



Dear D51 Colleagues and Families,

I hope y'all had another fantastic week in D51! I had fun attending different events in the schools this week, and I had the opportunity to present at the 2024 Western Colorado Economic Summit hosted by the Grand Junction Economic Partnership. It was a great opportunity to share the stage with CMU President John Marshall as we highlighted the strengths of our partnership between D51, CMU, and CMU Tech, and how providing opportunities like concurrent enrollment courses, which are free college classes for our students, helps better prepare our students for life after high school and helps drive workforce development in our community. Thanks to Curtis Englehart, Executive Director of GJEP, for the opportunity, CMU President John Marshall for the partnership and for presenting, and thanks to Tim Fry for moderating the session.

I also had a great time at the D51 Foundation JOY Celebration at the Food Bank of the Rockies facility last night. We were joined by dozens of D51 staff and students to help sort and pack food that will be distributed to folks in our community in need. I think it speaks to the heart of educators that, after a long day at work supporting our students, they showed up to volunteer and help others in our community. And we packed over 4,000 pounds of food! Thanks to everyone who came out, and thanks to Dr. Christensen and the D51 Foundation for organizing these great events for our staff.

Over the past few months, we have been actively gathering feedback and reviewing data on the impact of technology and social media on our students' learning and well-being. This week, we continued this important dialogue, and I presented information at Tuesday's Board of Education Business Meeting. If you missed the presentation, I encourage you to view it via the Board Meeting link provided below.

As we address this critical issue across our district and community, we are reaching out to families to play a proactive role in enhancing our students' technology usage. The American Pediatric Association offers guidelines suggesting a balanced daily routine for school-aged children and teens, which includes family time, outdoor activities, physical exercise, and adequate sleep. Current research reveals that children aged 8–12 in the United States spend approximately 4 to 6 hours daily on screens, while teenagers may use screens for up to 9 hours a day. Such extensive screen time makes it challenging to maintain a healthy balance with other essential activities.

For those unfamiliar with monitoring screen time on smartphones, here are some tips. On Apple devices, navigate to "Settings," select "Screen Time," and then "See All Activity." For Android devices, go to "Settings," find "Digital Wellbeing," and click the chart icon at the top right to view "Daily Use." These tools provide a detailed breakdown of daily usage by app or site, helping families become more conscious of how time is spent online.

By becoming aware of screen time, families can start conversations about reducing dependence on smartphones and certain apps that monopolize attention. In his recent book "The Anxious Generation," Dr. Jonathan Haidt advocates for not only limiting technology use but also replacing it with more fulfilling activities. Many children, accustomed to screen time, may initially struggle with boredom and lack of engagement.

To combat this, we need to invest effort in introducing meaningful activities that can replace screen time, such as group play, visits to parks, reading books, cooking together, and playing board games. Transitioning away from screen dependency is a gradual process, but it is vital as we've come to understand the profound effects excessive screen use has on our children's social, emotional, and educational development. We have started making these changes in our own home (you can monitor and limit time on game devices, too) and have observed significant improvements not just in our child's life, but in meaningful family interactions as well.

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, we look forward to a strong partnership with all D51 families. Tackling this initiative requires a community-wide effort to ensure our children can thrive in a digitally balanced environment.

As I close out the letter this week, I want to give a quick shoutout to our D51 bands that competed in the Colorado Band Association State Festival earlier this week in Fort Collins. Congratulations to Central, Fruita Monument, and Palisade High Schools for their outstanding achievement in not only qualifying for the State Concert Band Festival but also receiving "Excellent" ratings from the judges, a testament to their hard work and dedication throughout the year. Well done to all three schools, and a huge thank you to our band directors for their support and guidance of these students. Without a doubt, you continue to raise the bar high for Colorado bands!

Taylor Elementary School Survival Club Ceremony

On Monday, Taylor Elementary teacher Chris Philiou, parent volunteer Marcus Sanchez, and 25 students and parents gathered for their Survival Club graduation. The Survival Club aims to teach students to appreciate nature and feel more confident and connected to our world by providing the knowledge and skills to utilize tools to survive outdoors. Read more [here](#).

Athletic Signing Days

Athletic Signing Day is a special occasion for the athletes, their families, coaches, and communities alike. This week, we celebrated several D51 athletes from Grand Junction and Fruita Monument High Schools who signed their National Letter of Intent to play college sports. Read more [here](#).

Colorado West Invitational Music Performance Festival

This week, District 51, in partnership with Colorado Mesa University, hosted its Annual Colorado West Invitational Music Performance Festival, which kicked off yesterday and will continue through Saturday. Read more [here](#).

GJHS Capstone Project - Agents of Change

Each year, District 51 high school students complete Capstone Projects, marking the end of their academic journey in D51 for many. These projects are a huge undertaking for our students, encompassing research, practical applications, or community involvement tailored to a specific field of study. The objective is for students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge by addressing real-world challenges. Today, I'm proud to highlight the Grand Junction High School's Agents of Change, a group of students who recently completed their inspiring Capstone Projects. Read more [here](#).

D51 Student Added to List of Finalists for Boettcher Scholarship

Last month, we highlighted a D51 senior who was named a finalist for the highly sought-after Boettcher Scholarship. This week, Palisade High School added another name to the incredibly competitive list. Read more [here](#).

Senior Walks

As the school year draws to a close, D51 elementary schools are getting ready for a beloved tradition: Senior Walks. These walks provide a heartfelt opportunity for our graduating seniors to bid farewell to the schools that played a pivotal role in shaping their journey - both academically and socially. Read more [here](#).

Fruita Monument High School Bike Tech Project

The Bike Tech Program at Fruita Monument High School offers students a unique and hands-on learning experience in bike mechanics and repair. In this program, students gain practical experience and valuable skills as they refurbish bikes, ensuring they are in their best condition. Once bikes are restored, they are then provided to deserving individuals within our community. What an amazing way for our students to not only learn valuable skills that will serve them long after graduation but also foster a sense of community engagement by contributing to the well-being of the Grand Valley. **Don't miss out on their open house event next Wednesday, April 24, where they will generously donate refurbished bikes to the youth in our community.** See the [flyer](#) for details. Thanks to FMHS senior Lucy Kennedy for sharing this info, and shoutout to the FMHS Bike Tech students and staff for this great opportunity!

D51 Foundation Shares JOY with Community

Yesterday, almost 50 D51 staff members, including teachers and administrators, came together after work to volunteer at the Food Bank of the Rockies. This is just another way our staff gives back to the community. Read more [here](#).

GJEP Economic Summit

Earlier this week, I had the privilege of joining CMU President John Marshall in speaking at the Grand Junction Economic Partnership Economic Summit. This event brought together local businesses and community leaders to discuss key economic trends and opportunities across the Grand Valley. Read more [here](#).

Blue Star Mothers Military Signing

Each year, District 51 recognizes student athletes, student scholars, and countless others who have excelled both academically and in their extracurricular pursuits. We are also excited to celebrate our D51 high school students, along with countless others statewide, who've decided to enlist in our National Armed Forces. The Western Slope Blue Star Moms, alongside their partners in the Western Slope military community, invite all families of new recruits to join them on April 27 for a Military recognition event and family picnic. Together, we will recognize and honor the graduating seniors from across the Grand Valley who've chosen to bravely serve our nation. For more information about this event, click [here](#).

Social Worlds and Youth Well-Being Study Presentation

In February, Dr. Anna Mueller and her research team from the University of Indiana and British Columbia University released their findings and recommendations report on the Social Worlds and Youth Well-Being Study. From 2019 through mid-2023, her research team worked with seven of our secondary schools, conducting research to determine why our suicide risk and completion rate for adolescents is higher than state and national averages. During the study, students, staff, and families were interviewed. The results and recommendations of the study are profound and have been very enlightening to our participating schools and community members. The full report can be found [here](#). **Join us on Monday in the Harry Butler Board Room from 5:30 - 7 p.m. for a presentation on the report.** Dr. Mueller will be on hand to share the study's insights and recommendations, paving the way for enhanced youth suicide prevention strategies in our schools and communities.

Salute to Staff: End-of-Year Celebration

As we bid farewell to another amazing year in District 51, we invite you to join us in celebrating the achievements, friendships, and victories we've shared. Join us on Tuesday from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Grand Junction Convention Center for an evening of camaraderie and celebration. This event is an opportunity for our D51 family to come together, honor our Years of Service Awardees and Retirees, and celebrate another successful year at District 51. Whether you're receiving an award, retiring, or simply excited about end-of-year festivities, all D51 employees are welcome to join in the fun. We will have music, a photo booth, delicious food, and beach-themed mocktails for you to enjoy. We can't wait to see you there!

Board of Education Meeting Recap

On April 16, the Board of Education held a Business Meeting in the Harry Butler Board Room. For highlights from the meeting, click [here](#). To view a recording of the meeting, click [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 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!
- Social Worlds and Youth Well-Being Study Presentation
April 22, 5:30 to 7 p.m. Join in person at the Harry Butler Board Room (R-5 High School) or virtually: <https://bit.ly/d51swysz/>
Join D51 for a presentation on the Social Worlds & Youth Well-Being Study, examining the influence of social environments on youth mental health. Dr. Anna Mueller and her team collaborated with seven secondary schools from 2019 to 2023 to understand why our adolescent suicide risk exceeds state and national averages. Dr. Mueller will share the study's findings and recommendations.
- Palisade High School IB Film Festival
April 22, 6 to 8 p.m. at Palisade High School
Seniors will showcase a selection of films from the last two years in the programme.
- 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.
- Fruita Monument High School Bike Tech Project Open House
April 24, 5-7 p.m. at Fruita Monument High School
See the [flyer](#) for details.
- 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](#).

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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