



PUTTING  
THE 'A'  
BACK IN

BAY

## Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians  
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent  
Date: September 13, 2024

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### 9/12/24 Attendance Awareness Month

As we recognize September as Attendance Awareness Month, I want to speak directly to our commitment to putting the “A” back in Bay. This commitment focuses on five essential pillars: Accountability, Attendance, Academics, the Arts, and Athletics. Over the next few weeks, I will explain these pillars in more detail, starting with attendance, because it is foundational to every student’s success.

### The Unwavering Importance of Attendance

Attendance is more than just a measure of being physically present; it's about ensuring that each of our students has the best opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve their dreams. While we understand that children get sick and must stay home when unwell, regular attendance is crucial to their academic success and personal development.

Last year, we noticed a troubling trend: 9,000 of our 28,000 students met the legal definition of truancy. This isn't just a statistic—it's a challenge that impacts every one of us. When our students aren't in school regularly, they miss critical instruction and the chance to engage in their education fully. This affects their learning and the collective learning environment for all our students. As a BDS Team of Teams, we must remain unwavering in our dedication to reversing this trend.

It's important to understand that this is not just a Bay County issue; it's a national challenge. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, absenteeism rates were around 30% across the United States. Today, these rates have more than doubled, soaring past 60%. Chronic absenteeism has become a significant concern here in Florida, affecting student outcomes statewide. We must work together to reverse this trend and ensure our students are present and ready to learn.

### Attendance and Academic Achievement

While attendance is always crucial, it becomes even more vital during the Florida Department of Education’s state testing windows. These assessments provide a key opportunity for our students to demonstrate their knowledge


and for us to measure our progress as a district. Consistent attendance during these times ensures that every student has the chance to shine and achieve their full potential. We need your help to ensure our students are here and ready to succeed. For more information on the state's testing cycles and windows, visit: <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5663/urlt/2425StatewideAssessmentSched.pdf>.

## Supporting Our Families

We understand that some families face barriers that make regular attendance difficult, including transportation issues, health concerns, or other challenges. Our dedicated PRESENT Team, led by Jennifer Jennings, is here to support you. This team works tirelessly to provide resources and find solutions that help our students get to school regularly. Please reach out if your family faces any challenges affecting your child's attendance. We are committed to working with you to find a solution.

Ensuring regular attendance is a shared responsibility. It requires the commitment of our schools, families, and the broader community. We need your unwavering support to encourage and help your children attend school daily. By working together as the BDS Team of Teams, we can help all our students thrive and ensure that Bay District Schools remains a place where education and opportunity flourish.

Thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to your child's education. Together, we will tackle this challenge head-on and continue to make a positive difference in the lives of our students. Together, we're putting the "A" back in Bay.



# ★ ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Missing a day of school here and there may not seem like much, but absences add up!

When a student misses 2 days a month...	When a student misses 4 days a month...
They will miss <u>20 DAYS</u> a year.	They will miss <u>40 DAYS</u> a year.
They will miss <u>30 HOURS</u> of math a year.	They will miss <u>60 HOURS</u> of math a year.
They will miss <u>60 HOURS</u> of reading & writing a year.	They will miss <u>120 HOURS</u> of reading & writing a year.
They will miss over <u>1 YEAR</u> of school by graduation.	They will miss over <u>2 YEARS</u> of school by graduation.