

Sidney C. Huntington School

September 2025

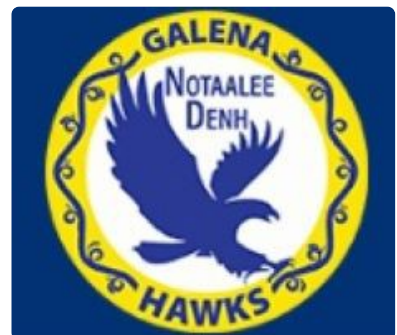
UPDATES FROM THE GCSD TEAM

Dear Galena Families and Community Members,

As we begin this new school year together, Sidney C. Huntington School is proud to share several important shifts in our daily activities.

These changes are the result of both state requirements and our district's ongoing commitment to improving student learning, supporting healthy development, and ensuring that every child has the tools to succeed.

We want to keep you well-informed, highlight the "why" behind these decisions, and celebrate the benefits these adjustments will bring to our students and community.



Reading Blocks

120-Minutes for Grades K-2 and 90-Minutes for Grades 3-4

In alignment with Alaska's Reads Act, all grades K-2 elementary classrooms include a 120-minute reading block, and our grades 3-4 elementary classrooms include a 90-minute reading block. This law reflects a statewide commitment to literacy improvement, and we are excited to embrace it. The extended time allows our teachers to provide systematic reading instruction, targeted interventions, and deeper support for students at all levels of reading development. Literacy is the foundation for future learning, and this ensures our students are set up for success.

Recess and Physical Activity

Daily Movement

We know healthy bodies support healthy minds. Every elementary and middle school student now participates in Physical Education daily, and elementary students enjoy recess before lunch along with outdoor recess three times a week, weather permitting, at varying times. Research shows that physical activity improves focus, behavior, and academic performance, and our instructional team worked hard to make these opportunities possible.

Extended School Day

Focus on Learning Growth

The majority of our elementary students are not yet proficient in reading. To address this urgent need, we have extended the school day for elementary students to provide additional interventions and individualized support, as outlined in the Alaska Reads Act. This focused time will help close gaps, build confidence, and ensure all students can grow toward grade-level expectations.

Brain Breaks

Focus on Engagement

Short, purposeful breaks are now built into elementary classrooms. These moments of stretching, relaxation, or laughter are designed to refresh students' minds and bodies, leading to stronger focus and better learning outcomes.

Pre-K Rest

Developmental Needs

Our youngest learners continue to benefit from a structured rest period of about 50–55 minutes each day. This ensures that preschool students stay healthy, focused, and ready to learn throughout the day.

Wednesday Schedule

Collaborative Professional Learning

On Wednesdays, students follow a modified schedule while our staff engage in high-level professional development. These are not routine meetings—they are collaborative learning sessions where teachers and staff sharpen their skills in instructional strategies, behavioral and mental health supports, and student engagement strategies. By investing in our educators, we create lasting, positive change for our students.

Library Update

Resource Support

We are in the process of securing support for our library so students can check books in and out during a specified time and receive help for resources to support academic purposes. We anticipate announcing times our library will be staffed within the next three weeks.

MS/HS Advisory

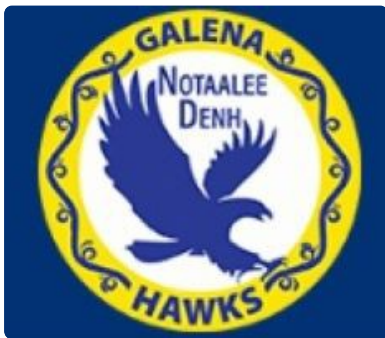
Academic Support & Interventions

Middle and high school students now have an Advisory block four days a week. Beginning this week, students will be able to access teachers in subject areas where they may be struggling, need to retake an exam, need to complete work they are behind in, need additional instruction to understand lessons, or may want to deepen or extend their knowledge working in small groups or individually with their teacher. Students can also use this time to study and complete work at school to allow them more time with their families or chosen activities outside of school hours.

Flipped Schedule for MS/HS

Access Across Campuses & Increased Engagement

Middle and high school students now follow a “flipped schedule” on Thursdays and Fridays. For example, 6th period meets first instead of last. This rotation allows students to experience all their classes at different times of the day. It ensures that courses like Physical Education, Science, or Math aren’t always tied to one time slot, supporting better engagement and flexibility in learning. Most importantly, the “flipped schedule” allows all high school students access to their teachers on both campuses during their Advisory.



We know these are big changes, and change can take time to adjust to. Already, we see students and staff finding their rhythm, and we are confident that these shifts will produce phenomenal results in the months ahead.

As always, we deeply value our partnership with you—our families and community members. Your feedback matters, and we are eager to listen, learn, and incorporate your ideas whenever possible. Together, we are shaping a brighter future for our children and our community.

Thank you for entrusting us with your students. We look forward to celebrating the growth, learning, and success that will surely come from these exciting changes.

Sincerely,
GCSD Team



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