



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues,

This week, we had the opportunity to celebrate the amazing accomplishments of some of our hard-working students and the inspiring tenure of our dedicated D51 staff, and it is always one of my favorite weeks of the year. On Tuesday, we had the privilege of coming together to celebrate our Superintendent Scholars (seniors who have a cumulative GPA of 4.0 or higher throughout high school), show gratitude to our retirees, and commend employees receiving their years of service awards. These moments of recognition serve as reminders of the incredible impact each of you have within our school community. I am proud to be your Superintendent, and I am grateful for the committed and dedicated staff here in D51 who give their all every day to make our community better. You can read more about our Superintendent's Scholars event and our Salute to Staff event below.

I was also able to make it out to some of our schools this week to hang out with our D51 students...the highlight of my week. On Monday, I visited Palisade High School for the unveiling of a student art project that fit perfectly with it being Earth Day! You can read more about it below, but shoutout to Sarah, Sami, and Grace for your hard work. I was also able to visit Central High School to eat lunch and hang out with my CHS Superintendent Student Advisory Group. This was our last meeting of the year, and I so appreciate the time these students spent with me throughout the year to share their thoughts and insight on important issues. I ended the week by visiting Monument Ridge Elementary School today to read to 1st-grade students during the Rotary Club book donation. It brought back memories of being in the classroom, and I loved seeing the excitement on the faces of the students. You can read more about the Rotary Club book donation below.

When I met with my CHS Superintendent Student Advisory Group this week, we continued the important conversation on tech use and the impacts of tech and social media on students. In last week's letter, I mentioned the importance of keeping an eye on the amount of time our kiddos are spending on smartphones and screens, and how extensive screen time makes it challenging to maintain a healthy balance with other essential activities. As we continue to find ways to better create sustained access to attention-fostering spaces and build spaces that maximize learning and thriving in our D51 schools, it is important that we continue the conversation about how families can partner with us to tackle this issue together.

To continue our conversation on how parents can support District 51's efforts to enhance our students' relationship with technology, we must address what many of our tweens and teens refer to as their "social awkwardness." They use this phrase to describe a deficiency in fundamental social skills, such as forming attachments, showing empathy, engaging in small talk, and maintaining eye contact. There are many things that can influence this, but a key factor contributing to this issue is the excessive use of technology, which often replaces the vital physical play and face-to-face interactions necessary for developing these essential skills.

It is crucial that we actively involve our socially hesitant children in social events that offer opportunities for physical play and direct interaction. Initially, they may feel uncomfortable or even claim to be bored. It's helpful to reassure them that it's normal to feel a bit reserved at the beginning. Encourage them by setting a manageable expectation: if they still feel uncomfortable after an hour, you can both decide to leave. However, more often than not, they rediscover their joy in playful interaction and connection with others and no longer wish to leave. By gently nudging our children into social environments, we help them build the crucial interpersonal skills needed for their future. Little shifts like this can help us, as a community, foster the development of essential skills in our students for the better.

As we approach the end of the school year, our work remains grounded in our shared commitment to deliver an exceptional educational experience to our students. We only have about 20 days of school left, and with all the amazing things continuing to happen across our district, I encourage all of us to finish the school year strong. Thank you for your continued support, hard work, and dedication to our students and staff, and thank you for being a part of our D51 Family!

#### Recognition Days

This week, I'd like to take a moment to recognize and celebrate the contributions of some of our D51 family members: our school bus drivers, administrative professionals, and volunteers. These roles are essential to the smooth operation of our school communities. Our bus drivers go above and beyond ensuring the safe transportation of our students; they also nurture meaningful relationships with our kids. These students trust them to be at the bus stop every day, greeting them with a smile and sending them off for another successful day at school. Our administrative professionals keep things running smoothly behind the scenes, handling countless tasks with efficiency and grace. They warmly welcome visitors and bid farewell at the end of the day, contributing significantly to the effectiveness of our daily operations. Additionally, our volunteers selflessly donate their time and energy to support various school activities across the district, enriching the lives of our students and empowering our staff. Together, these staff and community members are part of the foundation of our organization. They are dedicated, compassionate, and eager to serve, and we are grateful for all they contribute to our students, staff, and families. If you spot one of them around our schools next week, be sure to extend your gratitude for all that they do!

#### Superintendent's Scholars

Earlier this week, I had the honor of recognizing and celebrating over 200 D51 Superintendent's Scholars—high school graduates with a cumulative GPA of 4.0 or higher. This is the largest number of Superintendent's Scholars we have ever had, and close to 14% of our 2024 graduates have earned this distinction. It is truly remarkable. Every year, I look forward to this event because it gives me and the rest of our D51 staff an opportunity to acknowledge and honor the hard work, dedication, commitment, and sacrifice of these students over the last four years. As we celebrate the students' successes, the excitement and joy surrounding this event is fun to be a part of. Read more [here](#).

#### Salute to Staff

On Tuesday, we held our annual Salute to Staff End-of-Year Event to celebrate another successful year at School District 51. At the event, we recognized just shy of 60 retirees and hundreds of employees earning years of service milestones with District 51, and we thanked our over 3,500 employees for their hard work, dedication, and contributions throughout the year. Read more [here](#).

#### Caring for Colorado Mural Dedication at Central High School

This week, Central High School unveiled a community mural, which was donated to the school by Caring for Colorado. The mural focuses on a future of hope for our students, highlighting that with strong support systems, resilient communities, and nurturing relationships, our youth can thrive and reach their full potential. Read more [here](#).

#### Taylor Elementary/GJHS Monster Party

This week brought us some fantastic collaborations between our Taylor Elementary kindergarten students and students from across Grand Junction High School! On Tuesday, the kindergartners, led by Mrs. Brown and Mrs. LK, joined forces with our GJHS high schoolers to bring their hand-crafted monster projects to life. Read more [here](#).

#### FMHS Project Bike Tech Bike Giveaway

Last week, I mentioned the FMHS Project Bike Tech Open House, where students in the Fruita Monument High School Bike Tech Program were holding a community event to donate bikes to youth in the Grand Valley. The event was a resounding success, and I am so proud of the work ethic and heart of these students. Read more [here](#).

#### UB Senior Presentation at CMU

During the recent ASPIRE conference hosted at Colorado Mesa University, Angel Sosa-Henry, a senior at Central High School, captivated attendees with his workshop titled "Take the Risk or Lose the Chance." Read more [here](#).

#### Palisade High School CAS Project Highlight

Recently, students at Palisade High School who are part of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program successfully completed their CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service) project. Read more [here](#).

#### Colorado West Invitational Music Performance Results

Last week, middle and high school bands district-wide participated in the annual Colorado West Invitational Music Performance Festival. Ensembles were judged on a scale from I to V, with I indicating Superior performance. From these Superior-rated groups, judges chose one high school ensemble from each classification as the Outstanding Ensemble of the festival. These accolades are only given at the high school level, and several D51 high schools were honored with these prestigious awards. Read more [here](#).

#### GJHS Academic Team Wins National Knowledge Bowl

The Grand Junction High School Academic Team has taken home the state title for the second year in a row! Read more [here](#).

#### Central High School Recognized with Eliza Pickrell Rount Award

This week, Central High School was presented the esteemed Eliza Pickrell Award, named after the pioneering woman who played a pivotal role in Colorado's history. Read more [here](#).

#### Rotary Clubs of the Grand Valley Literacy Book Donation

This week, Rotary Clubs across the Grand Valley visited every D51 Elementary School, donating books to each first-grade student. Read more [here](#).

#### Saccomanno Higher Education Foundation Scholarship

**Attention all seniors!** The Saccomanno Higher Education Foundation (SHEF) a wonderful organization that has been supporting D51 students for decades, aims to support students needing financial aid for continued education, empowering them to enhance their lives, families, and communities. The foundation welcomes applications from individuals of all ages and academic backgrounds, offering scholarships for accredited colleges, universities, and vocational schools, both in-state and out-of-state. Don't miss this chance to apply. **The application deadline is April 30. APPLY NOW at [shf.smapply.org](#).**

#### D51 Foundation Students and Staff Wellness Grants

This week, the District 51 Foundation announced the winners of its inaugural Student and Staff Wellness Grant Awards. \$15,000 in grants will benefit 12 District 51 staff members. This is yet another demonstration of the remarkable support our D51 Foundation provides to our students, staff, and families. Read more [here](#).

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- Western Slope Blue Star Mothers 2024 Military-Bound Graduate Celebration  
*April 27, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at the Western Slope Vietnam Memorial*  
Join us in celebration of our D51 graduates who have made the honorable decision to enlist in our U.S. Armed Forces. More details [here](#).
- One Act Festival  
*May 3, 7 p.m. at Grand Junction High School*  
Come and watch performances by GJHS, FMHS, and CHS as each school presents a one-act play during our One Act Festival event.
- Special Olympics of Western Colorado  
*May 2, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Stocker Stadium*  
Come out and cheer on our D51 students as they participate in the Special Olympics of Western Colorado!
- Latino Anglo Alliance Foundation Cinco De Mayo Celebration  
*May 4, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Downtown Main Street*  
The funds raised from this event will support scholarships for Latino students in District 51. The event is hosted by the Latino Anglo Alliance Foundation and will feature food trucks, crafts, vendors, live entertainment, a car show, and exciting activities for children. Come and join us for a fun-filled day that supports a great cause!
- Senior Walks  
*May 13, various times, see [schedule](#) for details*  
Calling all D51 Seniors! Our Senior Walk is a beloved tradition where graduating seniors take a final stroll through the halls of their elementary alma mater, reminiscing and bidding farewell.

For more events happening across the district, visit:

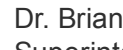
- [Spring Athletics Schedule](#)
- [District Upcoming Events](#)

If you have good news to share with us, we'd love to highlight your program, event, story, and more. Please share it with our communications department by emailing

[communicate@d51schools.org](mailto:communicate@d51schools.org).

*Brian Hill*

Dr. Brian Hill  
Superintendent of Schools  
Mesa County Valley School District 51  
[brian.hill@d51schools.org](mailto:brian.hill@d51schools.org)  
970.254.5193



215 Grand Ave.  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
[d51schools.org](http://d51schools.org)  
(970) 254-5100

2021 © All Rights Reserved