforcement to ensure a coordinated response. We recognize that security includes not only prevention and preparedness from outside threats, but also fostering a positive and nurturing school climate.

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

- Thank you to all of our incredible industry partners who participated in the third annual *Central Montana Works: Worlds of Work* event. The event was a huge success with all of our 8th and 10th graders engaging in meaningful, hands-on experiences that introduced them to a wide range of career opportunities. The partnerships we have with local industries are vital to ensuring our students are well-prepared for their future careers, whether they pursue college, vocational training, or enter directly into the workforce.

**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