



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent
Date: August 23, 2024

School safety is a critical topic that concerns us all. I want to start by expressing my gratitude for your support in helping us welcome back our students and staff for the 2024-2025 school year. Your encouragement and cooperation have been invaluable, and I am confident that this will be our best year yet.

Last week was all about settling into new routines, and I appreciate your patience as everyone adjusted to new bus routes, schedules, and traffic patterns. While these tasks are essential, I want to assure you that we have been working diligently behind the scenes to enhance our school safety measures.

This summer, in partnership with our local law enforcement agencies, particularly Sheriff Tommy Ford, we revised our safety protocols and conducted extensive training sessions. These efforts focused on the security of our students, staff, and campuses. Our law enforcement partners led exercises and drills, allowing us to practice and prepare for events we hope will never occur.

We have developed comprehensive safety protocols in collaboration with educators, staff, law enforcement, and community partners. Our approach to school safety includes physical security enhancements, emergency preparedness drills, mental health supports, and fostering a culture of open communication.

However, safety at school begins at home, and we need your partnership. Please talk with your children about safety-related concerns and encourage them to contact a trusted adult on campus if needed. Utilize the anonymous reporting tools available on our website and those of local law enforcement agencies.

Monitoring your child's online activity, messages, and social media interactions is crucial. Regularly check their backpacks, vehicles, and personal items to ensure only school-appropriate items are brought to school. Prohibited items include weapons, alcohol, vapes, and illegal substances.

It's also vital to have an active Parent Portal account with up-to-date contact information. Accurate contact details enable us to reach you quickly in emergencies. If you haven't already, please register your cell phone numbers, home addresses, and email addresses in the Parent Portal.

Behind the scenes, we've implemented several key safety strategies. Our campuses are equipped with more cameras than ever before, and we continue to enhance our surveillance capabilities. Secure front offices ensure that only authorized visitors can access our classrooms and campuses.

On the mental health front, we have trained professionals on every campus dedicated to supporting students and helping them develop resiliency skills. We also practice transparency and frequent communication, valuing your thoughts, concerns, and suggestions.

Please contact your school principals with any safety concerns, or contact our Bay District School offices at 850-767-4100 or via email at bdscomm@bay.k12.fl.us. Working together, we can create a culture of safety and vigilance that extends beyond the classroom and into our community. Our students need to feel safe to learn, and your continued partnership is essential in achieving this goal.

Thank you for your trust and confidence in Bay District Schools. Together, we can put the "A" back in Bay and ensure a safe and successful school year for all.