



Dear D51 Colleagues and Families,

As we near the end of another school year, I'm excited to share the incredible happenings across our district, particularly the ongoing dedication and efforts of our students and staff. It's inspiring to see everyone's hard work paying off. As we celebrate these achievements and look ahead to the final six weeks of the school year, I'm confident that together, we will continue to nurture an environment of learning, growth, and achievement for everyone, ensuring we finish the year on a high note. While our elementary and middle school students enjoyed a day off today, our high school students and staff were actively engaged in learning, and our dedicated PreK-8th-grade teachers and staff were busy planning and participating at in-service training to perfect their craft.

Over the weekend, I was able to take in some fun and exciting events in D51. Our FIRST LEGO League Explore Festival on Saturday was a huge hit, and the energy inside Orchard Mesa Middle School was amazing. You can read more about it below. I was also able to participate in the GJHS Farewell event, organized and put on by the GJHS Student Council, and I was able to take in some of the action on the field as our Palisade High School girls soccer team competed at CMU. You can read more about the GJHS Farewell event below, as well. On Tuesday night, I was able to catch even more soccer action at CMU as our GJHS girls and CHS girls battled it out. I love attending these events to not only see our student athletes perform, but also to see the D51 students, staff, and families who come out to support them. Last night, I was able to attend the 31st Annual Masonic Awards Ceremony where students and staff from D51 middle and high schools are honored for their performance, and we were able to honor Sarah Rayside from Rim Rock Elementary School as the D51 Overall Outstanding Teacher of the Year! Congrats to Ms. Rayside and all of the students and teachers who were honored.

Today I was able to make it out to CMU for our Exceptional Rodeo event for our D51 high school students who receive Special Education services to experience the fun of the CMU rodeo! You can read more about it below. The highlight for me was getting to see the joy on our kids' faces, and I also got a kiss from a baby goat, which isn't something you get to say everyday! I also was able to meet with my Superintendent Student Advisory Group at Palisade High School for our final meeting of the year. This great group of students gave up their lunchtime to meet with me throughout the year, and I really appreciate them bringing student voice and perspective to important topics in our district.

The students and I continued the conversation about tech use in schools and the impact it is having on our students. As we continue to explore this topic as a district, and look for solutions to address the problem, we will be presenting key data and information at next Tuesday's Board Meeting as we work to update our tech use policy and find ways to better create sustained access to attention-fostering spaces and build spaces that maximize learning and thriving in our schools. If you are a reader, and you want to learn more about this topic, two books that I have recently explored and would recommend are "iGen" by Dr. Jean Twenge and "The Anxious Generation" by Dr. Jonathan Haidt. They both provide intriguing insight into the relationship between the rise in adolescent mental health issues (major depression, anxiety, etc.) and self-harm and suicide rates starting in the early 2010's, and the introduction of the smartphone in 2007 along with greater access to social media apps around 2012. Not only has greater adolescent access to smartphones and social media apps led to greater rates of mental health issues, they have created more distracted children whose minds are "forever elsewhere." Dr. Haidt argues that a "phone-based childhood" vs the former "play-based childhood," and the "great rewiring" of the Gen Z brain has interfered with child development and exacerbated mental health issues. We will dive into this topic more at the upcoming Board Meeting, and in upcoming Friday Updates, as we work together as a school district and community to find solutions to these issues...for our kids.

Just a friendly reminder that there will be **no school tomorrow, April 12**, due to our Teacher Compensation Day. This day off is in recognition of the hard work and dedication of our teachers, who are required to stay after their contract hours for parent-teacher conferences each semester.

CMU Exceptional Rodeo

The second Annual CMU Exception Rodeo welcomed D51 students with exceptionalities to the CMU campus for a day filled with interactive rodeo events. Read more [here](#).

FIRST LEGO League Explore Festival

Last Saturday, our District 51 STEM Program hosted its Annual FIRST LEGO League Explore Festival, and it was a resounding success. With more than 240 students and 800 attendees, our community came together and engaged in an enriching day filled with STEM adventures. Read more [here](#).

GJHS Students Lead Farewell Tours for Community

I want to take a moment and shoutout our amazing Grand Junction High School StuCo students, who organized the GJHS Farewell Tours that happened last weekend. Read more [here](#).

FCCLA State Champions and National Qualifiers

In early April, our D51 FCCLA students from GJHS, FMHS/Fruita 8/9, and PHS headed to the Front Range for the Colorado State Leadership Conference. This season, D51 proudly celebrated three State Champions and sixteen students who qualified for the FCCLA National Leadership competition. Read more [here](#).

Masonic Awards

For years, the local Masonic community has honored exceptional students and outstanding educators in the Grand Valley. This week, I had the privilege of attending the Fraternity of Free & Accepted Masons of Colorado's 2024 Annual Public School Awards Ceremony. Read more [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Altrusa International Art Fair
April 9, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at The Art Center of Western Colorado
Don't miss the Altrusa Art Show, where District 51 students from Middle School to High School showcase their talents across various mediums.
- Colorado Bandmasters Association State Concert Band Festival
April 15 and 16, CSU Fort Collins
Central High School and Fruita Monument High School qualified for the State Concert Band Festival, which highlights Colorado's top concert bands and offers critiques from renowned music educators. Good luck to both high schools as they compete!
- CO Western Invitational Music Performance Festival
April 18-20, locations and times vary. See [schedule](#) for details.
This year's festival will showcase over 150 performing ensembles from across the state. All events are free and open to the public.
- IB Senior Art Exhibition
April 19th, 6 - 9 p.m. at The Blue Pig Gallery
The IB Art students at Palisade High School are showing their works at The Blue Pig Art Gallery in Palisade! Stop by during the reception to get a free drink and snack and show your support for our art students!
- Tiger Boutique Open House
April 20, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Grand Junction High School
All clothing, hygiene, and school supplies are free to the entire community!
- 2024 STEM Senior Capstone Presentations
April 24, 4-7 p.m. in the Central High School Auditorium
Join Central High School STEM's Senior Capstone Project Presentation for the Class of 2024. The presentation will start in the auditorium, followed by a campus tour to view the projects up close and engage with the students.

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.

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