



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues:

As we close out the last week before Thanksgiving break, I'd like to take some time to reflect on all that I am thankful for. I have to start with our students. We have the best students, and I am constantly impressed with the creativity and energy that our students bring to the classroom each and every day. We do what we do to serve our students, and I am thankful that we get to serve such a great group of superstar kiddos.

I need to brag about our D51 staff. Whether it is our school-based staff or our central office staff, I am so thankful for the time and energy you pour into the profession, all in the name of student success. We have weathered a lot of storms together, and the result is improved outcomes for our students...academically, socially, and emotionally. We are preparing and supporting our D51 students better than ever, and it is due to your tireless work ethic and drive to perfect your craft. As a parent myself, I know our family is so very thankful for the support our son is receiving from his teachers, school admin, and staff. Thank you for being the heart of the D51 Family.

And last but certainly not least, I am grateful to have the opportunity to serve our families and our community as your Superintendent. One thing I have learned in my 3 years here is that the Western Slope finds a way to work together and is resilient in the face of adversity. And when we progress as a community, together, we are stronger than we were before, and that combined strength and communal grit has a positive impact on our students. I am reminded daily of how amazing our community is through its continued support of the D51 mission and vision. I hear it in the positive comments made by families about our schools, and I see it in the faces of our families when I am out at events enjoying the display of talents from our students. Thank you to our families and community for being Engaged Supportive Partners with us.

Collectively, we have accomplished great things in the first 14+ weeks of the school year. We have a lot to be thankful for, and I hope you will take some time over the break to share your gratitude with those around you. Thank you for being a part of the D51 Family. We look forward to more positive things to come in the future.

D51 SCHOOLS RECEIVE TWO OF ONLY 21 GOVERNOR'S SPOTLIGHT AWARDS

We have very exciting news to share. Governor Polis announced today that 21 schools across the state of Colorado would be receiving the Governor's Spotlight Award. This award is given to schools that have demonstrated strong growth in student achievement since 2019 by advancing more than two bands on their School Performance Frameworks. These schools excelled through challenges caused by the pandemic and ensured their students progressed. We are excited to announce that two of the 21 schools are D51 schools! Congratulations to **Chatfield Elementary School** and **Bookcliff Middle School & the Dual Immersion Academy at Bookcliff!** These schools not only received their award, but they also will receive \$50,000 each to put towards continued school improvement efforts.

When Governor Polis called me this week to tell me the news (which we had to keep secret until now), he asked me what I would attribute to the success of these two schools. My answer was simple...strong leadership, dedicated and hard-working staff, families that are supportive/invested in their schools, and students who put in the work necessary to grow academically. When school communities work together towards a common goal, use real-time student data to drive their decisions, and provide the necessary direct support to students when and where they need it, schools can do amazing things. Chatfield Elementary and Bookcliff Middle School & the DIA Bookcliff Program have all of those necessary ingredients, and we are so proud that they are receiving this recognition. To be two of only 21 schools across the state to receive this award is a huge accomplishment, and I hope you will join me in congratulating both of our schools for their hard work. Thank you to Principal McCall and Principal Butterfield for your leadership. I also want to shout out our D51 central office staff who work hard to support all of our schools, including the two receiving this award. It takes a team, and we have a great team in D51.

Click [here](#) to read the press release from the Governor's office.

D51 STEM TEAMS QUALIFY FOR STATE

On Nov. 12, I attended the F.I.R.S.T Lego League Challenge Robotics Tournament held at Fruita Monument High School. I also had the pleasure of emceeing the closing ceremonies, and it definitely was the highlight of my week. We had 45 teams from across the state compete in the challenge, with 29 teams representing District 51. This event is the largest Robotics Tournament in Colorado and saw over 350 students and 1,200 attendees participate. District 51 teams won 11 awards, and three of our teams will advance to the state tournament. Congratulations to the Hawkeye Challenge Team from Mesa View Elementary, the Hawk Challengers from Mesa View Elementary, and the Solardiers from New Emerson Elementary. A big shout out to Jessica McDivitt and her team for creating such a fantastic event for D51 STEM students and our community! And thank you to all of the coaches, D51 admin and staff, volunteers, and families for coming out to support our students. The environment was electric, and I loved seeing the excitement on the faces of our students. Click [here](#) to view the incredible infographic the STEM team put together to recap the event.

COLORADO CHORAL DIRECTORS' SELECT CHOIR

I was honored to emcee the Colorado Choral Directors' Select Choir event held at Colorado Mesa University on Nov. 14. This annual event brings selected students from choirs all over the Western Slope of Colorado to perform together. The Colorado Choral Directors' Select Choir was started in 1991 by four high school choir directors from the D51 family. High School Choir Directors nominate their most talented students for this event, and those students come together for one day to perform. This event instills confidence in the nominated students, propelling them forward to lead their high school chorals and audition for other select choral groups. The directors spend hours of their spare time planning, organizing, and setting up the event to provide ways for our students to excel outside the classroom. I'd like to thank all the directors who helped in any way throughout this program. Your efforts are remarkable and substantially impact our D51 students. A special shoutout goes to Conductor Raisha Quinn. Mrs. Quinn served students through fine arts for 30 years, most recently at East Middle School in D51. Her leadership has been invaluable to our D51 choral programs, and we want to thank her for positively influencing the musical landscape for many of our students!

PALISADE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

It was a competitive fall sports season for D51 football, with three of four high school football teams advancing to the State Playoffs. The Palisade Bulldogs earned a spot in the playoffs during the last few weeks of their regular season and defeated the Northridge Grizzlies 14-7 in the State 3A Football Playoffs game last week. They will face Green Mountain High School tomorrow, Nov. 19, at 1 p.m.

I cannot say enough about how proud I am of our student-athletes. I would like to give one last shoutout to all individual and team State qualifiers in the fall sports. To our coaches, assistant coaches, and families, we appreciate your commitment to your student-athletes and their teams. They could not do it without you in their corner.

We hope you'll join us in cheering on the Bulldogs this weekend. You can catch the game in person or on the TEAM Sports Network. Go Bulldogs!

WESTERN SLOPE CO BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION SELECT BAND

This Saturday, 100 middle school and 100 high school students from across the Western Slope will gather for the Annual Western Slope Colorado Bandmasters Association Select Band Performance. The event will culminate with a concert tomorrow, Nov. 19, at 4 p.m. at Palisade High School. Students who participate in this band performance are nominated by their band directors. A selection committee then narrows down which students will participate in the Select Band. Congratulations to all students selected. We are cheering for you and wish you the best of luck!

OWL

Today, Mount Garfield Middle School finished out the fall season for the D51 Outdoor Wilderness Lab (OWL) Program. OWL, which is located at the Gateway School, is geared toward our 6th-grade students and offers a beautiful outdoor setting to explore the natural world. Every year, 6th graders from various D51 schools spend three days and two nights at the OWL campus.

Our OWL instructors are incredibly passionate about providing experiences for our students to learn about and connect with nature while fostering a love for science. Seeing how much these students grow during their short time at OWL is remarkable. Through this program, they learn valuable skills and then apply them to life outside the classroom. These programs are an invaluable part of our student's education, and I am proud our school district is able to offer these experiences.

FRUITA MONUMENT HIGH SCHOOL FFA TEAM

Fruita Monument High School FFA had a phenomenal showing at the District II Competition on Wednesday evening, taking home three 1st place finishes! All three FMHS students who competed in the speaking competition will now move on to the State Convention in June in hopes of advancing to Nationals. Congratulations to Taylor Schacht, who will represent FMHS in Prepared Speaking, Johnny Surber in Extemporaneous Speaking, and Kenli Fitch, who will compete in Creed Speaking. I'd like to give an additional shoutout to Mckenna Young, Katharine Eshelman, and Principal McClaskey for all the hours and dedication you and your team have put in this year - it shows! We will be rooting for you. Way to go, Wildcats!

ROCKET LEAGUE QUARTER-FINALS

The Central High School Rocket League team is headed to the quarterfinals this weekend in Denver. The team is ranked 5th heading into the competition and will represent the Western Slope as they compete against 32 other Colorado teams. Esports became an officially sanctioned CHSAA activity at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year after spending a year as a pilot program. Rocket League, a sport-based video game that requires teamwork and outmaneuvering opponents, involves high-level dexterity and fast-paced gameplay. We are excited to watch this team compete and have high hopes for their advancement to finals!

CHROMEBOOK DISTRIBUTION DATE CHANGE

When Chromebooks reach a certain "age," they are no longer functional in a school district setting. This is due to the inability to load necessary updates, the lack of functionality for school district use, and potential security issues. While the devices have served our students well for many years, they must be replaced after a certain point. Instead of disposing of the devices, they can still be useful in a non-school-based setting. This is why the D51 Foundation has graciously agreed to help distribute them to our community, and we are thankful for that.

Due to issues outside of our control, the event hosted by the D51 Foundation that was scheduled for this week to distribute Chromebooks had to be postponed. Fortunately, we discovered this problem before we began the distribution of the devices. We want to ensure every community member who receives a Chromebook can use it without issue.

We are confident distribution will begin before Winter Break, and we will update you with more information once we confirm the new dates. Again, we apologize for the inconvenience. Thank you to the D51 Foundation for your continued support, and thank you to the D51 technology department for acting quickly to resolve the issue. We look forward to distributing the devices to our community soon.

BOARD NEWS

The Board of Education held a business meeting on Tuesday in the Harry Butler Board Room. Highlights from the meeting included:

- The Board of Education opened up the meeting with several recognitions of our students and staff.
 - Colorado Association of Science Teachers Secondary Science Teacher of the Year, Ms. Liz Henrikson, Fruita Middle School
 - Colorado High School Mountain Bike State Champion, Ben Garmany, Grand Junction High School
 - Dedication to Fundraising for High School Theater, 240 Mile Endurance Race, Mr. Mark Leistico
 - Palisade High School Marching Band 2nd Place State finish, Mr. Jeff Mason, Director
 - Southwest League Softball Player of the Year, Jenna Fraser, Central High School, and Co-Coach of the Year, Ms. Windi Serrano, Grand Junction High School
 - Western Slope League Softball Pitcher of the Year, Mikayla Talbott, Palisade High School, and Co-Player of the Year, Melissa Carroll, Palisade High School
- Strategic Plan Focus Area #3 gave their presentation about Effective Community Partnerships to Advance Strategic Goals, Transparent and Effective Resource Allocation, and Communication and Connection with Families.
- Superintendent Dr. Hill gave a presentation regarding the Orchard Mesa Pool.
- The Board of Education approved the following consent agenda items:
 - Personnel Actions
 - Gifts
 - Curriculum Adoption
- Resolution to not approve the Wildflower Montessori Charter School
- Policy second reading/adoption approving the following policies:
 - J-2.a. DIA, Online School
 - J-2.b. DAB, Financial Administration
 - J-2.c. IC/CA, School Year/School Calendar
 - J-2.d. KFA, Public Conduct on School Property or at School Activities
- Board Open Discussion
- Two executive sessions were held following the Board of Education public meeting.
 - Conference with legal counsel for the purpose of receiving legal advice on specific legal questions under C.R.S. Section 24-6-402(4)(b), regarding Lincoln Park Stadium improvements.
 - Discussion of the purchase acquisition, lease, transfer, or sale of any real, personal, or other property interest under C.R.S. Section 24-6-402(4)(a), specifically to discuss the Orchard Mesa Pool.

As a reminder, you can watch the meeting by clicking on this [link](#). As always, our BOE meeting details can be found on our [website](#).

Brian Hill

Dr. Brian Hill
Superintendent of Schools
Mesa County Valley School District 51
brian.hill@d51schools.org
970.254.5193



2115 Grand Ave.
Grand Junction, CO 81501
d51schools.org
(970) 254-5100