



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent
Date: January 17, 2025

The start of a new year always brings a sense of renewal, and as we dive into the second semester of the 2024-2025 school year, there's so much to look forward to! From kindergarten registration and school choice opportunities to senior recognition events and graduation celebrations, this time of year is filled with exciting milestones that highlight our students' incredible growth and achievements.

As we move forward, it's also a time to reflect on the progress we're making across Bay District Schools. Our mission to "put the 'A' back in Bay" focuses on five key areas: **Accountability, Attendance, Academic Achievement, Arts, and Athletics**. Here's a look at where we stand halfway through the school year:

Accountability

At Bay District Schools, fiscal responsibility and good stewardship of taxpayer dollars are guiding principles. This year, we reduced our budget by \$30 million while maintaining our unwavering commitment to enhancing safety and security in our schools—a top priority. Despite operating within these tight budgetary constraints, we have made significant strides in supporting our employees. We've increased the starting teacher salary to \$50,000 and provided a five percent raise to all other employees. While we're proud of this progress, we recognize there is still much work to be done, particularly in addressing the salaries of some of our lowest-paid employees. We remain committed to that work in the coming year.

Transparency is also a cornerstone of everything we do, and our updated dress code policy exemplifies this commitment. Set to take effect next school year, the policy incorporates meaningful changes shaped by the valuable feedback we received during the 30-day review period. I want to extend my gratitude to everyone who shared their thoughts and ideas—your input has ensured the final policy aligns with the values and needs of our community.

These adjustments are designed to keep the focus on learning while fostering a positive and respectful school environment. Accountability means listening, responding, and taking action, and I'm proud of how we've demonstrated that through this process. Notably, stricter dress code enforcement was a top priority identified by our student leaders when we met with them. Their proactive ideas and dedication

to improving our district played a key role in shaping this policy, and we are incredibly proud of their thoughtful contributions.

Attendance

Our district's average daily attendance is an impressive 92%—a testament to the dedication of our students, families, and staff. While this is fantastic, we remain concerned about the number of students who have already missed 10 or more school days and are now considered chronically absent. Sick children should absolutely stay home to recover, but regular attendance is essential for academic success. Let's continue working together to support our students in being present and engaged.

Academic Achievement

We are thrilled with our students' progress! Data from the second state testing window before the holiday break shows continued improvements across the board. These results directly reflect the hard work of our students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. I'm incredibly proud of this team effort and confident we are on the right track for even greater success. I want to also thank parents who work with their children to reinforce the lessons being presented each day. Parental involvement is a key indicator of student success and we commend all of the parents/guardians who are investing in the education of their children alongside our BDS Team of Teams.

Arts

The talent and creativity of our students shone brightly during the holiday season. From choir concerts to band performances and dramatic productions, our schools were alive with the magic of the arts. These events showcased our students' skills and brought our community together in celebration. Thank you to everyone who worked tirelessly to make these performances memorable.

Athletics

Our student-athletes continue to excel both on and off the field. Recognizing the fall sports academic winners at the December school board meeting was a highlight for me. Many of these students maintain GPAs above 4.0 while balancing the demands of their sport—a remarkable achievement. Through athletics, our students are learning life skills like teamwork, discipline, and perseverance that will serve them for years to come.

Finally, I want to share an update about our school board meetings. Starting this month, the Bay District School Board will meet at **3 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month**. This schedule will remain in place for the next 11 months, and as always, the public is welcome to attend.

Thank you for all that you do to make Bay District Schools a fantastic place to learn, grow, and succeed. Together, we're creating a brighter future for every student, one day at a time as we work to put the "A" back in Bay!