



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

February 2025,

Great Falls...

As cold winter days grow longer, we're diving deep into the work we do. Winter screening academic achievement scores are in, and we're pleased to report that we're on track to meet our year-end goals. Additionally, discipline data is reflecting positive social and behavioral growth among our students. February also marks the time that we begin to actively recruit the next generation of Great Falls Public Schools teachers. Our leaders are keeping a close eye on the legislative session to understand how upcoming legislation might impact our schools, whether in positive or challenging ways. In this month of the heart, we encourage you to take time for self-care, cherish those you love, and know that we appreciate the ongoing support for our students, teachers, leaders, and schools. Thank you for being an essential part of our community and for standing with us as we continue our work together.

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

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

- We are incredibly proud to be part of such a vibrant community, working hand-in-hand with our valued community groups to advance the mission of our public schools. Over the past month, members of our leadership team have engaged with various community groups, sharing updates on our progress toward strategic plan goals, highlighting innovative programming that benefits students, families, and partners alike, and discussing the evolving needs of our schools. If you or a loved one are involved with a community group and would like an in-person update on our school system's progress, please reach out to my office at (406) 268-6001, to schedule a visit. We look forward to continuing this collaborative journey together.

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

- When a new teacher selects Great Falls Public Schools as their employer, they are not only choosing a workplace—they are embracing the Great Falls community. We are proud to partner with over 17 community groups and local businesses to sponsor our award-winning High Voltage Teacher Recruitment event. In mid-February, prospective teachers visit Great Falls and immerse themselves in our vibrant community, explore the diverse educational opportunities available to engage with our youth and families, and participate in in-person interviews with our leadership team. Many of these dedicated new educators even leave with a job offer, solidifying their commitment to our community. A special thank you to our *Premier Sponsor*, TDS, and our *Gold Sponsor*, Opportunity Bank, for making this annual and remarkable event possible. If you know of a teacher who is graduating from college or would like to learn more about sponsorship for this event, please contact Great Falls Public Schools at (406)268-6024.

Harmony Through Collaboration– Collective work around important initiatives.

- Great Falls Public Schools is proud to host a Legislative Transmittal Open House for area legislators on March 12th at the district office building. Please join us, along with our student facilitators, at 5:30 p.m. as our legislators share updates and insights into education initiatives for

the 2025 legislative session and discuss what these developments may mean for our schools. We are deeply thankful for the dedicated work our legislators do on behalf of our students, families, and our community's public schools. As a reminder, you can find your local legislator at <https://www.legmt.gov/districts/> and track bills by visiting <https://bills.legmt.gov/#>.

Heroic Employees and Volunteers – Applauding dedication and hard work.

- Throughout February, we proudly celebrate four dedicated groups who embody our core values of hard work and dedication. During National Guidance Counselor Week, starting on February 8th, we honored the 27 guidance counselors who guide and support our students as they grow in our schools. On February 9th, we recognized the 25 crossing guards who ensure our children have a safe route to school. February 15th was dedicated to expressing our gratitude to the five School Resource Officers who work tirelessly to keep our schools secure. Finally, on February 22nd, we highlighted the 64 bus drivers from Big Sky Bus Lines who provide daily transportation to and from schools and activities. Each of these groups plays a crucial role in making sure our children are safe, supported, and ready to learn. If you happen to know or see any of these employees, please be sure you thank them for all they do.

Honoring Hard Work - Fostering strong connections between our schools and the community.

- February marks the start of post-season competitions, when athletic teams are gearing up for their respective tournaments. High School wrestling wrapped up over the weekend of February 15th, and our community recently had the honor of hosting state swimming at Swarthout Fieldhouse on the same day. Meanwhile, our basketball teams are finishing their regular season games and eagerly anticipating the playoffs. Congratulations to the Great Falls High School Girls' Swimming team and Coach Ed McNamee for their state championship. The Great Falls High Schools Boys' Wrestling team, under the direction of Coach Luis Carranza, brought home a third-place trophy. Here are our individual/group *State Champions*:
 - Swim; Georgia Hatzenbeller (CMR Girls) – 100 Breaststroke. Set a new state record.
 - Swim; Seth Woldtvedt (GFH Boys) – 100 Backstroke
 - Swim; GFH Girls' 200 Medley Relay Team
 - Swim; GFH Girls' 400 Freestyle Relay Team
 - Wrestling; Maddy Deiter (CMR Girls) 125 lb.
 - Wrestling; Cael Floerchinger (GFH Boys) 126 lb.
 - Wrestling; Kale Baumann (GFH Boys) 157 lb.

Sports not only forge a vital connection between our schools, students, families, and spectators, but they also positively impact our community. Earlier this year, multi-day wrestling and swimming events hosted by Great Falls Public Schools were estimated to have generated over \$34,000 in lodging revenue alone. We are deeply thankful for the ongoing support our community provides to our teams and facilities.

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

- In February, the Career Technical Education (CTE) community celebrates CTE Month® to highlight the pivotal role CTE plays in preparing learners for college and career success. Through both academic courses and dynamic student organizations, CTE students forge a deep connection to

their futures. Available data shows that "CTE concentrators" (students who take a concentrated load of CTE courses) graduate at significantly higher rates, with most sources reporting a 93-94% graduation rate compared to the national average of around 85%. At Great Falls Public Schools, our commitment to CTE is evident not only in our comprehensive academic programs but also through active participation in student organizations that include Business Professionals of America (BPA), DECA (marketing and entrepreneurship, formerly Distributive Education Club of America), SkillsUSA (industrial technology), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC – leadership and civic engagement). To learn more about CTE and the associated student organizations, reach out to Mr. Mark Yaeger, Career Pathways Advisor, at (406) 268-7345.

Heartfelt Commitment – Great Falls Public Schools is proud of the comprehensive opportunities we provide to 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

Tell your friends about us: Please feel free to invite family and friends to subscribe to *Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer* by emailing their name and email address, along with a request to get on our mailing list to superintendent@gfps.k12.mt.us.

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