



Dear D51 Families and Colleagues,

Last Saturday, I had the opportunity to join over 400 students, their coaches, and D51 staff and families at the FIRST Lego League Tournament at FMHS. I look forward to this event every year, and I was honored to get to emcee the awards ceremony again. This year was extra special to me, because I got to attend as a parent, too, and see my son compete alongside his classmates. Thank you to D51 STEM Coordinator, Jessica McDivitt, and her team for creating this opportunity for our D51 Family. I also got to enjoy a couple of our high school theater productions last weekend. Friday night we attended A Comedy of Errors, put on by the Fruita Monument High School theater department, and Saturday evening we attended Airness, put on by the Grand Junction High School theater department. Both shows were awesome, and hilarious, and I'm so thankful to our theater directors and the theater students at our schools who put the productions on. Make sure to catch some of the upcoming shows at our high schools for an evening of fun.

I love any opportunity I get to be around students, and this week I had a lot of opportunities to do just that. On Monday, I got the chance to meet with my Superintendent Student Advisory Group at R-5 High School, and Tuesday I got to meet with my Superintendent Student Advisory Group at Palisade High School. I look forward to these opportunities as it allows me to hear directly from our D51 students about their experiences in their schools, and how we can make improvements or duplicate great things happening in our buildings. Also, on Monday I got to speak to the FMHS Boys Basketball Team. Coach Wells invites members from the community in on Mondays to speak to the team about leadership, and I appreciate the opportunity to join, and I love that this opportunity is offered to our student athletes. Great job, Coach.

Monday night was the 2023 CCD Honor Choir performance, and I want to thank the D51 high school choir directors for inviting me back this year to emcee the event. I was blown away by the talent of our high school choir students.

On Wednesday, I got to hang out with D51 students at our D51 Options Fair. Shoutout to the D51 Career & College Readiness Department, Counseling Department, and all of our D51 staff who made this opportunity possible for our 8th graders. It was cool to see our students learn about their high school options in D51, and I even had some students teach me CPR on the CPR dummy! After school on Wednesday, I got to join about 50 New Emerson Elementary students for some after school yoga! I love that Ms. Moyer at New Emerson offers this to the students, and it was a good reminder that I need to work on my flexibility! Also, shoutout to Principal Pfaffendorf for inviting me out to Pomona Elementary on Thursday to serve pumpkin pie to students and families at their Grandparents Lunch! It was great to see all of the families who showed up, and I loved the conversations that were had over delicious pie.

This week I also got to continue visiting schools that earned the highest academic rating in the state of Colorado as Performance Schools. Over two-thirds of our D51 schools earned the highest rating, and I love getting out and celebrating academic excellence. Shoutout to Principal Sorensen and the Grand Junction High School students and staff for earning Performance School for the second year in a row. Shoutout to Principal Swartwood and the West Middle School students and staff for earning Performance School for the second year in a row, and for growing by over 12 points on their School Performance Framework. And, shoutout to Principal Cohen and the Mesa View Elementary students and staff for earning Performance School for the 6th year in a row, and for growing over 10 points on their School Performance Framework. I loved getting to visit these campuses to celebrate, and I look forward to visiting the rest of our Performance Schools soon.

In this time of giving thanks, I want to thank all of our D51 staff, students, and families for all that you do as part of the D51 Family. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve this community, and I am thankful that you choose to support D51. I am also thankful for our Board of Education for their leadership, and I want to specifically thank our two outgoing board members for their service to D51. Thank you to Doug Levinson (8 years on the Board) and Dr. Kari Sholtes (2 years on the Board) for the time you have given to serving on the Board, and for being representatives for our community. Let's all show our appreciation for our two outgoing Board Members by thanking them, as well.

As I close out my letter this week, I want to remind all students that **there will be no school next week in observance of Thanksgiving break**. It's a well-deserved time for you to take a break, recharge, and enjoy some quality downtime. Whether you have exciting plans or simply plan to unwind at home, I encourage you to make the most of this break. Take the opportunity to engage in activities that bring you joy, spend time with family and friends, and prioritize self-care. A safe, fun, and relaxing fall break awaits you, and I look forward to welcoming everyone back refreshed and ready for new academic adventures. Enjoy your well-deserved time off!

Winter Sports Kickoff

I wanted to celebrate the successful conclusion of our Middle School Boys' Basketball and Girls' Volleyball seasons. The dedication and sportsmanship displayed by our middle school athletes this season have been commendable. Read more [here](#).

FIRST Lego League Tournament

We experienced an outstanding FIRST Lego League Challenge Tournament last Saturday at Fruita Monument High School, and the excitement continues as we announce the achievements of our participating teams. Read more [here](#).

Colorado Choral Directors' Select Choir

The Colorado Choral Directors' Select Choir event was held at Colorado Mesa University on November 13, and I had the honor of emceeing the event again this year. This annual event brings selected students from choirs all over the Western Slope of Colorado to perform together. The Colorado Choral Directors' Select Choir was started in 1991 by four high school choir directors from the D51 family who wanted to give students with vocal talent the chance to sing with a large group of choral singers. Read more [here](#).

Grandparents Day

During the Thanksgiving holiday, elementary schools across the district eagerly embrace the tradition of Grandparent's Day, a heartwarming celebration that bridges generations and fosters a sense of community. On this special occasion, students joyfully welcome their grandparents to join them for a delicious lunch and engage in various activities throughout the day. Read more [here](#).

8th Grade Options Fair

On Wednesday, District 51 held our Annual 8th Grade Options Fair, providing our students with a valuable opportunity to explore the various possibilities for their upcoming high school education. Read more [here](#).

Social Studies Community Forums

On Wednesday and Thursday night this week, District 51 hosted two social studies community forums dedicated to covering House Bill 1192, a recent legislative development that updated the State Standards for Social Studies and Civics. Read more [here](#).

National Recognition Days

As a district, we embrace the celebration of national recognition days, setting aside time to honor and acknowledge the many contributions our employees make to our students, families, and the broader school community. This week, we had the chance to recognize our Educator Support Professionals and our Substitute Teachers. Join us in expressing appreciation by offering a high five and a heartfelt thanks the next time you encounter one of them—together, we are making a difference in the lives of our students! Read more [here](#).

Informational Nights for IB and CHS STEM

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, one size does not fit all. At District 51, we firmly believe in empowering our families with the freedom to make choices regarding their child's education. We remain committed to providing strong neighborhood schools along with a diverse range of educational opportunities and programs that engage, equip, and empower each and every student each and every day. Over the next few weeks, our current 8th-grade students will have various opportunities to look at different programs offered throughout D51 for their high school education. Read more [here](#).

MLK Poster Contest and Community Celebration

The 2024 Martin Luther King Jr. Poster Contest is an opportunity for our D51 students at every educational level from kindergarten to high school. This contest not only celebrates the artistic talents of our students, but it also offers an exceptional educational experience to deepen their understanding of the historical significance of a pivotal period in our nation's history. This year's theme is: **Keep the Dream Alive**. Read more [here](#).

Board of Education Business Meeting Recap

On November 14, the Board of Education held a Business Meeting in the Harry Butler Board Room. For highlights from this meeting, click [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **Regional Cheer Competition**

November 18, 9:15 a.m. - 5:15 p.m., Grand Junction High School

FMHS Hip Hop (Poms) performs at 9:10 a.m.

FMHS Cheer performs at 9:40 a.m.

Central performs at 10:15 a.m.

Grand Junction performs at 10:35 a.m.

Two middle school cheer team champions will perform to open and close out the event:

Broncos at 9:10 a.m. and Steelers at 4:00 p.m.

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.

Brian Hill

Dr. Brian Hill
Superintendent of Schools
Mesa County Valley School District 51
brian.hill@d51schools.org
970.254.5193



2115 Grand Ave.
Grand Junction, CO 81501
d51schools.org
(970) 254-5100