



# Update from the Superintendent

To: All BDS Employees  
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent  
Date: April 29, 2022

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*"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."*

Albert Einstein

While we do our best to let our teachers know how much we appreciate them every day, there's one week set aside each year for National Teacher Appreciation Week and this year it's May 2-6. Before I go any further, I'd like to thank the countless businesses and individuals who have contributed this year to our weeklong celebration ... we have collected more than \$6,000 in prizes, free tickets and other giveaways and we're so excited to get the whole community involved in nominating our amazing teachers for these recognitions. We certainly appreciate the continued generosity of our donors and know that we are blessed to live in a community that supports public education.

Please follow us on Facebook if you don't already so you can nominate a teacher for one of these prizes that will be given away in daily random drawings. Prizes include:

1. A year's worth of Coca Cola products
2. Ten pairs of tickets to the upcoming Gulf Coast Jam
3. Gift baskets with more than \$500 worth of gift cards and other prizes
4. Custom inspirational tumblers
5. Dozens of \$50 gift cards to area restaurants

While gifts are always lovely, and well-received, Teacher Appreciation Week is not all about the material goods. This week is a chance for our entire community to think about what our teachers have been through in the past few years and to thank them for their dedication and passion for our children.

Just like many of you, our teachers had their personal lives upended after the storm but were back at work within a month because they knew our community needed to focus on rebuilding and they knew Bay County needed open schools for our students. Many of our employees lost everything but they managed to put smiles on their faces to welcome students back, and in many cases meet new students who had to move after the storm, while rebuilding their own lives at the same time.

And then there was Covid. Almost overnight, teachers had to learn to adjust to new online platforms and devices. They had to figure out innovative ways to stay connected to children who didn't have internet access and those who had to share devices with other siblings. They worried about students they were no longer seeing daily and many of them rode our school buses to deliver meals alongside Chartwells staff just so they could see, and hug, their students. When schools reopened, teachers had to navigate their own

personal healthcare needs while balancing the needs of their students. Many of them had immuno-compromised family members which further complicated the situation but, again, our teachers knew their students needed them and they stepped up.

While we've all faced difficult situations as a result of the pandemic, I would like you to stop and think for a moment about the challenges Covid created for our teachers. Without warning, they lost students to quarantines (sometimes for up to two weeks depending on the situation) and they had to instantaneously adjust to online learning delivery methods for those students. At the same time, students who had been quarantined for various lengths of time were coming back to school on staggered schedules and many of those students were not able to learn at home because their parents worked, or they didn't have internet access or online learning simply didn't work for them despite everyone's best efforts. This revolving door has continued throughout this year and it has been truly exhausting for our teachers, our administrators and our school staff members.

And despite all of that, state-mandated testing is still occurring this year and we haven't received any indication that there will be any waivers or forgiveness for any aspects of testing. So the usual testing pressure is present in the midst of all of these obstacles and challenges and that is most definitely taking a toll on everyone in our system.

### **So, how can you help?**

It's simple really ... kindness.

Teacher Appreciation Week doesn't have to be about gifts or prizes, it can be about a simple "thank you" or a handwritten note of gratitude. Appreciating our teachers is something that should be second nature to all of us and it's something that should be a part of the very fabric of our community. Sadly, however, politics have divided us in many cases and education seems to be caught in the crosshairs and, therefore, so are our teachers. Much of the criticism and vitriol I see online is from those who are not connected to our schools in any way, and those who don't even have children in our school system, but those harsh words matter and those harsh words hurt the dedicated, selfless staff members who are doing all they can for the children of our community.

So, please, take a few minutes every week to thank our teachers. You could thank those who are actively teaching your children or even dig back into your own experiences and thank that one teacher who truly made a difference in your lives.

I know that I am the proud product of public schools and that the teachers and coaches who invested in me made me the person I am today. I am eternally grateful to them and I am sure each of you can easily name one, two or more educators who played similar roles in your lives. Teachers appreciate your cards, emails and letters of gratitude more than you will ever know so I really encourage you to send those, and help your students send them, when you can.

Thank you teachers for all that you do for our students. Thank you for your selfless dedication, your compassion, your kindness and your determination to ensure the students in your care are as successful as possible. Thank you for caring. Thank you for loving our children as your own and, most of all, thank you

for continuing to give back to our community despite the obstacles you have faced personally and professionally.

Thank you!

Stay safe and God Bless!