



Great People...Great Falls Public Schools

January 2026,

*From all of us at Great Falls Public Schools, we wish you a joyful start to 2026. While the calendar has turned a new page, our mission remains steady and true to our promise. We continue to be guided by a heartfelt commitment to **Building What Matters**—creating opportunities for every student, teacher, and employee to feel supported, connected, and inspired. As we step into this new year, we are energized by the momentum of our students, the dedication of our staff, and the unwavering support of this community. From achievements in the classroom to the mat, floor, and pool, GFPS students are taking on 2026 with pride and integrity.*

Welcome to the January edition of GFPS Highlights with Superintendent Hoyer.

Honed in on Our Future – Polishing skills today for tomorrow's successes.

- January marks a pivotal time for our high school students as they prepare for mid-year finals this week. Our high schools are using alternative schedules to support semester testing, ensuring students have the time and environment needed to demonstrate their learning. Simultaneously, we are looking ahead to the next academic year; students in grades 8–11 are already beginning the scheduling process for their future classes. If you know a current or future high school student, please take a moment to discuss their hopes, future goals, and dreams. Studies show that through mentorship and career connections, positive relationships with adults (both in and out of the school setting) make students feel supported, understood, and motivated to reach their potential.

Hard Work– Working together to support each other.

- Our Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) advisors and students are hard at work preparing for their upcoming state, regional, and national competitions. These events are the culmination of months of dedication, where students showcase the technical skills and leadership abilities they have developed in their Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. From welding to business management, our students are ready to represent Great Falls with excellence and pride. Great Falls Public Schools supports the following CTSO's which help students make vital connections between school and industry: BPA (Business Professional of America), DECA (Formerly Distributive Education Clubs of America; it is now recognized for Leadership and Entrepreneurship), HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America), Skills USA (Workforce Development), FCCLA (Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America), JAG (Jobs for America's Graduates), and JROTC (Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps).

Harnessing Initiative – Lifelong learning is what we do.

- We are incredibly grateful for the generosity shown by our community through the Innovative Tax Credit program. Thanks to your support, we have received \$1,008,000.00 in contributions that will directly fund advanced, hands-on learning opportunities, field trips, and targeted student support. These funds allow us to go beyond the basics, enhancing the educational

experience for every child. Every dollar contributed is an investment in our students' future, helping them build the skills they need for academic and career success. If you missed your opportunity to participate this year, but are interested in planning for next year, 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>

Honoring our SRO Partnership – Safety and achievement go hand in hand.

- We are proud to celebrate the vital partnership between GFPS and the Great Falls Police Department, specifically our School Resource Officer (SRO) team led by Sgt. Katie Cunningham. Through their support of our 21 schools and the programming established by our teacher and administrative leaders, we have seen a tangible positive impact on our school climate. GFPS has seen a reduction of 52 major infractions compared to the same time last year. While we celebrate this progress, we remain focused on areas such as insubordination (students not following the directions of adults) and disorderly conduct (disruptions to the learning environment) as we work to build strong character within our schools. If you know an SRO, please thank them for their outstanding work with and for our students and community.

Heroic Volunteers – Strengthening our schools through our community.

- January is National School Board Appreciation Month, and we want to recognize the heroic volunteers who serve on our School Board of Trustees. These elected, unpaid leaders are integral to our district, playing a vital role in shaping the future of our schools by providing guidance and oversight that reflects the values and priorities of our community. Serving in these unpaid, three-year positions requires an average commitment of 2-4 meetings per month, legal certification, and residency within the Great Falls Public Schools boundaries. This spring, three trustee positions are up for election, offering an opportunity to join this important team. The deadline to submit candidacy forms is February 9, 2026, at 5:00 PM. If you are interested in learning more about running for the GFPS Board of Trustees, please contact Mr. Luke Diekhans, Director of Business Operations and Clerk of the Board, at (406) 268-6050. Thank you to our School Board for their unwavering dedication to the students and families of Great Falls.

Hours Spent – Student athletes wear their school colors with pride.

- In total, 400 student athletes are representing the Blue/White and Green/Gold this winter season. Encompassing 14% of the total high school student population, these individuals spend hours representing their school colors and building character traits on perseverance, integrity, grit, and teamwork. On average, our athletes spend 13 hours a week at practice and in competition. Over the course of an average 13.5-week season length (start to State), each athlete will dedicate an estimated average 175.5 hours to their sport, or an estimated average of 70,200 hours collectively given by our student-athletes across our district. To put things in perspective, our student athletes represent GFPS an equivalent of 8 years each winter season, each year. To catch them representing their schools, please visit <https://gfps.k12.mt.us/departments/athletics-sports-schedules/sports-schedules> for the most current schedule.

Heartfelt Commitment – Building What Matters (motto for 2025-2026)

- Great Falls Public Schools remains guided by a heartfelt commitment to *Building What Matters*—creating opportunities for every student to feel supported, connected, and inspired. Whether it is providing opportunities for students to connect to school via CTSO's, Montana High School Association sanctioned athletics, academics, or all three, we are dedicated to making each experience in our district unique and rewarding. Stay warm and please find time to visit us in 2026!

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.

Learn more about GFPS by following us on Facebook or visiting our website at www.gfps.k12.mt.us.