



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues,

Happy Friday, District 51! Seven days a week there are great things happening in D51, and last Saturday my son and I visited New Emerson Elementary for their annual pancake breakfast fundraiser. Shoutout to Principal Schmalz, Ms. Moyer, and everyone at New Emerson for putting on a fun event to raise money for kids while enjoying delicious food in the presence of community. Shoutout to all of our Board of Education members who attended, as well. Saturday night, we were able to have fun celebrating our amazing teachers, staff, and schools at the annual White Iced Awards Dinner. Thanks to Dr. Christensen and the D51 Foundation Board for putting on a great event that brought together over 900 people to celebrate academic excellence and raise funds for our schools.

On Tuesday, I was able to attend the County Commissioners meeting as they recognized our D51 students who won the I Voted sticker contest. You can read more about it below, and I want to thank Mesa County Clerk Bobbie Gross and the County Commissioners for taking the time to honor our students and their families. I was also able to attend Governor Polis's visit to Grand Junction on Tuesday as he shared highlights from his State of the State address. It was great to have Riverside Educational Center host the visit to highlight the importance of after school programming in D51. Shoutout to REC and all of our after school programs who provide a safe and engaging environment for our students beyond the school day.

Every February, school districts across the nation recognize National School Counseling Week to highlight the invaluable contributions of our school counselors and focus public attention on their hard work and dedication. You can read more about our D51 Counselors below. On Wednesday, I had the privilege of attending our first annual D51 Counselors Recognition Breakfast, generously sponsored by our *Engaged & Supportive Partners* at Colorado Mesa University. I want to personally thank our counselors for their dedication and commitment to supporting our students, families, and staff. You are the heart of our schools, and what you do has a daily impact on the lives of those you serve. I know, as a parent, the importance of having a strong school counselor who supports all kids no matter what their circumstances might be. I also want to commend Kayla Witzel, our Counseling Coordinator, for organizing the event. Your attention to detail and commitment to organizing this breakfast were evident and deeply appreciated by many of our counselors. Thank you for putting in so much effort to make this event successful.

On Thursday, I was able to meet again with my Superintendent Student Advisory Group from Palisade High School. We chatted about responsible technology use at school, the impacts of social media on kids, and whether or not cell phones should be allowed in schools. The conversation was rich, and I always appreciate hearing the voices of our students as we tackle tough topics. I look forward to meeting with my other Superintendent Student Advisory Groups this month to hear their perspectives, too. I also had the chance to join our BOCES Board for a tour of the CoorsTek facility in GJ. Shoutout to Andrew Golike for the tour, and shoutout to CMU and CMU Tech for the great partnership with D51 to provide multiple pathways for our students to get hands-on experience in trades that will lead to high demand jobs.

If you're looking for something fun to do tonight and tomorrow, you can join me at Central High School to cheer on our D51 Phoenix Girls Wrestling team as they compete in the regional tournament. Shoutout to our student athletes for all of the hard work they have put in, and shoutout to Coach Dare and everyone who has supported our girls. Can't wait to cheer y'all on!

Amid these busy times, it's important that we take a moment to recognize and celebrate Black History Month. During our Tuesday evening Work Session, the Board of Education issued a [proclamation](#) highlighting the significance of this month-long observance. At D51, one of our Core Behaviors is appreciating individuality and inclusivity and fostering a sense of belonging for all students. Throughout this month, District 51 and our *Engaged & Supportive Community Partners* will provide various opportunities for our students to recognize the rich history and culture of Black culture. You can find more information about these events [here](#).

Lastly, as you may have heard, the Board of Education voted unanimously to extend my contract as the Superintendent through 2030. I want to thank the Board for their vote of confidence and for allowing me the opportunity to continue serving our community in this role. Despite the challenges we have faced as a district, I am proud of the work we have accomplished, and I am committed to serving our district as we continue to work through these challenges for a better D51. We have great students, staff, families, and community partners, and I thank y'all for allowing me the honor and duty of leading our district into the future. You can read the press release [here](#).

National K-12 School Counselors Week

National School Counselors Week is a time to honor, celebrate, and reflect on the incredible impact our K-12 School Counselors have on our students, staff, families, and the D51 community. This year, we celebrated our school counselors as we gathered around the table for breakfast, community, and camaraderie. Read more [here](#).

Mesa County Elections "I Voted" Sticker Contest Winners

On Tuesday, four of our D51 students were recognized at the Mesa County Commissioners Public Hearing for being named winners of Mesa County's first "I Voted" Sticker Design Contest. Read more [here](#).

PHS Dynamic Fish Hatchery Class

This week, Palisade High School's Fish Hatchery embarked on an exciting educational project. Students received hands-on experience, collecting fish specimens and bringing them into the classroom for some unique learning. Read more [here](#).

High School National Letter of Intent Signing Day

National Letter of Intent Signing Day is a significant milestone in the lives of our student-athletes. This week, several of our high schools had student-athletes formally commit to continue their academic and athletic journeys at the collegiate level. Read more [here](#).

Independence Academy Fiber Arts Project

It is always fun hearing about the awesome things our teachers and staff are doing in our buildings every day, especially when it comes to collaborative efforts like the one between Mrs. Lee's Kindergarten class and Mrs. Balzer's Fiber Art middle schoolers. Read more [here](#).

FBLA State Qualifiers

At the end of January, the district's four comprehensive high schools demonstrated outstanding abilities at the recent Future Business Leaders of America State Qualifier Competition. D51 had over 70 students selected from our four schools who will progress to the FBLA State Championship, scheduled for April in Denver, CO. Read more [here](#).

State Swimmer Qualifiers

Grand Junction High School, Palisade High School, and Fruita Monument High School all have swimmers who qualified for the CHSAA Swimming Championships happening this week. Read more [here](#).

GJHS Cellist First Chair

Grand Junction High School student Nicholas Berry was named First Chair Cellist for his performance at the All-State Orchestra Festival last weekend. Read more [here](#).

Scholarship Finalists

Receiving scholarships for high school seniors is a significant accomplishment and a cause for celebration. Each year, students throughout District 51 are recognized for their academic achievements, extracurricular activities, and community involvement. This year, I want to highlight two exceptional students from Central High School who are finalists for the Daniels Fund and Boettcher Scholarships. Read more [here](#).

D51 Foundation Grants

The D51 Foundation knows how important professional learning is to D51 staff. Since 2018, the D51 Foundation has given over \$125,000 to more than 300 D51 staff members for professional learning. Select the PL that's best for you! ***Our 13th Round of Professional Learning Grants will close on February 15, 2024.*** [Click here](#) to apply.

Career Center Valentine's Floral Arrangements

Career Center's Horticulture Valentine's Day Special is back! Show your love this Valentine's Day by choosing from a variety of beautiful floral arrangements, all while supporting our D51 students and helping their program flourish. Reserve yours today and be a part of our students' growth and success! More information [here](#).

Bank of Colorado Calendar Contest

Calling all D51 students! Unleash your creativity and enter the 17th Annual Bank of Colorado 2025 Calendar Contest, which is officially underway. This is a chance to showcase your artistic talents and be part of something special. Submissions are open to students in grades K-12 and will be accepted from now until March 29. For more information or to submit your art, click [here](#).

Thank you to the D51 Foundation for Another Successful White Iced Event

On behalf of the entire D51 Community, I want to thank our D51 Foundation, led by Executive Director Dr. Angela Christensen, for hosting another incredible White Iced Celebration. Thank you for all your hard work in making this a meaningful event to honor and celebrate our D51 White Iced Award recipients and Outstanding Academic Growth Schools. We are incredibly grateful for all you do to enhance the educational experience of our students and foster a culture of excellence within our district. Read more [here](#).

BOE Recap

On February 6, the Board of Education held a Work Session in the Harry Butler Board Room. For highlights from this meeting, click [here](#). To watch the live stream of this meeting, click [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- D51 Girls Wrestling Regional Tournament
February 9, 4 p.m. and February 10, 9 a.m. at Central High School
Come cheer on our D51 Phoenix Girls Wrestling Team as they compete for spots in the State Championship. Good luck, and go get 'em!

For more events happening across the district, visit:

- [Fall 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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