



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

September 2025,

Great Falls...

Fall has arrived in Great Falls, and with it comes one of the most exciting traditions of the school year—Homecoming! For generations, Great Falls Public Schools has been at the heart of this community, bringing people together to celebrate not just our teams and activities, but the pride we share in our schools and the students who carry on these traditions. Whether you are an alum remembering your own homecoming days, a parent cheering from the sidelines, or a student experiencing it for the first time, these moments remind us how deeply our schools are woven into the story of Great Falls and why we are proud to call it home. Welcome to the September edition of Highlights with Superintendent Heather Hoyer.

Hard Work Behind the Scenes – 9/16 is National Information Technology Professional Day.

- Behind every lesson taught, assessment taken, and classroom connection made, there is a team of dedicated professionals ensuring the technology of Great Falls Public Schools runs smoothly and securely. Our 22-member technology team—including 1 administrator, 2 data integration coaches, 1 data center lead, 7 data specialists, 1 technology lead, and 10 tech specialists—works tirelessly behind the scenes to support staff, students, and families. Their expertise keeps our systems safe, reliable, and innovative, making them an essential part of the success of every school day. For more information on the Informational Technology department, contact Director Jeff Williams at 406-268-6068.

Hyperawareness of Attendance – You can't achieve if you don't show up!

- Attendance matters—in school, at work, and in life—and every day in class is a step toward success. With the strong support of parents and our community, Great Falls Public Schools reduced chronic attendance violations (defined as a student missing 10% or more of their education time) from 1,006 violations in 2024 to 661 violations last year—a remarkable improvement worth celebrating! Still, we know we can do even better. Attendance is not just about being in school; it's about building a lifelong skill that starts at home, grows in the classroom, and shines in the workplace. That means having the hard conversations with students you know are missing too much school—and remembering you are not alone. Please reach out to your child's school if you need support in navigating those conversations. Together, we can help every student develop the habits that lead to bright futures.

Homing in on Safety – Shorter days make walking and riding to school more dangerous.

- Fall brings shorter days and longer evenings, and with the change of season comes a reminder to slow down and stay alert. As we rush to school, events, and family activities, let's take extra care to watch for students and families walking, biking, or making their way to our schools. According to the United States Department of Transportation, a pedestrian dies from vehicular

collisions approximately every 72 minutes, with 77% of those deaths happening in the dark, 19% in daylight, and the remaining at dusk or dawn. Please watch for all of our citizens, but especially our smallest. Together, we can keep our community safe. Look for more tips and information during National Pedestrian Safety Month this October.

Heartfelt Focus – Communicating with our community.

- In an effort to strengthen communication with our community—both inside and outside our schools—GFPS has launched a multi-year Comprehensive Communication Plan. Led by Executive Director Jackie Mainwaring, this three-year strategic plan is guided by survey feedback and focuses on increasing opportunities for participation, improving transparency, and communicating more effectively with all stakeholders. Last year, our consensus-building process helped us make great strides in engagement and openness. Now, we want to learn more about how you prefer to receive information. Use this URL <https://forms.gle/45Qgh4xEQUFALj886> or the QR code below to take a very short survey to share your input and help us continue to grow in how we connect with you.



Heroic Partnerships – Fostering strong connections between our schools and the community.

- The annual Worlds of Work (WOW) Career Expo, a flagship event by Central Montana Works, recently lit up the path for the region's future talent, on September 23, 2025. This inspiring initiative brought together local industries and over 200 dedicated community volunteers in a powerful collaboration, offering a truly hands-on experience for over 2,000 8th and 10th graders. By transforming the campuses of Great Falls College MSU and the University of Providence into interactive career zones, WOW allowed students to explore the diverse, well-paying, and in-demand fields available right here in the Great Falls area. Thank you to our industry partners for helping the next generation of graduates by helping them dream big and "grow our own" workforce.

Highly Educated Educators – Fostering lifelong learning.

- A cornerstone of our exceptional faculty is the shared commitment to lifelong learning, demonstrated by the responsibility all Montana teachers embrace: renewing their professional license every five years. This periodic requirement to complete professional development units and/or earn graduate level college credits, is more than just a mandate; it's an opportunity to refresh, gain new insights, and bring the latest educational excellence back to the classroom. Last year, over 70% of our teachers held at least a Master's degree. This speaks volumes, proving that our dedicated educators don't just talk about continuous growth, they passionately live it, ensuring the very best for our students. High quality professional

development is a cornerstone of Great Falls Public Schools. Thank you to vital partners, like Malmstrom Air Force Base, and their mock deployment PIR (Pupil Instruction Related) learning opportunity, allowing them to earn renewal credits while experiencing the stress of deployment unique to our military members and their families. If you are a community partner who would like to partner on a teacher learning opportunity, please contact Mrs. Rebecca Frisbee, Secondary Curriculum Coordinator, at 268-6761.



GFPS teachers at Malmstrom AFB

Heartfelt Commitment – Building What Matters (motto for 2025)

- We often find the strongest bonds in shared experiences, which is why fostering a deep connection between our schools and the community is so important. One of the most powerful tools we have for building these relationships is simply asking **connection questions**. These are open invitations to share, learn, and appreciate what we have in common. Think about how much closer we feel when we ask: "**What is a favorite memory you have of homecoming?**" or "**Who was a teacher that truly inspired you, and what was it about their class?**" Perhaps it's simply, "**What is one piece of advice you would give to a student preparing for graduation?**" By creating space for these warm, school-specific questions, we share in a common legacy, moving beyond simple facts to celebrate the human experience of education that connects us all. Thank you for helping us *Build What Matters* for our students, families, and community.

Warm regards,

Heather Hoyer
Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools