



# Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

November 2025,

*This November, I invite our community to join me in recognizing the many reasons we have to be thankful. We honor the dedication of our students, staff, parents, and partners who bring learning to life every day – in our classrooms, on our stages, and across our athletic venues. Our students continue to reflect what is best about Great Falls through their talent, perseverance, and character; so, savor the concerts, swap your fall jerseys for winter ones, and offer a word of thanks to those who help keep GFPS strong, spirited, and proud.*

*Please be safe, stay warm, and we will see you in our schools. Welcome to the November edition of GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer.*

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

- As we honor Native American Heritage Month this November, we celebrate the rich histories, vibrant cultures, and enduring contributions of our Indigenous community. Great Falls Public Schools is proud to serve 1,623 Native American students, roughly 16.7% of our student body, from 71 Tribal Nations, and we are deeply committed to supporting them through our Indigenous Education programs. Our Indigenous Education Title VI program is grounded in the promise to meet the *unique educational and culturally related academic needs* of Indian students, helping them achieve rigorous state standards while embracing and understanding their heritage. Through this mission and promise, we affirm that every student matters, every story matters, and every learner belongs.

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

- We invite you to stop by the GFPS Christmas Stroll Pop-Up Shop and explore a wonderful variety of student-designed and student-created goods. Our talented learners have been hard at work crafting unique items that showcase their creativity, skills, and entrepreneurial spirit. The pop-up shop will be open during the Great Falls Christmas Stroll on December 5th from 5–8 p.m. at 101 Central Avenue – a perfect opportunity to support our students and find meaningful holiday gifts. If you know a creative student who would like to participate, please encourage them to reach out to their principal for details on how to get involved.

## **Harnessing Innovation** – Supporting creativity through *State Tax Credits*.

- The Innovative Tax Credit program continues to empower Great Falls Public Schools (GFPS) by funding advanced, hands-on learning opportunities, field trips, and targeted student support. Every dollar contributed goes directly toward initiatives that help students build the skills they need for future academic and career success — and donors receive a dollar-for-dollar state tax credit in return. If a contribution exceeds the donor's tax liability, the remaining credit can be carried forward for up to two years. Donations for the 2026 tax year must be received by January 21, 2026, and our district's total eligible contributions are capped at \$2.88 million dollars. For

more information, please contact GFPS Director of Business Operations, Luke Diekhans, at 406-268-6050. <https://gfps.k12.mt.us/departments/business-services-and-operations/business-office-and-finance/innovative-education-programs-tax-credit>

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

- In November, we are proud to honor two essential groups of employees whose dedication strengthens the foundation of Great Falls Public Schools. School Psychologists Week, celebrated November 10–14, recognizes the vital work of our nine GFPS psychologists, who support students’ academic, social, emotional, and behavioral well-being. Their expertise helps ensure that every learner has access to the tools and interventions they need to thrive. The following week, Substitute Appreciation Week (November 17–21) gives us the opportunity to thank our remarkable substitute educators. With 231 substitutes, including five full-time substitutes and one who has served our teachers and students faithfully since 2000, this team steps in with flexibility and professionalism to keep classrooms running smoothly when teachers must be away. Together, these two groups play a crucial role in maintaining continuity, care, and high-quality learning across our district—and we are deeply grateful for their service. If you know a school psychologist or a substitute teacher, please take a moment to thank them for their service to Great Falls Public Schools!

**Hard Work in the Classroom and On-Stage** – Fostering strong connections between schools and the arts.

- This month, our students shined brightly under the stage lights as both CMR and GFHS delivered outstanding drama productions. If you didn’t have the chance to experience *The Addams Family* or *Steel Magnolias*, you truly missed remarkable performances from our talented young artists. But don’t worry – December offers countless opportunities to support the performing arts in GFPS. Our students will present 108 elementary concerts, 8 middle school concerts, and 5 high school concerts across the district. To make that elementary magic happen, our music teachers lead 756 lessons districtwide, building the skills and confidence that culminate in those memorable performances. And with more than 2,000 family and community members attending our middle school concerts alone, it’s clear that the arts continue to bring Great Falls together in powerful ways. We invite you to join us next month to celebrate the creativity, dedication, and joy of our student performers. Please check out: <https://gfps.k12.mt.us/departments/fine-arts> for the most current holiday concert schedule.

**Habits to Build the Future** – Reinforcing academic skills and habits for after graduation.

- As we continue progressing through the school year, I want to provide an update on academic performance – one of the central focus areas of our Great Falls Public Schools Strategic Plan. This fall, students completed the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments, giving us a baseline for monitoring growth over the coming months. In reading, our median scores and overall score distributions matched last year’s exactly. Notably, 1st and 4th grades posted the strongest gains. In math, overall results show a one point drop over last year’s scores. However, particularly strong growth is recorded in 1st, 8th, and 9th grades. Our curriculum team is currently examining factors that may be influencing these trends – including summer learning loss, points in the curriculum where expectations increase sharply, and instructional practices – so we can make targeted adjustments to support continued progress. Thank you for

your ongoing partnership in helping every student reach their full potential. Together, we can continue improving academic performance and attendance as we advance toward our strategic goals.

**Hardworking Partnerships** – Our community helps our students thrive.

- The generosity of our Great Falls community continues to shine in meaningful and heartfelt ways. This year, one of our community partners, *All 4 Him Ministries*, provided 138 complete Thanksgiving dinner boxes to families from 14 of our schools, ensuring that plates, tummies, and hearts are full on November 27th. Another partner, *Flying S Title and Escrow* donated 1600 pair of socks during their “Socktober” drive. Their kindness reflects the spirit of a community that truly cares for its children – helping them feel supported, valued, and able to thrive. We are deeply grateful to our partners who lift up our students and remind us what it means to take care of one another.

**Heartfelt Commitment** – Building What Matters (motto for 2025)

- At Great Falls Public Schools, our work is rooted in a heartfelt commitment to building what truly matters for our students, staff, and community. We are guided by the promise of our Indigenous Education Department that every student feels included and every student experiences success. Whether we’re strengthening curriculum through thoughtful analysis, creating new opportunities for students to grow, celebrating the rich cultures within our schools, or fostering a deep sense of belonging, our focus remains unwavering: people first, and building our future together.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Heather Hoyer  
Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools

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