



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues,

Welcome back to our D51 students, families, and staff! I hope y'all had a wonderful Winter Break, and we are ready for an exciting new semester!

During the break, our D51 Central Office staff were hard at work preparing for the spring semester, our D51 school staff were hard at work during the Teacher Workday and In-Service Day to prepare for the spring semester, and many of our D51 student athletes were hard at work as sports were still in session. I had the opportunity to check out the Palisade High School boys and girls basketball teams on the court, and I had the opportunity to watch our D51 Phoenix girls wrestling team dominate on the mats. I'm so proud of our D51 student athletes and our coaches, and I encourage all of y'all to get out and support our D51 sports teams this semester.

This week was filled with great things happening in D51, too, and I enjoyed getting out to many of the events. My son and I were able to attend the MLK Children's Read & Dream event at the downtown Mesa County Public Library. Shoutout to Black Citizens & Friends for hosting events like this for our students to learn about the life and legacy of Dr. King. I was also able to attend the D51 Foundation Ambassador celebration hosted at Timberline Bank. The D51 Foundation does so much to support our students and staff through raising funds for initiatives aligned with our district mission, and we appreciate all of the D51 Foundation Ambassadors who have stepped up to spread the word and support the cause. I was able to share some updates at the event about some of the successes we have seen in D51 recently, including achieving the highest graduation rate in the last 17 years! You can read more about that below, but I want to make sure to shoutout our hard working teachers, staff, admin, and central office staff for all that they do to make sure our students are academically successful. This is a huge success, and it deserves a huge amount of celebration.

Thank you again to our D51 students, staff, and families for being a part of the D51 Family. We are energized and excited for a successful spring semester, and we look forward to celebrating y'all in our Friday Updates each week.

On a heavier note, I wanted to share with you an opportunity to support one of our D51 family members. In December, our Broadway Elementary School community lost one of its own after a hard-fought battle with childhood cancer. Many of you know Alice Williams, but if you don't, you can find more information from her family [here](#). Alice was a 2nd Grader at Broadway Elementary and, like all of us, is a part of our D51 Family. In remembrance of Alice, 2nd Grade Broadway teacher Ms. Nielsen, in collaboration with Alice's friends and family, has initiated a fundraiser to gather contributions. These funds will be dedicated to honoring Alice's memory through the installation of a butterfly bench, a tree, and inclusive playground equipment at the school. I hope you'll consider joining me to support Alice, her family, and the Broadway community. You are D51. Alice is D51. We are all D51. And we are stronger together.

Reminder: Monday is Martin Luther King Jr. Day. D51 schools and office buildings will be closed in observance of the holiday.

D51 Achieves Highest Graduation Rate in 17 Years

District 51 earned a graduation rate of 81.2% in 2023, the highest rate for District 51 in the last 17 years. Read more [here](#).

BOE Recognition Month

January is Board of Education Recognition Month, and I want to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the dedicated members of our District 51 Board of Education. Read more [here](#).

All-State Band & Orchestra

During Winter Break, we learned that several of our students had been nominated for All-State Jazz Band and All-State Orchestra. These high school students from across the district put their skills and talents to the test every year, committing hours to practice and sacrificing many evenings for performances. After a rigorous audition process, the following students were selected for All-State Band and Orchestra. Read more [here](#).

Girls Wrestling Highlight

Last week, I had the opportunity to spend some time watching our D51 Phoenix Girls Wrestling team dominate their matches during their home tournament at Border Battle, hosted at Central High School. Read more [here](#).

Pear Park Student Council Delivers "Survival Kits" to Local Law Enforcement

The Student Council at Pear Park Elementary School crafted over 100 "survival kits" for each Grand Junction Police Department Officer in recognition of Law Enforcement Appreciation Day on Tuesday. Read more [here](#).

MLK Day Events

Often called "MLK Day of Service," this national holiday sees people of all ages engaging in acts of service and kindness for others. Various impactful events across the City have taken place and will continue to be hosted in honor of the holiday. Read more [here](#).

School of Choice is Now Open!

School District 51 is dedicated to offering a diverse range of educational options that align with our mission of empowering families to choose the educational setting that best suits their unique preferences and aspirations. All of our schools offer students strong academic and extracurricular opportunities, but we know that every student is unique, and what works well for one child may not work well for another child. **School of Choice applications opened today at 10:00 a.m. and will remain open until 4:00 p.m. on January 26.** Read more [here](#).

D51 Foundation Ambassadors Meeting

Last night, over 60 D51 Foundation Ambassadors joined together for the 2024 Winter Ambassador Meeting hosted at Timberline Bank. Ambassadors heard from D51 Foundation Board Directors and D51 Foundation Executive Director Dr. Angela Christensen, and I was able to share some of the successes we have seen in D51 over the last year. Every year, schools identify key parents to serve as D51 Foundation Ambassadors and share information with their schools about D51 Foundation activities. Last night's focus was on the upcoming 12th White Iced Celebration taking place on Saturday, February 3, at the CMU Ballroom from 7 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. If you're interested in attending the White Iced Celebration, you can find more information and purchase tickets [here](#).

Two D51 Schools Recipients of GJ Lions Club Grant

We are incredibly grateful for our "Engaged & Supportive Community Partners" who play a vital role in our mission and vision to engage, equip, and empower each and every student, each and every day. This week, the Grand Junction Lions Club pledged over \$150,000 to 15 local groups through the proceeds collected from their 95th Annual Carnival and Raffle. I am excited to share that two of those recipients were D51 schools. Read more [here](#).

Housing Survey

In conjunction with The Colorado Department of Housing, District 51 is conducting a survey of all its employees to better understand the housing needs and preferences of our staff. As an incentive to fill out the survey by January 22, Housing Resources of Western Colorado will have a drawing to provide three respondents with a \$100 American Express gift card. While the survey is anonymous, you do need to provide your email address to be eligible, but this will not be tied to your survey response. The survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. [Click here](#) to fill out the survey now.

W-2 Online Option

It's W-2 season, and the Finance Department is working hard on getting 2023 W-2s to you as quickly as possible. To speed up the process, you can choose to opt out of paper delivery of your W-2 form and receive it electronically. This will allow you to access your W-2 as soon as they are posted without having to wait for the delivery of the paper form. In addition, you will help us reduce the costs associated with purchasing paper forms, stuffing envelopes, and distributing the W-2s to schools. **If you opted-out of paper forms last year, you do not have to opt-out again.**

To opt-out, log on to Employee Online or click this link and follow the instructions below.

Username: Your D51 username

Password: Your D51 password

From the menu, select Payroll Information, Tax Forms, and W-2. Then, click "Opt-Out of receiving paper W-2 forms" and the save icon.

Board of Education Recap

On January 9, 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:

- Central High School CMEA Bon Voyage Concert
January 16, 7 p.m. at the Robinson Theatre at CMU - Free admission
The Central High School Madrigals Chamber Choir has earned the opportunity to perform as an Honor Group at the CMEA (Colorado Music Educators Association) Conference at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. This recognition is one of the highest achievements for music ensembles in Colorado. As a send-off, the choir will showcase their performance here locally during the *CMEA Bon Voyage Concert* next week. We hope you will join us in wishing them good luck and come out to show your support!
- College & Money Night
January 23, 6 - 8 p.m. at Escalante Hall at CMU
Learn more about financial aid opportunities available for Higher Ed. There will be information on FAFSA, Career Advance Colorado, scholarships, and more.

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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