

Grand Forks Secondary School

1331 Central Ave | Grand Forks BC | V0H 1H0 | Phone: 250 442 8285 | Web: gfss.sd51.bc.ca

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

September 2025



Principal's Message

Welcome, students, to another great year at GFSS. We are looking forward to creating a fun year full of learning and laughter. We'd also like to say an extra special, "Welcome!" to our new families and new students. We expect to have about 400 enrolled students this year.

Our fall volleyball season will be starting right away. Thank you, Coaches, for getting us started. The swimming team will be diving in soon this fall as well. I encourage all students to jump in and get involved with our athletic teams. We will soon be launching our Student Council, Mountain Bike, Warhammer Club and E-Sports Clubs. All students are encouraged to join in. Go Wolves!

Good thinking begins with a nourished body and mind. At GFSS, students are offered free breakfast snacks and lunch starting after September 8th. Please view our full bell [schedule](#) on our website.

Regular attendance, 4 days each week, is another key to student success. To maximize student learning, please make appointments on Fridays or other days when the school is closed. If students are going to be absent, please call 250-442-0954.



I am excited about having a great year together. Please reach out to our teachers and administration team if you have any concerns.

~ Tom Eccleston, Principal

[link to previous weekly principal's reports and monthly newsletters](#)

New Staff

- Kalena de Wynter-Wilkie (Teacher)
- Erin Perkins (Teacher)
- Kayla Soukoreff (Child Youth Care Worker practicum student)

Welcome!

Important Dates

- Sep 2, 8:30 First day of school and early student dismissal at 11:30
- Sep 4 Grade assemblies
- Sep 5 School in Session
- Sep 22 Fall Photo Day
- Sep 29 Truth and Reconciliation Assembly and Orange Shirt Day
- Sep 30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (school closed)
- Oct 3 School in Session, Terry Fox Run
- Oct 8 Family Conferences & Welcome back BBQ

Learning Launch: AKA First Day of School

The day is here! On Tuesday, September 2nd, students should arrive to school by 8:30. Locker selection only is from 8:00 to 8:30. There will be posters around the school so students can find their Homeroom. Staff will be on hand to help anyone who needs it.

Students should be in their homeroom by 8:30. Homeroom will be about 30 minutes then students will rotate through A, B, C, D, blocks finishing at 11:25. Busses depart from 11:30 onwards. Wednesday is a normal day.

Welcome Back BBQ & Family Conferences

We believe in our community, and we're excited to kick off the new school year together. On October 8th, join us for our Welcome Back BBQ. This will be a fun time for students, families, and staff to reconnect, share a meal, and celebrate the start of another great year at GFSS. The BBQ coincides with our Family Conferences, where families can meet teachers, learn about classroom expectations, and set a positive tone for the year ahead.



This gathering reflects our school's values of connection, growth, and joy. Bringing all our school together in a spirit of family sets the stage for positive learning and achievement. Together, we are building a school rooted in respect, purpose, and partnership.

We look forward to seeing you there and working together to ensure every student thrives. Watch your inbox for a registration link in the coming weeks.

Website

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

Student Council

We believe that students are the centre of all that we do at school. Students' thoughts, opinions, and involvement matters. To raise the voice of students in school activities, we promote [Student Council](#). Our hope is that [Student Council](#) will represent the perspectives of students and advise school administration and faculty on student issues

Additionally, the [Student Council](#) helps make school fun and promotes school spirit through organizing special events by helping model an inclusive, positive culture. Every student is welcome to join and details about how to get involved will be announced in early September.

Facilities Updates

As planned, the library is relocating upstairs (to room 208) and the Learning Support Centre has moved to the old Library location. High efficiency lighting was installed in the Gym and Bike Shop along with an upgrade of HVAC in the community wing. We are seeking to augment our supervision plan and add hallway video surveillance to help curtail vandalism and deter crime. Cameras have been installed but are not yet functional.

GFSS suffered significant water damage to many parts of the school after the downpour in August. The bike shop, changerooms and room 101 were severely affected and will be shut down until repaired. Remedial work will continue all month (out of sight or the way of students). These, and a few other issues, have caused delays in our upgrades to the main washrooms. For gym changing rooms, we are installing temporary portables on the East side and temporarily redesignating (with signage) other washrooms so that we will have enough toilets for our students to use. Thank you all in advance for your patience with the inconveniences.

Code of Conduct Restricts Personal Digital 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, our [Code of Conduct](#) (Section 10) reflects 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 will be frequently communicating this restriction policy, so all students and families have fair notice. Families, please join us in sharing this important message with students.

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 (gffs@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.



Other Extra-curricular Activities coming this Fall

- Swimming
- Boys Soccer
- Grade 8 Girls and Boys Volleyball
- Junior Girls and Boys Volleyball
- Sr Girls and Boys Volleyball
- Mountain Bike Club
- Warhammer Club and E-sports Club
- More to come...



Student Supplies & Fees

We want to share with you our [supplies list](#) and school fees for 2025-2026. Please review both documents. Please know that participation will not be denied due to financial hardship. If this is the case, please speak with the school principal.

Activities (sports and clubs) and some courses have additional fees. Teachers, Coaches and Sponsors will communicate them to students.

Student fees are \$22 this year (all students). Locks are \$8 and must be obtained from the office.

| SECONDARY | |
|---|--------|
| Athletics: Curling (based on ice rental cost) | TBA |
| Athletics: Golf | 150 |
| Athletics: Grade 8, Volleyball, Basketball | 150 |
| Athletics: Jr Basketball, Volleyball Soccer, Ultimate | 200 |
| Athletics: Mountain Biking Team | 200 |
| Athletics: Sr Basketball, Volleyball Soccer, Ultimate | 250 |
| Athletics: Swimming (based on rental cost) | TBA |
| Athletics: Uniform Deposit | TBA |
| Clubs: E-sports | 175 |
| Elective: Art 9-12 | 15 |
| Elective: Band 8-12 | 15 |
| Elective: Foods 9-12 | 40 |
| Elective: Outdoor Education | 50 |
| Elective: Woodwork (special project) | varies |
| Foods 8 | 15 |
| Grad: Ceremony Fee | 100 |
| Locks (optional) | 8 |
| Student Council Fee | 22 |
| Yearbook (optional) | 50 |
| Financial Hardship Information: | |
| Participation will not be denied due to financial hardship. Any student unable to pay fees is invited to speak with the school principal. | |

Bell Schedule

Welcome Bell: 8:12 am

- Period 1 (85 min) – 8:17 – 9:42
- Period 2 (85 min) – 9:47 – 11:12
- Period 3 (85 min) – 11:17 – 12:42
 - LUNCH (44 Min) 12:42 – 1:26

Welcome Back Bell: 1:26

- Period 4 (120 min) – 1:30 – 3:30

Early Dismissal Bell Schedule

Welcome Bell: 8:12 am

- Period 1 (85 min) – 8:17 – 9:42
- Period 2 (85 min) – 9:47 – 11:12
- Period 3 (85 min) – 11:17 – 12:42
 - LUNCH (44 Min) 12:42 – 1:26

Welcome Back Bell: 1:26

- Period 4 (60 min) – 1:30 – 2:30

Our School Vision and Mission Journey

Over the past few months, GFSS has been on a journey to imagine our future together. Our new vision and mission statements will reflect the voices of staff, students, and families. We want to capture a shared sense what makes our school such a special place to learn and grow.

We started with our students. Last spring, they shared inspiring ideas about what makes a great school: one that is safe, inclusive, vibrant, and full of opportunities to participate and contribute. They also made practical suggestions such as improving spaces and clubs to create more chances for student voice. [Read the full Report: What are GFSS Students Telling Us?](#)

We continued with an invitation to parents to share their thoughts through a survey. Families emphasized the importance of preparing students for the future: both in academics and in life. They also highlighted how much they value experiential learning, personal growth, and strong communication between home and school. [Read the full Report: Beliefs About Education.](#)

We involved our staff as well. Through an activity called the “Hall of Fame,” every adult was invited or consulted to highlight the values they admire most in their experience in service to public education. Out of those stories came themes that felt very true to GFSS: connection and compassion, growth and achievement, integrity and accountability, purpose and contribution, and creativity and joy. [Read the full Report: Hall of Fame.](#)

We summarized all the input and discovered a powerful picture of what matters most to our learning community. [Read the full Report: Community Synthesis.](#)

What’s next? This fall, we’ll use the synthesis to draft our new vision and mission statements. Students, staff, and families will all have a chance to review them in the coming weeks.

We’re excited about where this is heading, and we’re grateful to everyone who has contributed so far. Together, we’re building a future for GFSS that is grounded in connection, growth, and joy.



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 for class, only for missed classes. Please let the office know if your contact information has changed so we can update it in the system.

Have you moved or updated your phone number?

Communication with 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.

A form will be sent home on the first day to send back to school with any corrections. Please check that your student knows of any changes to your contact information.



Mountain Bike Club

The GFSS Mountain Bike Club will be riding weekly after school, September through October. The club is open to students grade 8 through 12. Bikers of all experience levels welcome.

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.





Dear Students and Families of Grand Forks Secondary School,

Welcome to 2025-2026 here at GFSS. I hope everyone had a rejuvenating summer full of rest, adventure, and fun. As we return to school I am looking forward to seeing our hallways filled with the energy and spirit our Wolves bring to us every

day. Whether you are new to GFSS or returning for another year, we are committed to providing our students with the best opportunities to grow academically, socially, and personally.

As we begin our year together, I want to take a moment to highlight a few important responsibilities and expectations we have that help make our school safe, respectful, and keep the focus on learning:

Please review the school [Code of Conduct](#). All students and families should be familiar with this foundational document that outlines the values, behaviours, and expectations that guide our daily interactions. Respect, responsibility, and safety are foundational to everything we do.

Cell Phones and Personal Devices. Personal digital devices, including cell phones, are not to be accessible during instructional time or in the hallways during the school day. These expectations support focused learning and positive social interactions. Devices should remain off and stored away unless explicitly permitted by staff for educational use.

Vaping. Vaping is illegal for minors, highly addictive, and contributes to an unsafe environment for others. It is strictly prohibited on school property and during school events. Students found in violation will be subject to our progressive discipline policy.

Attendance Matters. Regular attendance is crucial for student success. This year, we will be placing a strong emphasis on consistent attendance. We encourage families to prioritize school schedules, and we will be reaching out when concerns arise to offer support and guidance. Absences due to illness or appointment can be phoned into the office at the 24 hour attendance line, (250) 442-0954.

Extended absences. Planning an extended absence for more than a week? Please let us know. It is essential that the school is notified in advance. A brief form is available in the office that must be completed prior to the planned, extended absence. This allows teachers and administration to help students plan and stay on track with their learning.

I'm looking forward to working with families, students, and staff to create a year of learning that is purposeful and memorable. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out anytime. Wishing everyone a great start to the school year!

Sincerely,

Jon Dowswell, Vice Principal

Grand Forks Secondary School and Walker Development Centre

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