



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: February 4, 2022

Many people use January as a time to make resolutions or goals for the upcoming year and we're no different at Bay District Schools.

While we always have our own set of goals and commitments for our school system, we thought we'd take a few minutes this year to tell our stakeholders what we *wish* for our children and our community this year.

1. We wish that all students experienced the job of being read to by trusted adults at home. We know work schedules can make this challenging but we wish that all families could designate even a few minutes each week for story time with mom, dad, grandma, grandpa or a trusted family friend or neighbors. There's no shortage of research about the incredible benefits for students, one study notes that "kids who are read one short book a day enter their first school years hearing almost 300,000 more words than those whose parents didn't read to them at all"
(<https://forreadingaddicts.co.uk/news/reading-to-your-kids-can-boost-their-vocabulary-by-over-a-million-words/>).
2. Along that same vein, we wish that ALL students were encouraged to read at home for pleasure every single day. Reading for at least 15 minutes a day has a profound impact on a student's life. "The study also found a student's level of reading engagement was more highly correlated with their reading achievement than their socioeconomic status, gender, family structure, or time spent on homework. In fact, students with the lowest socioeconomic background but high reading engagement scored better than students with the highest socioeconomic background but low reading engagement"
(<https://www.renaissance.com/2018/01/23/blog-magic-15-minutes-reading-practice-reading-growth/>). **Please, take a minute to read this again ... it's a sobering and very true statement and it shows you just how quickly, and easily, we could have a HUGE impact on the lives of children in our community.**
3. We wish that all students would learn the benefit of playing outside, entertaining themselves and even being bored. So many of our children are missing out on childhood traditions and games because they are always connected to devices. In a recent article

about technology usage in children, authors noted “when parents monitored media use, children had reduced exposure to media violence and negative messaging as well as improved sleep, lower body mass index (BMI), better school performance, improved social behavior, and reduced aggression”

(<https://www.verywellfamily.com/cut-kids-screen-time-for-health-621154>). To me, it’s entirely too easy to “kill” in some of these games and our children are getting desensitized to violence as a result.

4. It’s sad, but true, that we wish all students had access to trusted adults in their lives who could function as mentors and encouragers. While many children have these people in their lives as parents, guardians, grandparents etc. others simply don’t through no fault of their own. We are constantly recruiting community members as mentors for students in need and we will never have “enough” as the needs continue to grow. If you would like to be a mentor for a student, please call us at 850-767-4100 so we can connect you with the right mentoring program for you. The time you invest will be minimal but the impact you will have on the life of a student will be immeasurable.
5. And finally, we wish that no children in our community would have access to guns, weapons, prescription medications not intended for children, alcohol or anything else that could be harmful for them. We wish parents/guardians would ensure that all of those items are locked up, secured and inaccessible to children and we wish that parents would make sure that NONE of these items are traveling to and from school with their students. We are committed to ensuring the safety of our students, and staff, and we really need the help of the entire proverbial “village” on this issue because there’s so much we don’t control.

There’s no question that the faculty, staff and administrators of Bay District Schools are 100 percent committed to these goals for our children and for our community and we know they will resonate with so many of our parents. You can help us, however, by having these conversations with your children and your social circles and in your families. I have no doubt that there are families within your social circles who may need help with some of these goals and we’re only going to get stronger as a community when we reach out to those in need, one at a time, and lift them up together.

Thank you for your continued support and for taking the time to read these weekly messages. We are grateful for the trust you have in us and for our continued partnership with our community.

Stay safe and God Bless!