

Press Release

School Success

August 10, 2015

I wrote this piece last May, with the intention of having it run now. From where I sit on the Grand County School Board, every year the month of May is a celebratory time for our community. As the new school year approaches, I'd like to reflect on the energy and excitement that culminates at the end of a school year. That energy is beginning anew now.

Things begin to ramp up in April, when the High School and Middle School announce their spring Honor Rolls. Did you know that for the second trimester at the Middle School's 7th and 8th graders last year, there were 28 4.0 students, and dozens upon dozens more students racking up 3.0 to 3.99 GPA's, which when combined represent over half the student body? There are similar numbers at the high school.

Also in April, Utah State University Moab has its graduation ceremonies. A number of former GCHS students are conferred a higher education degree, and other adult students are honored as they receive their own GED or high school diploma from the School District.

May roars in with so many well-deserved celebrations that are so important to our students. Here are but a few –

In May, an evening full of activities is held at the end-of-school year party hosted by the BEACON After School program at HMK Elementary. Over 650 children were served by BEACON last school year at HMK, the Middle School and the Moab Charter School. The program is renowned throughout Utah for its effectiveness and breadth of programming, as it helps many students thrive. The Grand Area Mentoring program had its own end of the year events, a "Moab Daily" river trip, donated by the local non-profit outfitter, 'Splore, and some time at the Bowling Alley for kids, their families and mentors. Last year the program served 80 students at HMK, GCMS and the GCHS, matching students with one-on-one volunteer adult mentors.

Native American Recognition night happened at the High School on May 22, a celebration for families and students of all ages, recognizing the great work of the students capped off with an exciting Hoop Dance by two awesome guests from Arizona. The 3rd annual "Boston Night" assembly and extravaganza celebrating the rich learning experience that the large group of HMK 5th graders and their chaperones had – in Boston, of course! D.A.R.E. graduation! Kindergarten Graduation! The HMK Art Walk! Grand County Middle School graduation and awards ceremony! Staff Recognition Day! (when the Teacher of the Year, Employee of the Year, Community Member of the Year and retiring staff members are recognized.) And, a first ever for Grand County School District – regular Pre-School graduation, with 22 pre-K students from the morning and afternoon classes promoting to Kindergarten. These children are ready to be full-fledged Kindergarteners this August, and will join many other students starting public school from

our great local private preschools and the school district's special needs Sundwall Center pre-school students.

Oh my gosh, so much more, but my space is limited! Last but not least, the final celebration - what all of the above-mentioned celebrations really lead up to - what it is all about – High School Graduation (with its attendant Senior Awards Night and Sports Awards Night). This truly American ritual, this rite of passage, saw 97 GCHS students walk through the “G”, receive their diplomas (some with quite a flair) and walk off that stage and into the next big phase of their lives. Colleges and universities, trade schools and the military, work and family, are calling these students as they ready themselves for the next big step. I invite you to come to the High School to take a look at the huge map of the United States hanging on the south wall of the central commons – you will see 2015 GCHS graduates names listed, and Block “G”s located in the many different states and locations that our graduates are headed to.

So many people give so much of their time, energy, and lives to make high school graduation a reality for our students. Everything I've talked about leads to that iconic day. From preschool to high school, teachers and aides; maintenance, mechanics and custodians; bus drivers, food service staff, coaches, school secretaries and administrators – they all make their contributions, of course. But so do parents and guardians, and a huge cadre of volunteers, community members and business people who are so generous with their time, their money and their own experiences to share.

I'm proud of what our students achieve as they move through their school years, and I'm equally proud of the efforts our community puts forth and the support so many give to make this all happen. Thank you for what *you* do!

Jim Webster serves on the Grand County Board of Education. He and his wife Vicki are the proud parents of two Grand County High School graduates.