



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues,

Happy Friday, District 51! As we kick off March, there is a lot to celebrate in and around our school district. Speaking of kick, this week was KIC week in D51. KIC (or Kindness Is Contagious) Week is a time for our schools to promote and celebrate spreading kindness throughout the district. Shoutout to all of our students, staff, and admin for all of the fun school events this week to promote kindness in our schools. It is a good reminder for all of us, as the KIC sweatshirts say, to JUST BE NICE.

Also, speaking of kicking, the Fruita Monument High School boys basketball team kicked butt all year long on the court. After an undefeated regular season, the team headed into the state playoffs as the #1 seed. I was able to catch the first and second round games in person, and tuned in online last night to see the team compete in the final 8 in the state. While the boys didn't come away with the victory, I want to shoutout Coach Wells and the entire FMHS boys basketball team for an incredible season. Going undefeated and making it to the Elite 8 is an amazing accomplishment, and y'all represented the Western Slope at the state tournament with pride. Shoutout to the students, staff, families, band, cheer squad, dance team, and everyone who cheered on our Wildcats all season. Let's give these student athletes a round of applause, and let's make sure we get out and support our student athletes as spring sports kick off, as well.

This week, I was able to attend three of the many Say Something Assemblies held at all of our D51 middle and high schools. On Monday, I attended the assembly at Mount Garfield Middle School, on Wednesday I attended Grand Junction High School, and today I attended Central High School. Seeing these assemblies in person amplified the power behind the message and the importance of saying something about tough topics like bullying, exploitation, suicide, and addiction when we see it or experience it. As Andrew, one of the leaders of the assemblies stated, these aren't topics that anyone is comfortable talking about or wants to talk about, especially in schools. And we wish we didn't have to do so. But, these are real issues impacting students across the country, including here on the Western Slope, and we have to be willing to address them when they happen. Many D51 students received the help they needed this week because of this opportunity. I want to thank all of our middle and high school staff and admin for supporting our students during these events, especially our school and district counseling teams for providing extra support to students and staff as a result of hearing the powerful messages. Thank you to the team at Say Something for spending the last two weeks spreading this important message in our schools, and shoutout to our Engaged and Supportive Community Partners who donated money to fund these assemblies.

This week I finished up the February meetings with my Superintendent Student Advisory Groups. On Monday I met with my group from Central High School, and we wrapped up the conversations I have been having with all of my student groups around responsible technology use and the impacts of social media on students. I gained more valuable information that will help guide our district and Board of Education as we look for ways to better promote responsible technology use and support the mental wellbeing of our students in D51. And, shoutout to Bookcliff Middle School for hosting a social media presentation this week for families in conjunction with the Colorado Office of School Safety. You can read more about that below.

Lastly, this week was also National Public Schools Week. One of the things I love about working in public education is that we serve everyone who walks through our doors, and we provide access and opportunity for all students and families. I want to shoutout all of our D51 teachers, staff, and admin for all of the work they put in, day in and day out, to support our 20,000+ students. It is a challenging and rewarding career, and I'm proud of our D51 schools, and I'm proud to work in public education. If you get a second, be sure to thank a D51 staff member who has made a difference in your life or your child's life. Public education is the backbone of our community, and I'm proud to serve alongside our amazing staff.

#### **National Employee Appreciation Week**

I want to take a quick moment, as we celebrate National Employee Appreciation Day today, to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every member of our D51 family. Whether I am walking the halls of our schools, visiting a program, interacting with our maintenance or custodial crews, or collaborating with central office staff, I see your dedication, compassion, and tireless work to serve our students, families, and community. You go above and beyond to create a nurturing and supportive environment where every student can thrive. YOU are the cornerstone of our success at District 51. I am incredibly grateful for your service and commitment to our shared vision to engage, equip, and empower each and every student each and every day. Thank you for all that y'all do!

#### **Mesa County Safety Fair**

This week, our District Safety and Security Team had the privilege of participating in the Mesa County Safety Fair at Mesa Mall. This was a valuable opportunity for our team to engage with community members and elementary students across the Valley, sharing important information about school safety and promoting awareness about the Safe2Tell app. Read more [here](#).

#### **MESA Club Competition**

This week, middle school students from various schools across District 51 competed in the Balsa Bridge MESA Competition, held at Redlands Middle School. Read more [here](#).

#### **STEAM @ Tope Elementary Kids Heart Challenge**

STEAM @ Tope Elementary held its Kids Heart Challenge Assembly to celebrate their *Heart Heroes*...top earners from the Kids Heart Challenge, which promotes physical activity and heart health. Read more [here](#).

#### **Bookcliff Middle School Family Social Media Presentation**

In today's digital age, social media continues to shape our interactions, perceptions, and connections. Recently, students at Bookcliff Middle School embarked on a study to explore the impact of social media on today's youth. In collaboration with the Colorado Office of School Safety, BMS took a proactive step by hosting a Social Media Safety Presentation tailored for our D51 families. Read more [here](#).

#### **National Breakfast in Schools Week**

Next week is National Breakfast in Schools Week, a week dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of breakfast for students' academic success. Read more [here](#).

#### **Solo/Ensemble Festival**

Last weekend, D51 hosted its yearly Choir and Orchestra Solo/Ensemble Festival, showcasing the musical talent of our students. Read more [here](#).

#### **Health Occupation Students of America**

This past week, the Career Center HOSA (Future Health Professionals) team competed at the State Leadership Conference. Read more [here](#).

#### **Thunder Mountain Student Artwork Displayed at Art Center**

Starting today, 35 Thunder Mountain Elementary students will have their art proudly displayed at the Art Center of Western Colorado through March. Read more [here](#).

#### **Social Worlds & Youth Well-Being Study**

In 2018, District 51 collaborated with Dr. Anna Mueller, a Sociologist from Indiana University Bloomington, to study youth suicide and address the prevention of it. Dr. Mueller, the principal investigator and an associate professor of Sociology at Indiana University, recently published the study's findings. Read more [here](#).

#### **Rotary Grants**

They say it takes a village, and indeed it does. I want to shout out our "*Engaged and Supportive Community Partners*" at the Rotary Club of Grand Junction, who have generously supported District 51 through their Winter 2024 Robin Hood Grants. This year, the Rotary chose a theme that aligned with their international dedication to supporting mental health, a crucial issue impacting students throughout our district on a daily basis. With their support, District 51's Counseling Services and the Orchard Mesa Elementary Schools' Neurodiversity Cottage Program will receive funding to enhance mental health resources for our students and staff. Thank you to the Rotary Club for your unwavering dedication to our community's well-being, especially our youth!

#### **Panorama Survey**

Yesterday, D51 sent a communication to all families regarding the administration of our next Panorama Survey to all students in grades K-12. Starting March 25th, schools will administer a brief Panorama Student Perception Survey, a research-backed process for students, families, teachers, and staff to better understand and build a positive school climate throughout our district. For more information, visit [d51schools.org/surveys](https://d51schools.org/surveys). To opt your student out of the survey, click [here](#).

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Grand Junction High School Theatre Presents: Matilda  
*March 1, 7 p.m., March 2, 1 p.m. & 7 p.m., March 8, 7 p.m., March 9, 1 p.m. & 7 p.m. at Grand Junction High School*  
[Purchase tickets here](#)
- La Siembra, Student-Led Dual Language Conference  
*March 6, 5 p.m. at Bookcliff Middle School*
- Central High School Theatre Presents: Mean Girls  
*March 7, 7 p.m., March 8, 7 p.m., and March 9, 1 p.m. and 7 p.m., at the Central High School Mariposa Theatre*  
[Purchase tickets here](#)
- Fruita Monument High School Theatre Presents: Beauty & the Beast  
*March 7, 8, & 9, 7 p.m., at Fruita Monument High School*  
[Purchase tickets here](#)
- Youth Career & Resource Fair  
*March 14, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Career Center*  
This career fair is open to all students across the valley. Come ready to meet employers, dress for success, and bring your resume.

*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



2115 Grand Ave.  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
[d51schools.org](https://d51schools.org)  
(970) 254-5100