



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent
Date: February 9, 2024

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of education, we must recognize the importance of equipping our students with real-world skills that extend beyond the classroom. In the powerful words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." With this sentiment in mind, I am excited to share the continued expansion of our Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs within Bay District Schools.

Our commitment to providing students with opportunities to learn practical, applicable skills remains unwavering. CTE is the conduit through which we empower students to dream big and acquire the tools necessary to realize those dreams.

At Bay District Schools, CTE is not limited to a select group of students; it is a comprehensive program spanning from kindergarten through 12th grade and onward to Tom P. Haney Technical College. This holistic approach ensures every student can engage in hands-on learning experiences that foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation.

I am delighted that our CTE initiatives extend beyond our K-12 classrooms. Our graduates have incredible opportunities to continue their education at renowned institutions right here in Bay County. Tom P. Haney Technical College, Gulf Coast State College, and Florida State University-Panama City Campus provide seamless transitions for students eager to further explore and specialize in their chosen CTE pathways.

Our CTE students are truly embracing "next-level" thinking and learning. From programming robots in elementary school to flying drones, solving complex engineering problems, operating heavy construction equipment, and completing real-world welding projects, our students are gaining invaluable skills that will serve them well in their future endeavors. These CTE courses lead to valuable industry certifications that prepare students for enhanced career opportunities after graduation or college/university scholarships for those pursuing additional degrees. CTE is the right path for students regardless of their goals after graduation because these "real world" skills will always translate into "real world" opportunities.

In honor of National CTE Month in February, I would like to commend our dedicated CTE teachers, many of whom are industry and content area experts recruited from the local industries and businesses. Their wealth of experience enriches the learning environment, providing students with insights into the

practical applications of their chosen fields. Moreover, our CTE administrative and program managers are raising the bar for excellence by providing planned and well-resourced CTE program expansion. These new certification pathways are designed to meet our community's trained and educated workforce requirements for the next decade.

Whether during February or at any point in the school year, I encourage parents and guardians to explore the plethora of CTE courses and certification pathways available at their child's school. Our school counselors are ready and willing to provide more information and guidance on how CTE can positively impact your child's educational journey and future career prospects. I strongly encourage any adults seeking next-level technical career training to contact our team of experts at Tom P. Haney Technical College. There are a plethora of incredible programs at Haney designed to meet the needs of our employers while embracing students of all ages and career backgrounds.

Let us join together in celebrating the achievements of our CTE students and expressing our gratitude to the exceptional CTE teachers who contribute to their success. We are empowering futures through education, and I am so proud of the BDS Team of Teams members who contribute to this daily.