



June 9, 2022

Dear Helena Public Schools Families and Staff,

The last day of school is a joyful one for students, as it should be. As a parent of three grown children, I remember marveling at the transformation that took place physically, socially, and academically from beginning to end of each school year.

I hope you can find a quiet time over the next few days to visit with your child about their accomplishments and help them appreciate the incredible strides they've made. And don't forget to reward yourself for all you've done to support your student/s and our schools over the past 9 months.

A special thanks to our many parent volunteers who make time in their busy schedules to bring events and opportunities to their schools. And a tremendous thank you to our educators and staff, whose resilience, flexibility, and dedication to lifting up our students is beyond measure. I have asked much of our teachers, para educators, support staff, principals, and administrators this year, and they have dug deep time and again to meet the challenge. Thank you.

Our Central Office will be working throughout the summer to prepare for a strong 2022-23 school year, and I will keep you updated with periodic emails. This will include the link to the application for the federal Free & Reduced Lunch Program, which will be available in mid-July. The link also will be available on our [district website](#) starting July 15. The federal funding that allowed us to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students over the past two years has ended, meaning students who don't qualify for Free & Reduced Lunch will need to pay for all meals this fall.

Beyond meals, filling out the Free & Reduced Lunch Program application benefits all students because our district's federal Title 1 funding is based on the number of students qualified for meal assistance. Even if you don't plan for your student to participate in the meal program next year, it's important to fill out the Free & Reduced application if you believe your family may qualify. Please watch for more information on this and other back-to-school details this summer.

And if you haven't yet, please take a moment to like/follow us on [Facebook \(@HelenaSchoolDistrict\)](#), [Instagram \(@HelenaPublicSchools\)](#), and [Twitter \(@SchoolsHelena\)](#), which is a great way to stay on top of District news. If you are not a parent or staff member, you can [subscribe to receive our Friday and summer updates by email](#).

The 2021-2022 school year had its fair share of challenges. But with the help of our students, staff, families, and broader community, we made it a year in which the positives far outweighed the

negatives. I am fortunate and grateful to lead in a community that continues our Montana tradition of supporting our schools.

On that note, I would like to share a few final recognitions for the great work of our students, staff, and community boosters this school year. You can find photos on our website at helenaschools.org/student-and-educator-recognitions/

Have a wonderful summer!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Weltz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Rex Weltz
Superintendent, Helena Public Schools

- Congratulations to HHS Graduate Brooklynn Anderson, who received the “2022 Jobs for Montana Graduates Chairman’s Recognition” award. The Chairman's Recognition Award recognizes students who have shown significant growth in personal and career development due in part to their participation in the Helena High School's Jobs for Montana’s Graduates (JMG) program and the Montana Career Association.

Brooklynn, the JMG Chapter President, was recognized at the JMG Ignite Montana Conference. Other HHS students honored were Brooke Sedlock, 3rd place in Meme design-12th grade; Kaden Martello, 3rd in Meme design-11th grade; and Ava Strainer, 2nd in Chapter Web Page.

The Jobs for Montana Graduates (JMG) program prepares middle and high school students for the workforce by connecting students with local employers and teaching them workplace professional skills, leadership skills, and career readiness. Taught by Business Education Teacher Samantha Humphrey, the JMG class at Helena High is open to juniors and seniors. In addition to hosting an annual career fair, the class holds an annual blood drive for the Red Cross and conducts fundraisers for Toys for Tots, Special Olympics, NAMI, and other local and national organizations.

- Capital High Bruin William Southworth is among [two Concordia College graduates \('21\) to be selected by the U.S. Department of State to teach abroad through its Fulbright U.S. Student Program](#). The Fulbright Student program (separate from the Fulbright Scholar program) enables graduating college seniors and graduate students to study, teach, or conduct research. It is one of highest academic achievements for those holding a bachelor’s degree in the United States.

Southworth, who will spend his Fulbright experience teaching English in Germany, encourages students to seize the opportunity to study abroad. “I owe all my best experiences to my tendency to throw myself in places I don't quite belong,” Southworth said in an interview for

Concordia College. “That tendency landed me interviews with Cuban prisoners of state and British politicians, put me in parliament and international trade conferences, and made me friends all over the world.”

Helena Public Schools Teacher Kayla Ryan, who is an instructional coach at Bryant and Central elementaries, also is headed to Germany this summer with the [Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms](#) program. Ms. Ryan completed a year of project work with the program and will spend two weeks in Germany, where activities will include teaching in a primary school.

The program is designed to help teachers develop students into global learners.

“It’s about trying to get out beyond ourselves and our borders,” said Ms. Ryan. “Being from Montana, we don’t necessarily have the opportunity to go out and experience different cultures with our students so we’re learning to bring culture to them.”

Ms. Ryan also traveled to Thailand with the [Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad](#) program in 2017.

Congratulations and auf Wiedersehen to Ms. Ryan and Mr. Southworth!

- Students from the middle school and high school PEAK Program recently competed in the annual Silverwood Physics Day event at the Silverwood Theme Park in Idaho.

A high school team earned Second Place in the Roller Coaster Design Contest (CHS students Adam Grasmick, Paedyn McArthur, Carter Sleed), and a middle school team took Third Place in the Math/Physics Measurement Contest (CRA students Madison Clement, Sophia d’Ambrosio, Keely Lewis, and Weston McNearney). Way to go Team PEAK!

- Congratulations to Helena High’s Jesse Zentz, who was selected by the Montana Coaches Association as the AA Girls Track and Field Coach of the year! The Helena High Girls Track Team won the 2022 Montana state championship with the following individual state champion titles:
 - Logan Todorovich, girls 100 hurdles and girls long jump
 - Odessa Zentz, girls 400-meter run (third straight state championship in this event), and girls 800-meter run (again third straight state championship in this event)
 - Sydney Mattfeldt, HHS, state champion, girls shot put
 - Josh Goleman, boys shot put (second straight in this event)

Thank you, Coach Zentz, for your commitment to our students!

- Mt. Helena hikers will have a place to enjoy a snack and rest their weary legs this summer thanks to our Capital High Welding 1 students and the Tombstone Kiwanis Club.

Welding Teacher Tom Kain’s students built two steel park benches that will be installed along Ambrose Trail later this month: One near the junction with Mike Cormier Trail and the other at the junction with Daisy Hill Trail.

The Tombstone Kiwanis Club provided \$1,600 in funding for the project. Thank you, Tombstone Kiwanis, for all you do to support our students and our community!

- The Helena High Science Seminar and AP Environmental Studies classes assembled more than 400 emergency food packs for families at Helena Food Share. Way to go Bengals and thank you to Teachers Claire Pichette and Missy Sampson for helping our students experience the gift of giving.
- Helena Public Schools was able to purchase two sets of Sensory Pathways for every elementary school this spring, thanks to the Helena Education Foundation (HEF) and its generous supporters: Ron and Ann Waterman, Mike and Beth Cummings, Allegiance, PacificSource, First Interstate Bank, SMA Architecture & Design, St. Peter's Health, and Opportunity Bank.

Applied to the floor in common areas, the colorful Sensory Pathways provide physical challenges, problem-solving, and brain breaks throughout the day to calm and refocus kids in school. HEF provided funding for a Sensory Pathway pilot project at Bryant Elementary two years ago through a Great Ideas Grant. Based on the success of the pilot project, HEF made the pathways available to elementary students districtwide, naming the project in honor of Jack and Penny Copps, long-time supporters of public education and the Helena Education Foundation.

Thank you to the Helena Education Foundation and all who have brightened our students' days with these bright, fun, and engaging pathways!