

# Grand Forks Secondary School

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

## January 2026

### Principal's Message

Welcome to 2026 and welcome back to GFSS. With optimism and a strong sense of purpose, we look ahead to a positive and powerful year of learning together. Let's work together to make it one where students are supported to grow, contribute, and develop their unique strengths within a caring school community.

There was plenty of fun at GFSS last month, with decorating, dress-up days, daily activities, and even some dancing along the way. A big thank you to Student Council for leading eight days of seasonal fun and helping keep spirits bright while strengthening the sense of belonging that makes our school such a vibrant place to learn.

Our December 18 Passion Day was a highlight, offering a wide range of creative and community-focused activities. Students and staff came together to share interests and talents through hockey, baking, crafting, and much more. GFSS enjoyed an afternoon that reflected our commitment to learning that is engaging, relational, and connected to life beyond the curriculum.

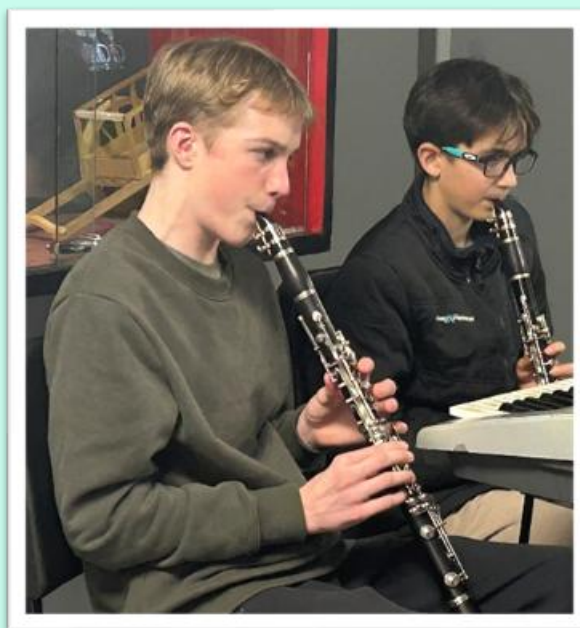
As we move toward the conclusion of first semester in the coming weeks, students are encouraged to check in with their teachers to clearly understand final assessments. January 26 is Completion Day, intended for a small number of students who have received direct communication and specific appointment times from their teachers.

A special reminder to our graduating students to continue working steadily on your Career Life Connections requirements to ensure they are completed thoughtfully and on time. Best wishes with your Capstone presentations, taking place January 12–15.



As always, thank you for working together to make GFSS a place where learning, connection, and community matter. Let's continue supporting one another as we move into the new year.

~ Tom Eccleston, Principal



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

## Grand Forks Secondary School

### Important Dates

- Jan 5 Welcome back to school
- Jan 7 Write for Rights (Bistro, lunch)
- Jan 12 Core Competency / Circle of Courage (Student self-assessment, A-block)
- Jan 12-14 Provincial Assessments
- Jan 12-15 Capstone Presentations (gr. 12s)
- Jan 21 Summative Assessments (A, B)
- Jan 22 Summative Assessments (C, D)
- Jan 26 Completion Day (by appointment – [click for details](#))
- Jan 27 Turn-around Day (no students)
- Jan 28 Learning Lunch: Semester 2 begins (ABCD)
- Feb 2 PAC Meeting (6pm, Bistro, or [online](#))
- Feb 11 Summary of Learning Reports distributed in homeroom



### Substance Use Action Plan

Our Vision for GFSS is one of a thriving community. An aspect of our school plan is proactively addressing substance use in youth. We have developed a [Substance Use Action Plan](#) to communicate ideas and to coordinate joint efforts of GFSS and its network of partners.

As partners in our youths' success, we invite you feedback on the plan and would like to share a resource called Substance Use Intervention Approaches ([Harm and Stigma Reduction](#)) FAQ for parents and caregivers.

The CSH framework helps our school staff, students, families, and community partners to work together to create an environment that makes GFSS the best place possible to learn, work and play.

### Did you know...

Every day at lunch nearly one hundred students take to the gym floor to practice their athletic skills. Working in about 8 different zones, you can find small groups of students practicing basketball free throws, playing 3-on-3, bumping and setting volleyballs in a circle or even sometimes practicing their badminton.

At GFSS, we value the social and health benefits of sports and thank our noon-hour supervisors for making this opportunity a reality for our students.



## Grand Forks Secondary School

### This year, join an extra-curricular activity

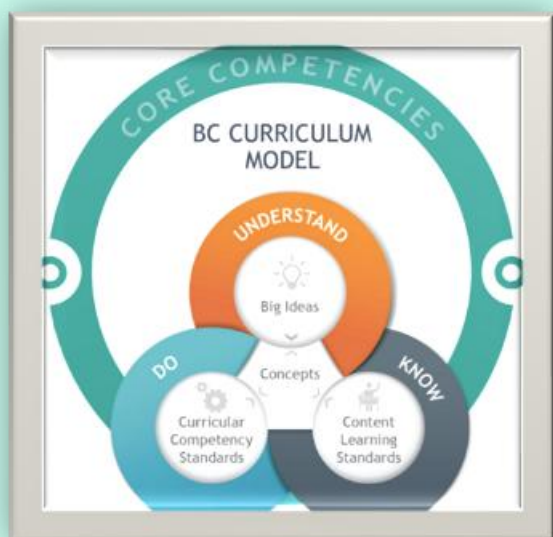
GFSS is lucky to have dedicated educators and community members that give their time and talents to volunteer to sponsor dozens of extra-curricular activities (ECAs) that cover a wide range of interests (sports, clubs). Warhammer, student council, SAGA, yearbook, global citizenship, mindfulness, mountain bikes and more!

Clubs are always happy to welcome new members. A full listing of our ECAs can be found by checking out the [ECA directory](#) on our website.

Students can also check out the student council board for information on what is going on about the school.



### What are the Core Competencies?



The Core Competencies are sets of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies that all students need to engage in for deep, lifelong learning. Along with literacy and numeracy foundations, they are central to British Columbia's K-12 curriculum and assessment system and directly support students in their growth as educated citizens.

Students develop Core Competencies at home as well as at school, making parent/guardian support for students' growing awareness, understanding, and development of the Core Competencies crucial. Parents/guardians will likely already have some understanding of their students' development in Communication, Thinking, Personal and Social.

This January, GFSS students will begin self-reflection and personal assessment of their development of the core competencies. Click here to [learn more about the Core Competencies](#) and goal setting.

### Hot Lunch at GFSS

School District No. 51 is happy to announce a new catered hot lunch program! As part of the provincial government's Feeding Futures initiative, we have partnered with the Boundary Community Ventures Association to provide lunches for purchase.

Orders can be placed online using [MunchaLunch.com](https://munchalunch.com). You can pay for your orders online using credit card (Visa/Mastercard), debit-credit card, Google Pay, Apple Pay or pre-paid credit card. Paper order forms are also available for families wishing to pay with cash.

## The Graduation Capstone: Learning that comes together

The Graduation Capstone is an important part of the BC Graduation Program and a requirement for graduation. It gives students the opportunity to look back on their learning, reflect on who they are becoming, and share how they hope to make a meaningful impact in the world.

Rather than a traditional exam or final project, the Capstone allows grade 12 students to explore a topic, passion, or experience that matters to them. They reflect on their learning both in and out of school, think about their strengths and interests, and connect this learning to their future plans after graduation.

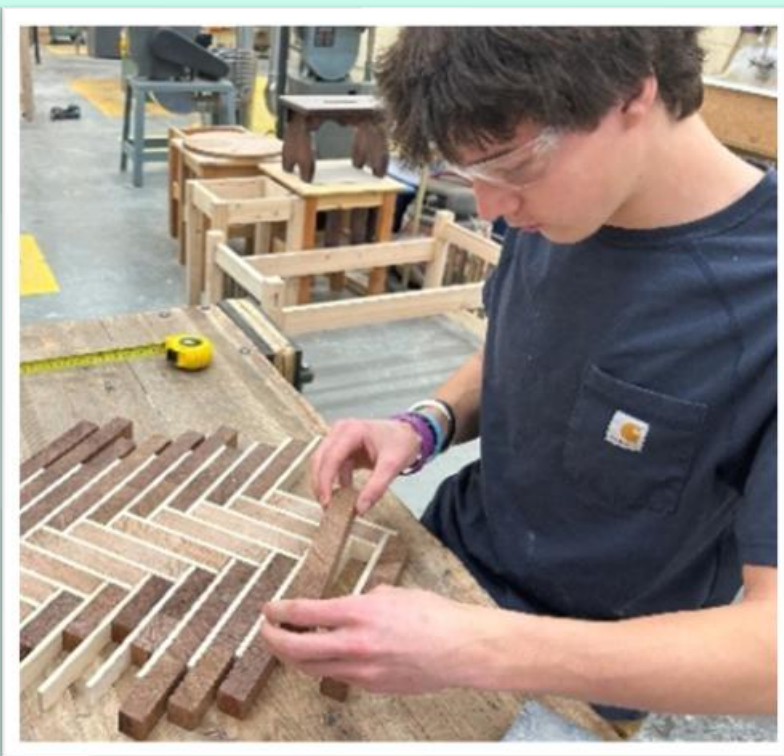
Students may create different kinds of Capstones depending on their interests: presentations, portfolios, creative projects, or community-based experiences. What matters most is the thinking behind it: reflection, growth, and purpose.

Through the Capstone, students demonstrate the skills they have been developing throughout their education, including communication, critical thinking, responsibility, and self-awareness. It is a chance to pause, reflect, and say, *"This is what I've learned, and this is how I want to contribute."*

Families play an important role in supporting grads through the process. You can help by:

- Talking with your student about their interests, strengths, and future goals
- Encouraging them to choose a topic that feels meaningful and authentic
- Asking reflective questions about what they are learning and why it matters
- Celebrating effort, growth, and persistence

The Capstone is meant to be a celebration of learning, not a source of stress. With support from both school and home, it becomes a powerful opportunity for students to recognize their growth and prepare for the next stage of their journey.



## Grand Forks Secondary School

### GFSS students shine in the fine and practical arts gala

Our Fine Arts, Woodwork, Metal, Music, and Foods students showcased their creativity at last week's Celebration of Learning: Practical Arts Gala. Families joined us to explore student projects, meet the young creators, and celebrate the hands-on learning that makes GFSS such a vibrant place to learn. From handcrafted wood and metal pieces to culinary creations, artwork, and musical performances, the event highlighted the skill, effort, and pride our students bring to their work.

A heartfelt thank-you to our teachers (Ms. Doyle, Ms. Farahmand, Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Theilmann, and Ms. Oh) and community volunteers whose guidance, and enthusiasm made this showcase possible. Your support helped make our Gala into a great event to celebrate student learning.



## Grand Forks Secondary School

### Drama production

This fall's drama season at GFSS was truly special. Our students brought energy, heart, and genuine talent to the stage with not one, but two outstanding productions. Both shows drew large, enthusiastic audiences, and the response from families, staff, and community members was nothing short of glowing.

What stood out was the sense of teamwork and belonging that developed behind the scenes. For many, the stage became a place where confidence grew, and friendships deepened. Aspiring towards our school's vision, students supported one another through long rehearsals, learned elements of stage craft, took risks, and discovered and developed their unique gifts.

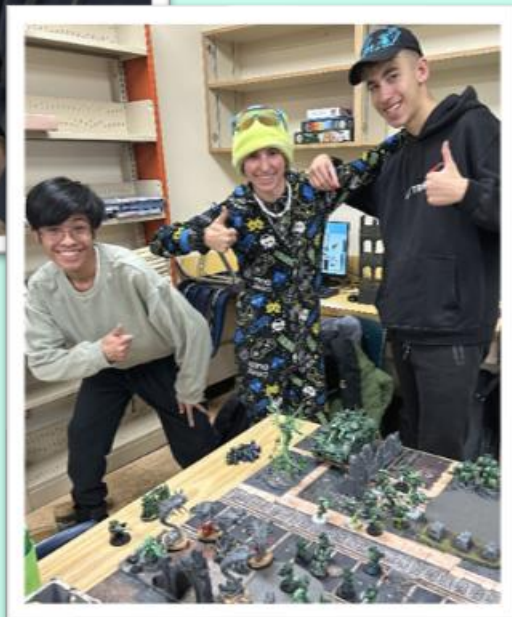
A huge thank-you goes to Mr. DeWynter-Wilke, whose leadership, creativity, and belief in students made these productions possible. We also want to acknowledge the dozens and dozens of volunteers and sponsors who contributed in ways big and small: set design, costumes, lighting, sound, backstage support, ticketing, makeup, and supervision. These shows are a massive undertaking, and they simply could not happen without the dedication of so many generous people.

Lastly, thank you drama students for sharing your talents with us. Your courage, your hard work, and your joy on stage reminded





GFSS: A community of connection



# Winter health tips for children

## Bundle up for the cold

Remind children to wear these before going outside:

- Winter jacket
- Hats
- Mittens and scarves
- Insulated boots

## Keep bodies moving

Keep children active to boost immune systems and help with mental health.

Look for winter programs at local community centres or indoor sports facilities.

## Protect from illness

Teach children health etiquette:

- Wash hands
- Cover coughs and sneezes with elbow
- Stay home when sick

Encourage getting annual flu and COVID vaccinations.

## Frostbite or Hypothermia

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia is when your body gets too cold and can't warm up. Signs could be shivering, blue skin, numbness, or confusion.

**What to do:** Go indoors, dry off (if wet), and use blankets to warm the chest/neck/head first.

### Frostbite

Frostbite happens when skin freezes. It usually affects fingers, toes, ears, and nose. Skin looks white/yellow, or in severe cases, black or blistered.

**What to do:** Warm up indoors.

**In all cases of Hypothermia or Frostbite children should get medical help right away.**