



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

March 2025,

Great Falls...

March has long been a month of transition, bridging the harshness of winter with the promise of spring. Named after Mars, the Roman god of war, it was once the first month of the year in the early Roman calendar, symbolizing new beginnings and the renewal of life. Historically, it marked the time when armies would resume campaigns after winter's pause, but in a broader sense, it has always represented movement, change, and anticipation. As the days grow longer and the earth begins to thaw, March encourages us to look ahead to greener days—both literally, as nature awakens with budding leaves and blooming flowers, and figuratively, as we shake off the dormancy of winter and embrace new opportunities with a fresh perspective. We hope that March brings you a breath of fresh air and a renewed sense of purpose and hope. Welcome to the March edition of GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer.

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

- On March 18, 2025 we proudly celebrated the 53rd annual Great Falls Public School Bosses Night—our favorite night of the year! This special evening honors the accomplishments of our Secondary Life Skills and Competitive Employment students and their incredible employers who support them on their journey to independence and success. This year, we recognized 78 community and district employment partners and 110 students whose dedication and hard work inspire us all. A heartfelt congratulations to this year's award recipients:
 - Patty McHenry Memorial Award for the Most Dependable Employee
 - Bryan O'Born – Secondary Life Skills
 - Patty Cooper Memorial Award of Most Improved Employee
 - Landen Meek and Zack Benton (CMR)
 - Sabrina Tartaglia and Cody Dostal (GFH)
 - Brayden Kottke (PGEC)
 - Sid Nasby Memorial Award for Outstanding Employee
 - Quyn Reddick and Jacey Brooks (CMR)
 - Crystal Reed and Calvin Worrell (GFH)
 - Michael Norman (CMR)
 - Employer of Year
 - Great Falls Public Schools Print Center
 - Most Valuable Community Partner
 - Great Falls Transit

To learn more about our Secondary Life Skills program for students aged 18-21, contact Mr. Jason Bailey, Special Education Coordinator at (406) 268-6636.

Heartfelt Thank You for Time Given – Working together to support our students, staff, and community.

- A heartfelt thank you to our local area legislators who took time during their *Transmittal* break to engage with our community on important education initiatives. On March 12th, Representative Jane Weber, Representative Russ Miner, and Senator Jeremy Trebas joined us for a discussion on topics which included: support for teachers and staff, strong programming, career preparation,

taxpayer impact, and school funding. The evening, attended by over 50 community members, was facilitated by Great Falls High School senior Vail Van Voast and C.M. Russell High School sophomore Lydia Comstock. We appreciate the legislators' willingness to listen, share updates, and encourage us to reach out with personal stories when advocating for or against legislation. Your engagement makes a difference in shaping the future of education in Montana. Thank you for your time, dedication, and service! Legislators can be contacted at <https://www.legmt.gov/legislators/>.

Here Comes the Sun (Sports) – Students connecting to school through activities

- With basketballs retired, swim lanes calmed, and wrestling mats rolled up, it's time for high school spring sports to take center stage in Great Falls! Across the city, student-athletes are hitting the fields, courts, and tracks, ready to showcase their hard work and dedication. There are a total of 437 students proudly wearing their school colors for the spring: softball (48), tennis (89), and track & field (300). As they push themselves to new heights, we encourage the community to come out and support these talented competitors. Follow your favorite teams and athletes throughout the season by visiting [GFPS Sports Schedules](#). Best of luck to all who proudly represent Great Falls—go get 'em!

Heroic Employees and Volunteers – Applauding dedication and hard work.

- On March 3rd and 7th, we took time to honor three special groups whose hard work behind the scenes keeps our schools running smoothly. On March 3rd, we recognized our six dedicated Warehouse workers, who intake and verify orders, distribute supplies to schools, and move essential materials and equipment—like music risers and food—across the district. We also celebrated with our three Print Center employees, who ensure classrooms and offices have the posters, copies, and critical documents needed for effective teaching and administration. On March 7th, we honored our 21 Buildings and Grounds/Skilled Trades staff, including carpenters, electricians, groundskeepers, painters, plumbers, supervisors, and administrative staff. This team is responsible for everything from maintaining 300 acres of grass and 80 acres of asphalt to repairing broken windows, designing signage, and keeping our facilities safe and functional. Their dedication and expertise ensure that our schools are well-equipped, well-maintained, and ready for students and staff every day. We are grateful for their hard work and commitment to our district.

Honoring those who serve – Celebrating the dedication of our military members and families.

- By the time we meet again, Great Falls Public Schools will have proudly recognized the 2025 Purple Star Recipients for the State of Montana. This year's honorees include the students and staff of Riverview Elementary School, as well as distinguished individuals Tara Murillo (librarian at Chief Joseph Elementary), Montana Johnson (counselor at Core School at Morningside), and Mark Yaeger (District Career Pathways Advisor). Their dedication to supporting military-connected students and families is truly commendable. On April 10th, Great Falls Public Schools and Malmstrom Air Force Base will join together for Purple Up Day, a time to show appreciation for the resilience and sacrifices of military children. The color purple represents all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, symbolizing unity and support for these remarkable young individuals. We are proud to stand with them and honor their unique experiences during the Month of the Military Child. Please wear purple on April 10th to help Great Falls Public Schools recognize our service members and their families.

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

- Congratulations to Lydia Comstock of C.M. Russell High School on her well-deserved nomination to the Montana Board of Public Education as the state's student representative! A sophomore and daughter of Jeremy and Emily Comstock, Lydia is an outstanding student and leader for the Rustlers. She currently serves as a Great Falls Public Schools Student School Board Representative, demonstrating her commitment to student voice and educational excellence. In addition to her leadership, Lydia is a standout in Speech and Debate, qualifying for nationals in Domestic Extemporaneous (1st place) and International Extemporaneous (2nd place), and earning the title of state champion in Impromptu Speaking. We are incredibly proud of Lydia's accomplishments and know she will represent both C.M. Russell High School and Montana students with passion and integrity. Congratulations, Lydia!

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

- March is Youth Art Month, a time to celebrate the creativity, talent, and artistic growth of our students. While they are busy honing their craft and developing their skills, their dedicated teachers work behind the scenes to ensure they receive the recognition they deserve. Across the community, student artwork is on display in a variety of exhibits, showcasing their passion and artistic expression. From the Great Falls Public Library and the Montana State Capitol to local venues like Luna Coffee, Heritage Inn, the Great Falls High School's Dahl Gallery, the C.M. Russell High School Seltzer Gallery, and Paris Gibson Square, these exhibits highlight the incredible work of young artists. As you check out student work at these venues, please give a special thank you to the teachers who encourage, inspire, and uplift their students daily, making these opportunities possible. Your dedication to fostering artistic talent enriches our schools and our community!

Heads-up on Dates– Keeping our community up to date on important events.

- There are several important dates and events that we want to make you aware of:
 - March 27, 2025 at 5:00 pm is the deadline for filing for Great Falls Public Schools Board of Trustees. There are three positions open. Four candidates have filed to run. If you're interested in learning more about running for the Board of Trustees, please contact Mr. Brian Patrick, Director of Business Operations and Clerk of the Board, at (406) 268-6050.
 - Watch for those Red Blazers! April 3-5, 2025, Great Falls will host over 300 students from across our state for the Montana Skills USA competition. This competition is designed for high school students in our Career Technical Education courses like auto, welding, construction, woods, electrical, and family consumer science. For more information, contact Community Connections Manager, Becky Nelson, at (406) 899-8624. If you are interested in judging, please fill out the online form at <https://skillsusamontana.volunteerhub.com/vv2/>

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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