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## [Letter from Grand County School District]

Grand County School District

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Grand County School District  
EACH STUDENT, EVERY DAY.

Melissa Byrd, Board President  
Steve Kennedy, Board Member  
Ariel Atkins, Board Member  
Britnie Ellis, Board Member  
Kathy Williams, Board Member  
Taryn Kay, Superintendent  
Pat Wilson, Business Administrator  
March 17, 2022

“We can judge our progress by the courage of our questions and the depth of our answers, our willingness to embrace what is true rather than what feels good.”

— Carl Sagan

“Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.” — Horace Mann

“For time is the essential ingredient; but in the modern world there is no time. The rapidity of change and the speed with which new situations are created follow the impetuous and heedless pace of man rather than the deliberate pace of nature.”

— Rachel Carson

“And you will understand all too soon  
That you, my children of battle, are your heroes”

— Nikki Giovanni

It is not enough to wake up each day and merely exist in a neutral world of tough minds and hard hearts; the world necessitates one to wake up each day with a courageous state of mind and a human heart fierce for change.

Twenty-two years into the 21st Century has brought our education community in Moab together in a multi-year global crisis. Thousands of us in Grand County wake up each morning to prepare to live through another day through the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Parents ready their children for school, and children ready themselves as students. Teachers spend hours and days preparing curriculum and lesson plans to share the excitement and joy of learning with students. When teachers are absent due to illness, support staff show up to cover their classes. There are few members from the public who come to be substitute teachers and support staff are being hired from all parts of the country. The pay for the work in schools is always a struggle to balance and plenty of volunteer time is necessary.

The state of education at Grand County School District is one of perseverance, optimism, grit, social intelligence, self-control and gratitude. The motto is "Each student, everyday."

When the community shut down in March of 2020, the graduating class of the year rallied together and held a parade for the graduation ceremony and trucks, cars and Jeeps were decorated. Grand County School District is one of the few school districts to re-open to in-person learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in the 2020-21 school year. Working in-sync with the health department, hospital and school nurse, the district created a plan to develop an asymptomatic testing program and distributed supplies like face masks, sanitizers, thermometers and air filters. In the first few months of the pandemic community members sewed masks and donated them to the schools. A mask mandate was put in place for students and staff to wear them during the school day, and as the district opened its doors to students at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year there were very few school cases. This effort is supported by scientific analysis of mask wearing that proves the effectiveness of mitigating the spread of the virus in

schools. Even now, entering the third long year of the pandemic, there are rarely cases of the virus in the schools.

We hope the future generations will learn from our efforts now and will continue to uplift public education in times of crisis and uncertainty so that all students, regardless of their background, can access equal educational opportunities. Horace Mann, the first American advocate for nonsecular, democratic, free and universal public education funded by tax monies, wrote many speeches worthy of a careful examination, but is most commonly quoted as having said, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." Humanity is dependent upon the public opportunity for free and equitable education and it is the responsibility of those with higher education to continue to uplift people in the community toward those same resources and opportunities for learning and growth. There is always much work to be done in the field of education and we can hardly know what the future generations will be working on, but no matter what it is, let us continue to be victorious in our efforts to provide equal public educational opportunities for all children in our community.

Still, students realized the impact of the virus as community spread continued, and students saw events and trips canceled and the loss of grandparents and relatives to Covid during the pandemic. The longterm impact of the struggles students have realized is yet to be fully understood. We hope all generations of Red Devils grab life by the horns. Keep going! You are the creators of your world. Change presents opportunities to overcome challenges. One cannot be assured the flow of time will create solutions to problems, only conscious action can do that. During this era changes have been created to progress the mission of public education in the community. The federal waivers for school meals has provided free breakfasts and lunches to all students and the school breakfast program expanded so that students can pick-up to-go breakfast meals to take with them; this month there were over 150 breakfast meals distributed to high school students in just three days. Presently, the school board is working on a proclamation of support for recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Day, which is one of the first efforts by schools to incorporate the day formally declared a federal holiday in 2021. Changes to state law now allow students to have time off for mental health and there are school-based therapists to support students' wellbeing and coping strategies in times of crisis. In sports, schools are beginning to recognize the inclusion of girls in sports that were previously designated as boys-only teams, such as wrestling. It took the Utah Legislature a long time to bring nurses into schools, and the Legislature first began to fund a school nurse for the school district in 2019; in 2022 there was funding provided to potentially hire a second nurse in the district. We have honored and recognized our school district's first-ever nurse as employee of the year. Afterall, she coordinated all of the testing among students and faculty during the pandemic that allowed students to continue to participate in their sports and activities and vaccine clinics on the school campuses.

Located in one of the most beautiful and remote corners of the lower 48 states, Grand County School District in Moab, Utah, serves a community of approximately 1,500 enrolled students on five campuses. *Our mission is to put each student first every day.*

Grand County School District provides a strong learning foundation for the youth in our community, based on our whole child, whole school, whole community approach. Moab's social and environmental diversity challenges students to become the next generation of compassionate and resourceful leaders. We provide a safe and engaging environment that promotes a lifelong passion for learning among our students. Every student will attain a purposeful future.

Established in 1883, the district shares common boundaries with Grand County and has grown to include a northern portion of San Juan County. The district's campuses and offices are located in the City of Moab. Campuses include the Grand Preschool, Helen M. Knight Elementary (grades K-6), Grand County Middle School (grades 7-8), Grand County High School (grades 9-12), and Arches Education Center (for adult learners and alternative education students) that is co-located with Utah State University-Moab.