



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent
Date: March 28, 2025

As a retired Army General, a military dependent, and the proud father of a military-connected family, I know firsthand the challenges of military life—the frequent moves, the long deployments, and the sacrifices made by spouses and children alike. That’s why it means so much to me that Bay District Schools is one of only five districts in Florida to be designated a Purple Star District by the Florida Department of Education. Even more impressively, 100% of our schools are Purple Star Schools, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to supporting military-connected students and their families.

April is the **Month of the Military Child**, and here in Bay District Schools, we take immense pride in honoring the strength, resilience, and sacrifices of the more than 1,000 military-connected students in our district. These children serve in their own way, enduring change and uncertainty with incredible courage, and we are proud to celebrate them throughout the month.

What It Means to Be a Purple Star School

The Purple Star designation is awarded to schools that go above and beyond to meet the unique needs of military children. According to the Florida Department of Education, this includes:

- Providing military families with a dedicated point of contact for assistance.
- Ensuring students receive support during transitions and deployments.
- Offering resources for academic success and emotional well-being.
- Educating staff and students about the challenges faced by military-connected children.

Our commitment to these students is unwavering, and April is a special time to recognize their contributions to our schools and communities.

Special Activities for the Month of the Military Child

Throughout April, we will host a variety of activities to honor our military children:

- Each school will recognize one exceptional military child with a certificate and gift bag, sponsored by Gulf Coast State College and Tyndall Federal Credit Union.

- These students will be celebrated during morning announcements, offering a chance for their peers to learn more about the sacrifices and contributions of military children.
- On April 8th, we will host a special School Board Meeting to adopt a resolution honoring the Month of the Military Child, with senior leadership from Tyndall Air Force Base and Naval Support Activity Panama City in attendance.

One of the best ways our community can come together to celebrate our military children is by participating in Purple Up Day on April 15th! We invite everyone in Bay County—students, teachers, families, businesses, and community members—to wear purple as a visible sign of appreciation for our military-connected students and their families. Purple represents all military branches and serves as a powerful reminder of our military community's unity, strength, and resilience. By wearing purple, you're showing our military families that we recognize their sacrifices and appreciate everything they do for our country and our schools.

I want to personally thank Gulf Coast State College and Tyndall Federal Credit Union for generously sponsoring this month's events. Their support ensures we can properly honor and celebrate the incredible military-connected children who call Bay County home.

Bay County is blessed to have such a strong and vibrant military community, and I am so proud of the myriad of ways our Team of Teams supports military-connected students at every grade level. Whether it's a kindergartener just starting their educational journey or a senior preparing for graduation, we are committed to providing every military child with a world-class education and the unwavering support they deserve.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating the Month of the Military Child. Together, we're putting the "A" back in Bay!