



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

June 2025,

As another remarkable school year comes to a close in Great Falls Public Schools, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our students, families, staff, and community partners for making this year one of growth, resilience, and achievement. Graduation season is always a time of celebration and reflection, and we are incredibly proud of the Class of 2025 as they embark on their next chapter—whether it be college, career, or service. We also honor our dedicated retirees who have given so much to education and now step into a well-earned new phase of life. To all who have contributed to the success of this school year—thank you. Your commitment and support continue to shape the future of our schools and our community. Enjoy a safe, restful summer! Welcome to the final edition of 2024-2025 GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer. We will be back in August.

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

- This year, 794 individuals proudly walked the stage in celebration of earning their GFPS diploma or HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) - a moment that marks both personal triumph and community pride. Among them were 273 graduates from Great Falls High School, 280 from C.M. Russell High School, 120 from Paris Gibson Education Center, 117 HiSET graduates from the Career and College Readiness Center, 3 graduates from Secondary Life Skills, and 1 graduate from RESTART. Graduation is more than a ceremony—it's a deeply meaningful milestone for students and families alike. The Class of 2025 saw graduates between the ages of 16 through 84, each with a profound story. Graduation serves as a powerful economic driver for our city and our graduates. As loved ones gather from near and far, our hotels, restaurants, and local businesses see a welcome surge in activity. From celebrations and meals to gifts and decorations, graduation season highlights the close connection between our schools and the economic vitality of Great Falls. Beyond the immediate celebration, we are also welcoming a new generation of young adults who are ready to make their mark as members of the workforce, college students, and engaged citizens, bringing fresh energy and ambition to our community's future. In Montana, high school graduates, or those earning their equivalency, have a lifetime earning potential that is over \$250,000 greater than their peers who drop out. If you know of a student who has or is thinking of stopping their journey to the graduation stage, please encourage them to reach out to their local school or the Career and College Readiness Center.

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

- We are pleased to welcome Mr. Craig Duff as the newest member of the Great Falls Public Schools Board of Trustees. We also extend our heartfelt congratulations to returning Trustees Gordon Johnson and Paige Turoski on their re-election. We are grateful for their continued commitment, time, and belief in the power of public education and our Great Falls community. Their willingness to serve as active and present board members speaks volumes about their dedication to shaping the future of our schools. At the same time, we bid a sincere farewell to Trustee Mark Finnicum, who is retiring from the Board after six years of dedicated service. His thoughtful leadership and

steady presence have made a lasting impact, and we thank him for his invaluable contributions to GFPS. GFPS Board meetings continue over the summer with two meetings in June, one in July, and two in August. Please check out our calendar at <https://gfps.k12.mt.us/school-board/agendas-minutes/agendas-meetings>

Harnessing Achievement– Talking about and measuring how we learn.

- While our school buildings may grow quieter after June 6th, learning continues across Great Falls Public Schools throughout the summer. Many high school students will be hard at work recovering missed credits or getting a head start on future coursework. For select students in rising grades K–3, our Summer Jumpstart program—made possible through support from the Montana Legislature—offers valuable opportunities to continue growing in literacy and numeracy. Summer is also a time for families to reconnect, relax, and recharge. We encourage all students to keep their minds active by reading for enjoyment, discussing stories with loved ones, and thinking mathematically through everyday experiences. Learning never stops, and summer provides the perfect time to grow both academically and personally. For more information on summer learning opportunities, contact the offices of the Executive Directors at (406) 268-6008 or your local school.

Heroic Employees and Volunteers – Applauding dedication and hard work.

- As the school year came to a close, we wrapped up a month filled with well-deserved celebrations of the incredible staff who serve our students and families each day. In May, we honored our Principals (May 1st), Food Service workers (May 2nd), Teachers (May 5th – 9th), School Nurses (May 7th), Occupational and Physical Therapists (May 17th), and Speech-Language Therapists (May 17th) – each playing a vital role in the success and well-being of our school community. Their specialized skills, unwavering dedication, and compassionate support helped ensure that every student had the opportunity to thrive. On behalf of Great Falls Public Schools, thank you for your commitment to excellence and for making a lasting difference in the lives of those you serve.

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

- Learning doesn't stop in the summer for our educators, either. Many of our teachers use this time to continue their professional growth by participating in a wide range of PIR (Pupil Instruction Related) opportunities. Each year, teachers engage in at least 18 hours of professional learning outside the regular school day. This requirement is not only outlined in local Collective Bargaining Agreements but also mandated by Montana State Law. These sessions allow educators to develop new skills, gather fresh instructional tools, and refine their teaching practices. In doing so, they model the very essence of lifelong learning, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to excellence in education and to the success of every student they serve. Thank you to community partners, like Malmstrom Air Force Base and the Montana National Guard, who make experiential opportunities available to our teachers. If you are a community partner and are interested in engaging our teachers in learning opportunities in the future, please contact the Secondary Curriculum Director, Mrs. Rebecca Frisbee, at (406) 268-6761.

Honoring Commitment to Public Education – Thankful for the impact you made.

- We extend our deepest thanks to Mr. Brian Patrick for his outstanding service and impact on public education—not only here in Great Falls Public Schools but throughout the state of Montana. After 14 years as our Director of Business Operations, Brian is retiring, leaving behind a legacy of integrity, leadership, and steadfast dedication to students, staff, and the fiscal health of our district. While he looks forward to spending more time with his family, we are grateful that he will continue to support our community. Please join us in celebrating Brian’s contributions at a community open house on June 17th at 4:30 PM at the District Office Building. His commitment and influence will be felt for years to come.
- Great Falls Public Schools is proud to announce that we have been selected as the only AA K–12 district in Montana to receive a Montana Reads grant. This multi-million-dollar, five-year grant will allow us to provide focused professional development and resources grounded in *the Science of Reading*, strengthening our commitment to literacy and student success. At a time when many districts are being forced to reduce professional development due to cost, we are thrilled to offer our staff and students access to high-quality, research-based learning opportunities. A heartfelt thank you goes to the dedicated district team who made this possible: Carol Paul, Rachel Cutler, Beckie Frisbee, Lance Boyd, and Jackie Mainwaring. Their work is helping to shape a stronger future for our learners.

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

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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