



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

December 2025,

Great Falls...

As we head into the holiday season, we want to pause and extend our deepest gratitude to the educators and staff of Great Falls Public Schools—and to the community that supports them. This time of year invites all of us to slow down, reconnect, and enjoy a well-earned reset. The work happening in our schools every day is both incredibly rewarding and undeniably hard. It takes patience, creativity, compassion, and a whole lot of heart. During this break, we hope our staff find time for rest, laughter, and moments with the people who matter most—along with a few mornings where no one asks them to solve a problem before coffee. To our community: thank you for believing in public education and for standing beside those who serve our students. The collective support of families, partners, and neighbors strengthens our schools and helps create the conditions for students to thrive.

From all of us at Great Falls Public Schools, we wish you a joyful holiday season filled with warmth, connection, and hope. We look forward to continuing to build what matters together in the year ahead. Welcome to the December edition of GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer.

Harnessing Hands-On Pathways for Student Success – Opportunities for their future.

- Under the leadership of Executive Director Lance Boyd, Career and Technical Education (CTE) continues to thrive in Great Falls Public Schools, connecting students to meaningful, real-world learning opportunities. Each January, our district submits the Montana Advanced Opportunities Grant report, and this year we are excited to share strong momentum: 4,620 students in grades 7–12 participated in at least one CTE course, and 202 students engaged in internships or pre-apprenticeships with local business and industry partners. This grant has allowed GFPS families to be reimbursed \$229,580.71 for expenses incurred during these experiential opportunities, from tetanus shots, to mileage, to steel-toe boots, and welding helmets (and so much more). GFPS is actively developing new cosmetology and HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) pathways to meet workforce needs, while Great Falls High School will launch its new *Exploring Careers and the Workplace* course this spring. This innovative course is being built hand-in-hand with more than 50 community partners to expose students to the wide range of career opportunities available right here in Great Falls and across Montana—strengthening our workforce pipeline and preparing students for success beyond graduation.

Helping Hands – Working together to support each other.

- The relationship between our schools and the Great Falls community is built on care, generosity, and shared responsibility—especially evident during the holiday season. This year, generous community partners and donors provided food, clothing, books, gifts, and most importantly, hope to students and families in need. At the same time, our students gave back in meaningful ways, celebrating the season through song, ringing Red Kettle bells, serving meals, wrapping gifts, and creating wreaths for others. These moments reflect the heart of our community: schools and neighbors working together to lift one another up and remind us that

belonging, compassion, and service are lessons learned both inside and outside the classroom.

Harnessing Initiative – Lifelong learning is what we do.

- 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>

Honing Higher Learning – Sharpening skills through continual learning.

- Great Falls Public Schools is proud to serve our community with nearly 700 dedicated teachers who choose, every day, to invest deeply in our students and in themselves. Teaching is not simply a profession; it is a commitment to lifelong learning. Our educators routinely spend their own time and their own money growing as learners and professionals by attending trainings, pursuing advanced coursework, and continuously refining their craft so they can better serve the students in their classrooms. Today, 68% of our teaching staff hold a master's degree or higher, and this number will continue to grow as more teachers complete advanced degrees this spring. This level of expertise reflects not only academic achievement, but a deep belief in the power of education and the responsibility educators feel to be their very best for our students.

Highly Engaged Student Athletes – Fostering strong connections between schools and the arts.

- Across Great Falls Public Schools, students who participate in extracurricular activities demonstrate an extraordinary commitment—balancing challenging coursework, family responsibilities, jobs, and other out-of-school obligations, while still finding time to proudly don their school colors. Whether they are competing in swimming, wrestling, or basketball; sharpening their voices through speech and debate; energizing crowds as part of spirit squad; or setting the rhythm in bands and choirs, these students represent their schools with pride, discipline, and heart. Participation beyond the classroom creates powerful connections to school, fostering belonging, confidence, and purpose. Research and experience consistently show that students who feel connected through activities are more likely to attend regularly, stay engaged, and ultimately graduate. These opportunities are not “extras”—they are essential pathways that help students find their place, build relationships, and succeed in school and in life. This winter, 21% of all high school students are involved in MHSAA (Montana High School Association) recognized activities. Best of luck to our Speech and Debate teams who will participate in the AA State Tournament January 30 and 31, 2026. For the most current schedule for the activity you love, visit: <https://gfps.k12.mt.us/departments/athletics-sports-schedules/sports-schedules>

Heartfelt Commitment – Building What Matters (motto for 2025)

- As we close this season, we remain guided by a heartfelt commitment to *Building What Matters*—creating opportunities for every student to feel supported, connected, and inspired. Whether it is assisting families with basic needs, thinking intentionally and creatively to offer meaningful and relevant classes, providing opportunities for students to serve others, or ensuring strong connections through extracurricular activities, our focus remains steadfastly on students. Thank you for the partnership, generosity, and trust that make this work possible. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season filled with peace, gratitude, and hope.

Warm regards,

Heather Hoyer
Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools

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