



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues:

There are some amazing things going on in District 51 schools, and I got to see some of those amazing things first-hand this Monday and Tuesday on our Back to School Bus Tour. Members of our Senior Leadership Team, Board of Education, and I kicked off our tour with a visit to see Tech Education, JROTC, and STEM classrooms at Central High School, then headed over to Chatfield Elementary for an all-school song and a discussion of Chatfield's transformation from the lowest school performance frameworks rating to the highest level possible in two short years. I also received a gold coin from a student to use at the Chatfield book vending machine. Such a cool idea that encourages kids to read more. We rounded out the day by visiting English- and Spanish-speaking Dual Immersion Academy classrooms at Bookcliff Middle School and talking with a class of high school students on their first day of orientation for concurrent enrollment classes at WCCC. These students are taking advantage of free college classes through the concurrent enrollment program...a partnership between D51, CMU, and WCCC. Learn more about concurrent enrollment [here](#).

On Day 2, we toured the library and new playground at New Emerson STEM School, stopped at R-5 High for a Stuff the Bus school supply check presentation, and stuck around for a tour of the school's many hands-on programs, like the aquaponics setup where R-5 students grow vegetables that are used in our local restaurants. Next, we tried out VR technology and discussed project-based learning at STEAM @ Tope Elementary, then finished the tour at D51's newest elementary school, Monument Ridge. Thanks for dancing with me and showing us your robotics and Makerspace areas, MRES.

It was truly inspiring to see our staff and our students thriving in the classroom as we begin the school year. A big shoutout to our Board of Education members and D51 staff who were able to join us, including our amazing bus driver, Butch. You can check out pictures of the tour from [Day 1](#) and [Day 2](#). I look forward to next year's tour!

CMAS scores

District 51 students saw growth in both Math and English Language Arts proficiency at almost every grade level on this year's Colorado Measures of Academic Success tests. The Colorado Department of Education released CMAS data this Wednesday that showed a three percentage point climb in both math and ELA, compared to 2019 test data, as you may have heard in Thursday's [Colorado Public Radio](#) story. In their list of 6 key takeaways from state test results, D51 was mentioned twice under takeaway number 6 for our student growth. I especially want to shout out our fourth-graders, who beat the state average for CMAS math proficiency by more than six percentage points. While we know we still have work to do to ensure that all D51 students are successful, let's take a moment to recognize the efforts of our D51 teachers, admin, and staff for helping our students grow academically through a challenging couple of years.

School Safety

Unfortunately, we have had three incidents with gun facsimiles (an airsoft gun and two BB guns) already this school year. I want to thank the students who reported these incidents and did the right thing by telling a trusted adult. Reports can be made in person or through Safe2Tell at 1-877-542-7233 or [safe2tell.org](#). I also want to ask parents and guardians to please talk with your children about guns - including low-powered facsimiles - and how they have no place in schools. Bringing any type of weapon to school can result in serious consequences, including expulsion, and we want to keep student and staff safety & security as our top priority. I thank you in advance for partnering with us to make that happen.

Panorama Survey

Starting next week, D51 schools will administer a quick Panorama survey to all students in grades 3-12. The questions on the survey ask about a student's sense of well-being. The results will be kept confidential and used by staff to better support students. The data gleaned from this survey will also help guide our work around student wellness...a priority area in our Strategic Plan under the Focus Area of Prepared & Supported Students. You can see all of the questions on the survey on our [website](#). If you would like to opt your child out of this survey, please visit the D51 website (under the Parents tab, click on Assessment Information).

Literacy Open House

The last of three open houses hosted by our Curriculum Team will take place from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. today in the Harry Butler Board Room, 455 N. 22nd St. Visit the open house to see the two choices for materials under consideration to replace D51's current elementary school literacy curriculum in 2023-24. I want to thank the members of the Instructional Resource Selection Team for all of the hours they have put into this process. Their work will help to ensure that we have a high quality ELA resource as a district moving forward.

Noche Informativa (Spanish Language Parent Information Nights)

To support the implementation of the D51 Strategic Plan and build bridges of communication with our Spanish-speaking families, our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education and Migrant departments are collaborating with other departments to provide important information about district services and policies. This information will be provided at monthly parent/guardian information sessions that will take place in Spanish on the third Monday of each month from 6:30-7:30 p.m. I was able to attend last night's meeting, and it was a great opportunity for me to hear questions and concerns shared by our Spanish-speaking families. I also invite you to attend our School Board meetings at 6 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of the month in the Harry Butler Board Room; Spanish interpretation services are available at our board meetings.

Senior Leadership Spotlights

We have amazing staff throughout our school district who work hard to engage, equip, and empower each and every student, each and every day. This includes our hardworking central office staff. Our central office staff roles exist to remove barriers to success for our schools. Leading the many important central office departments is a tough job, and we are fortunate to have strong Senior Leadership Team members who are tasked with taking on the challenge of ensuring the work we do leads to student outcomes and staff success in all of our schools and district buildings. Over the next few weeks we will be highlighting members of the Senior Leadership Team so that you can get to know them better and put a face to the name of the folks who are leading the work of continuous improvement in D51. At the bottom of this week's letter you'll see a spotlight on our Executive Director of Human Resources, the amazing Nikki Jost.

Recognitions

Before I end this week's letter, I want to again recognize some outstanding D51 employees that were honored at our Board of Education meeting on Tuesday: Career Center healthcare instructor Lane Seger, who saved the life of a man who was having a heart attack this summer by using an AD machine; Environmental Health & Safety Manager Petie Pope, who earned the Lasting Legacy Award from the North American Hazardous Materials Management Association; retired Fruita 8/9 Band Director Brett Argo, who recently became just the 47th person ever inducted into the Colorado Bandmasters Association Hall of Fame; and CBA Exemplary Band Award winners Ryan Crabtree (FMHS), Sarah Kamstra (RMS), Jeff Mason (PHS) and Tzetz Mendez (MGMS). We have top notch staff in D51, and these individuals are a snapshot of the talent that exists in D51. Congratulations!

Brian Hill

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



SENIOR LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Nikki Jost

Exec. Director, Human Resources



Career Background
I am in my 16th year as a school district Director of Human Resources and have worked in the HR field since 1998.

Alma Mater
University of Northern Colorado

Why did you want to work in K-12 education?
I come from a family of heroes - all educators.

What's your favorite thing about D51?
The D51 family and our commitment to collaboration in making decisions based on what's best for students.

What are you looking to accomplish this year in your role?
I am looking forward to advancing our strategic plan, especially in the focus area of prepared and supported staff.

Fun Fact
I'm an avid Broncos and Avalanche fan.



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