



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

December 2024,

As we approach the holiday season and the upcoming winter break, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your support throughout the first half of this school year. Your unwavering belief in our students and their potential makes all the difference in their growth and success. This season, may your days be filled with joy, love, and laughter shared with family and friends. Together, we look forward to the promise and opportunities of the New Year, continuing to nurture the bright future of our students and community. Happy Holidays and best wishes for a wonderful New Year!

Welcome to the December edition of GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer.

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

- Great Falls Public Schools recently hosted legislative “Walk-and-Talks”, welcoming our local elected representatives and senators. Senator Jeremy Trebas visited Whittier Elementary, Representative Russ Miner visited the CORE School at Morningside Elementary and Sunnyside Elementary, Representative Jane Weber visited Paris Gibson Education Center and Great Falls High School, and Representative Melissa Nikolakakos visited Chief Joseph. We extend our heartfelt thanks to them for accepting our invitation and for their time and engagement as they toured our schools, connected with students and staff, and engaged in meaningful conversations with our Board members.

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

- During this holiday season, we are reminded of the incredible generosity of our community members and businesses who go above and beyond to make the season brighter for our students and families. Special thanks to Kellergeist and the Schalper family for donating space for the student pop-up shop during the Christmas Stroll, giving our students a chance to showcase their creativity. We are also deeply grateful to Flying S Title and Escrow for their continued support, from donating socks in the fall to providing food for our school food banks this holiday season. All For Him Gathering Ministries made Thanksgiving special by donating 160 food boxes, ensuring families could celebrate together. And once again, an anonymous Secret Santa has brought joy to students in need through thoughtful gifts that make the season magical. Your kindness and generosity remind us of the strength and compassion of this community.

Harmonious Talents – Enjoying the sights and sounds of the season.

- We hope you had the chance to enjoy one or two of the many visual and performing arts events during this holiday season. From visual arts pop-up shops and markets that showcased and sold student artwork to the incredible concerts and drama productions, Great Falls Public Schools hosted over 130 opportunities for our community to engage with our talented students and

teachers in just the past month. If you missed out, don't worry—spring concerts and performances are just around the corner!

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

- Great Falls Public Schools takes great pride in supporting military members and their families. Ray Shaw, MIC3 (Montana Interstate Children's Compact Commission) Commissioner, emphasized the importance of this commitment: "Military children face unique challenges due to their families' service and frequent relocations. Providing them with consistent and compassionate support in our schools is essential to creating environments where they can thrive and feel valued. Purple Star Schools play a vital role in this mission, and the MIC3 deeply appreciates their efforts in supporting these remarkable children." We are thrilled to share that Riverview Elementary has been named one of three Purple Star Schools in Montana! Congratulations to Principal Nicole Heintzelman and her dedicated staff on achieving this well-deserved recognition. Schools hold their Purple Star designation for three years before undergoing renewal. Additionally, we recognize the following individuals for their outstanding contributions to supporting military-affiliated students and families:
 - Mark Yaeger, Career Technical Education Pathways Advisor
 - Tara Murillo, Chief Joseph Elementary Librarian
 - Montana Johnson, Morningside Elementary Counselor (former Loy Elementary counselor)

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the professionals of Great Falls Public Schools for their dedication, compassion, and tireless efforts in supporting our students and families of our dedicated military members as they serve and protect our nation.

Hard Work with our Community – Fostering strong connections between our schools and the community.

- The partnership between Great Falls Public Schools and our community is a cornerstone of what makes Great Falls strong. GFPS is proud to highlight the incredible collaborations between our students, staff, and local organizations that enhance everything that makes the Electric City truly GREAT. Some examples of these partnerships include:
 - **Holiday meals** with GFHS Drama students and the Women's Shelter
 - **Holiday bell ringing** with The Salvation Army and student leadership groups
 - **Holiday storytelling** by Omni Marketing and Design with elementary students
 - **Bison Video Production** students creating a public service announcement for the Great Falls Library Foundation
 - **Night Without a Bed** with Family Promise and Key Club and Peer Mentors
 - **CMR Jazz Band** performing for Great Falls Development Alliance to celebrate new entrepreneurs
 - **Peer Mentors** from GFPS working with Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine on responding to youth mental health

These meaningful collaborations showcase the power of community and highlight the shared commitment to making Great Falls a vibrant and supportive place to live and learn.

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

- Thank you to the Montana Contractors Association members, Sletten Construction Companies and Geranios Enterprises, Inc. for visiting the High School House project, inspiring the next generation of contractors, and showcasing the opportunities within their industry. In addition, thank you to ADF International, American Welding and Gas, General Distributing Company, and Lincoln Electric for their generous material donations to our high school welding programs. The support and engagement of our industry partners are invaluable in encouraging young talent to pursue careers in construction and trades.

Harnessing Innovation – Through State of Montana Innovative Tax Credit

- This dollar-for-dollar tax credit applies to your Montana Tax Credit liability and has a contribution deadline of January 15, 2025. We appreciate the overwhelming support last year and hope to continue the standard that was set. Information can be easily found on our district website (<https://gfps.k12.mt.us/departments/business-services-and-operations/business-office-and-finance/innovative-education-programs-tax-credit>) or by contacting our Director of Business Services and Operations, Mr. Brian Patrick, at 406.268.6050. These funds are accepted by the Department of Revenue on a first come first served basis. We encourage people to consult their financial advisor before participating in the program. All school districts can participate so the money is claimed very quickly.

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!

May this holiday season bring you joy, good health, and prosperity. We are lucky to live, grow, and learn right here in Great Falls with you!

Warm regards,

Heather Hoyer
Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools