

# Grand Forks Secondary School

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Principal: T. Eccleston | Vice Principal: J. Dowswell

## OCTOBER 2024

### Principal's Message

Welcome to the fall season. This month we welcome new students and returning staff members, Scott Stewart (Learning Support & Math 8) and Rhonda Hoffman (Food Services). GFSS now has 430 students and 58 staff members.

Thank you to staff members, Kristen, Laura, Megan, Sarah, and Shannon for organizing the heartfelt assembly to recognize the significance of harm caused by the residential school system and the meaning and importance of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada.

Last week, we had a fantastic cancer awareness and research campaign with a Terry Fox school run. Thank you for your generosity for cancer research.

Our Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) are in full swing with hundreds of students involved with volleyball, global citizenship, student council, swimming, Warhammer, mountain biking, and more. Check out our [ECA Directory](#) for sponsors, dates, and times.

Our Feeding Futures program is now in full operation. Students can access free healthy breakfast each day and lunch options in the bistro. Every student deserves a strong education, and we are grateful that every student has access to nutritional meals while at GFSS.

For every student, the student council and activity fee is \$20. It helps pay for Spirit Week, Pumpkin Carving Supplies, Gingerbread House Making, Spot the 'Elf on the Shelf' and many more things that students engage in for fun. There are other reasonable fees to pay for course consumables such as food, fabric, wood, etc. Individual teachers will let students and families know these fees. If there is any financial hardship, please contact the office.

Our auto-dialing system is in place again. If your child has missed a block during the day and we haven't been notified by a parent or guardian, you should receive a phone call and an email. If students are going to be absent, please call 250 442 0954.

Our school's code of conduct prohibits smoking and vaping on or near GFSS. If a student is found in violation, parents will be notified, and consequences will be assigned.

Learn more about [the risks associated with vaping](#).



At GFSS we believe in pro-active communication. We are always happy to meet and discuss your concerns. Please reach out to our teachers and administration team if you have questions for us. Keep on learning!

~ Tom Eccleston, Principal

## New and Returning Staff

- Rhonda Hoffman
- Scott Stewart

Welcome!

## Important Dates

- Sep 30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (school closed)
- Oct 1-18 Informal Updates window (reporting)
- Oct 4 School in session
- Oct 8 (lunch) Open house in the Indigenous Education room
- Oct 8, 2:30 Early Dismissal
- Oct 9, 2:30 Early Dismissal & Family Conferences
- Oct 14 Thanksgiving Day (school closed)
- Oct 21, 6:00 PAC Meeting (bistro)
- Oct 16 Student Vote
- Oct 30 Photo Retakes
- Nov 11 Remembrance Day (school closed)
- Nov 15 School in Session
- Dec 18 Band + Drama Winter Gala



## Student Council + Youth Advocacy

Students are the centre of all that our school should be. Students' thoughts, opinions, and involvement matters. To raise the voice of students in school activities, we have formed a Student Council. The council's two aims are to engage our students in youth advocacy initiatives and enhance a positive school culture. We meet each Tuesday at lunch and new members are always welcome. For more information, please contact our teacher sponsors, Ms. Doyle, Ms. Farahmand, and Ms. Wall or any student council member.

## Family Conferences

Ongoing communication with families is critical to your child's success. In October we offer all families an **Informal Learning Update**. We welcome you to meet with your child's teacher in person or by phone this month. Next week you will receive an email to invite you to book an appointment with your child's teachers. If you are unable to meet, you may be receiving emails from teachers.

## School Growth Plan 2024-2025

*How do we equip our students with an appreciation for differences in perspective and to act responsibly to strengthen an equitable and just society?*

After scanning our sources: teachers, students, PAC, data, we identified the need to prioritize the transformation of our school's culture. This focus (fostering an inclusive climate) is multi-year and will involve all our learning community in taking meaningful actions that make a difference.

Our teacher-led learning groups are taking on facets of this question. It will be exciting to see the positive convergence with our educators' efforts and with our students' voice for a harmonized vision for a fun and engaging place of learning. Please view the [school growth plan](#) on our website.

## Terry Fox Run

On Sept 26th, the whole school turned out in force to run to promote awareness of the ongoing research for a cure for cancer and in honor of people we love.

Thank you, Mr. Mace and your Outdoor Education students, for organizing the fundraising campaign. The final count should be out next week.



## What's our School Vision and Mission?

We envision **a school that nurtures curiosity, resilience, and joy in all**. Our vision develops an exciting future and gives a sense of the direction to work students, staff and parents do to move us forward in our mission. Both the vision and mission are drawn from the district's strategic plan.

Our mission is **to ensure our students are flourishing today so they can build a confident future tomorrow**. Our mission is our fundamental purpose. It establishes our priorities, and those priorities guide our decisions. We are excited about working together for student success.

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## Website

Learn what's happening at GFSS by going to our [website](#). Additionally, we will occasionally post photos and flyers for special activities on our [Facebook](#) page.

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## Student and Family Affordability Fund

GFSS has again this year received funding from The Ministry of Education and Child Care to directly support parents and guardians of students with costs associated with going to school that they may be struggling to pay. Please contact our office if you are in need this support.

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## Code of Conduct Updated to Restrict Devices

Please remember that access to and the use of **personal digital devices** will not be permitted during instructional time (phones, smart watches, earbuds, video games, etc....)

These devices have a demonstrable net negative effect on student learning and the school environment. They have numerous negative health effects and increase the frequency and intensity of social-emotional problems. Also, a lot of time is wasted when students are distracted on their device instead of putting effort into learning.



To support our students, we've updated our [Code of Conduct](#) (Section 10) to reflect the need to restrict their use to only with the teacher's explicit direction (for educational purposes). Otherwise, all devices need to be silenced, put away in lockers and not accessed in-between classes nor on field trips.

Staff have been frequently communicating this restriction policy so that all students and families have fair notice. Families, please join us in sharing this important message with students.

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## Bussing & Student Drop-off/Pick-up

All students taking the bus must be registered. All families need to fill out the forms to take the bus. If your child has never been registered on a bus, please fill out the Bus Registration form. Please access the [Bussing Protocols, Bus Registration forms and Bus Route information](#) online and return to the school office ([gfss@sd51.bc.ca](mailto:gfss@sd51.bc.ca)).

Reminder that student drop-off and pick-up must happen in the east or west parking areas. There should be no parent cars nor bicycle traffic through the central bus lane.

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## Health and Students' Absence

We remind everyone to be aware that no-one should come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities. It is each of our responsibilities to practice health awareness.

Please advise the office (not just classroom teachers) if your child is going to be absent for any reason or any duration of time. The absentee Auto-Dialer system is in place again this year. If your child has missed a block during the day and we have not been notified, the system will phone and email you. The system will not call if students are late to class, only for missed classes. Please let the office know if your contact information has changed so we can update it in the system.

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## Have you moved or updated your phone number?

Communication to families is very important for student success. Please let us know of any changes to your address, phone number or email address. We use an update form that students complete on the very first day. Parents, please check that your student knows of any changes to your contact information.

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## Yearbook Club

We are actively seeking new members to join our enthusiastic group. We have started planning and photographing school events. Stay tuned for announcements as the group normally meets on Wednesdays at lunch in the art room. Please see Ms. Doyle (teacher sponsor) if you have any questions about joining or how to get involved in your school community.

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## Mountain Bike Club

The GFSS Mountain Bike Club will be riding Tuesdays, 3:45-6:00 pm, September 17 through October 22. The club is open to students grade 8 through 12. Bikers of all experience levels welcome.

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## PAC

The GFSS Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is here to ensure that parents and caregivers have an organized voice in their child's education. PAC offers an opportunity to be involved in the student experience (e.g., by providing funding for some extracurricular activities, field trips, clubs); while



providing parents with a place to voice concerns and issues and receive direct feedback from the school administration and School Board Trustees.

PAC meets each 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month. The next meeting is October 21 at 6:00.

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## Bouquets

- PAC for sponsoring our Welcome to Gr 8 BBQ with the whole school.
- Teachers and volunteer community coaches for supporting our many clubs and sports.
- Mr. McKaig and Ms. Argue for organizing the Liaison Day with post-secondary institutions.
- Community guests at our Truth and Reconciliation Assembly
- Teachers for engaging with professional learning and department coordination this past week.
- Parent volunteer drivers for out-of-town activities.
- Our entire learning community for a joyful first month of powerful learning.



Thank you!