

19 GFPS Notables for 2019

Happy 2019! As GFPS embarks upon the new calendar year and the second half of the school year, I thought it was a perfect time to share 19 notables about GFPS (in no certain order):

1. **BASICS.** GFPS is the 2nd largest school district in Montana with approximately 7% of Montana's students attending. It is the 3rd largest employer in Great Falls only behind Malmstrom and Benefis.
2. **LONGEVITY.** We have been a stable and well-managed community institution since 1888. August 29, 2018 was the 130th first day of school in Great Falls.
3. **STUDENTS.** 10,000+ students from ages 3 to 21 attend our schools. This doesn't include the adults who attend the GFPS Adult Education program at GFC-MSU. Our goal is for every student to graduate college, career and citizenship ready with a meaningful plan for the future. We continue to focus on achievement and opportunity gaps that challenge our students and their futures.
4. **STAFF MEMBERS.** Over 1900 full and part-time staff members play a significant role in making education happen for our 10,000+ students. We believe that all students deserve teachers and staff who thrive on student success.
5. **ACADEMIC AND EXTRA- AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS.** We also believe that each student should have fair and equitable opportunities for quality instruction and academic success, and that all students learn best when their individual needs are met through a personalized school experience. That is why we offer comprehensive programming that allows for student choice and exploration.
6. **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.** For the 3rd year in a row, our 3rd-8th grade students outperformed the rest of the state on last spring's Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBAC). Student achievement is important because we believe that a well-educated community is the foundation of our democracy.
7. **TRUSTEES.** Our Board members understand their obligation to do best by our students and our community as exemplified by their commitment to fair governance via contemporary and meaningful policies.
8. **SAFETY.** We take student and staff safety seriously. Through a continued partnership with the Police Department, four SROs work alongside staff members in keeping students and staff safe. Safety plans and protocols have been prepared for 12 different emergencies. They are on the Crisis Manager app.
9. **BUDGET.** This year's general fund budget is \$70.9 million. Since 2000, the budget has increased an average of 1.51% per year. Inflation has increased an average of 2.41% per year in the same time period.
10. **BALANCED BUDGETS.** Since 2008, \$10,439,212 in reductions and \$5,120,288 in reserves have been used to accomplish balanced budgets. We never forget that our financial resources are public assets that require responsible stewardship.
11. **FACILITIES.** 2.1 million square feet of building space and 295 acres of land are well-maintained and conducive to learning and work. The 2016 bond dollars are being used to update all schools and to build new learning spaces. The bond dollars cannot be used for anything else. We believe that all students and staff learn and work best in a safe, secure, and nurturing environments.
12. **TECHNOLOGY FUNDING.** GF taxpayers invest \$225,000 (\$22.50/student) annually for technology expenses via a perpetual Technology Levy that passed in 2002. Through their Technology Levies, Butte taxpayers invest \$300,000 (\$68/student), Kalispell \$565,750 (\$182/student), Bozeman \$584,300 (\$88/student), Helena \$1,038,000 (\$125/student), Missoula \$1,623,400 (\$180/student) and Billings \$2,184,100 (\$128/student).
13. **NUTRITION PROGRAMS.** Approximately 50% of our students qualify for the National School Lunch and Breakfast program. Each day, about 6000 students receive healthy lunches that contain fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and are greeted by committed and caring Food Service staff. About 2500 students eat a healthy breakfast at school to start their day.
14. **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** GFPS believes that highly skilled and committed personnel are our greatest asset which is why we fight to continue to fund our professional development and staff training programs.

15. **TRANSPORTATION.** In conjunction with Big Sky Bus Lines, our Transportation Department oversees 68 buses that are driven 4820 total miles per school day while focusing on safety and getting students to school on time.
16. **OUR FOUNDATION.** When staff members have good ideas that enhance educational opportunities, the Foundation steps up to fund them. The GFPS Foundation funded 34 grants this school year to include 15 innovation grants totaling \$132,750.72 and 19 discovery grants totaling \$41,127.78.
17. **TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION.** In September 2016, the Board adopted our Technology Plan. As technology is an extension of student life today, it is essential that attention is paid to learning opportunities that use technologies that engage students and promote collaboration, critical thinking skills, and multi-dimensional problem solving for academic success. Check out the Plan here: https://gfps.k12.mt.us/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Great%20Falls%20Public%20Schools_Technology_Plan.pdf.
18. **COMMUNITY.** The GF community supports our students, staff, and schools in a variety of ways. We are grateful to local businesses and community groups that provide opportunities like internships and resources that enhance what we do. We continue to do more to engage families and community members with our schools because we believe that quality education is a partnership of students, staff, family, and community members.
19. **AND ABOUT 2000 MORE...**to make it 2019 but that is too many to list. Check out this link for more tidbits and long lists of accomplishments: <https://gfps.k12.mt.us/about-us/>.

Happy New Year! Take care! Stay safe! Be well!
Tammy

