



## Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians  
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent  
Date: February 14, 2025

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I want to share some important information regarding our Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Program. Starting **Tuesday, February 18, at 7:30 AM**, the application window will officially open for families with children who will be four years old on or before September 1, 2025.

At Bay District Schools, we know that a strong start in VPK helps children develop essential skills they'll need for kindergarten and beyond. Our VPK program focuses on building a solid foundation in critical areas like literacy, math, and social skills, all while fostering a love for learning in our youngest students. We believe that every child deserves access to a high-quality early learning experience, and that's why our VPK program is a priority in Bay District Schools.

Research has shown that high-quality early childhood education is essential in setting up a child for future academic success. Studies consistently demonstrate that children who participate in VPK programs tend to perform better in school, have stronger social skills, and show increased enthusiasm for learning. In fact, the National Institute for Early Education Research found that children who attend a high-quality VPK program are 40% more likely to graduate from high school and 25% more likely to attend college. It is well established that over 80% of a child's brain develops by age five, which means early learning opportunities are more critical than ever.

### **You can submit your application online or in person**

We are committed to helping you and your child have a great start to early learning at Bay District Schools. Below are easy steps you can take to help enroll your child.

- Online: Visit <https://focus.bayschools.net/focus/apply> to submit your application
- In Person: You can apply at the Bay District Schools Special Services Center, 1575 June Ave, Building 4, Panama City, FL 32405. Our staff will be ready to assist you with the process.
- If you need any help or have questions, please feel free to reach out to our VPK team at 850-767-4201 or visit our website at [bay.k12.fl.us](http://bay.k12.fl.us), select the Parents tab, and then VPK for more information.
- Spaces are limited, and our program tends to fill up quickly, so I encourage you to apply as soon as possible.

We are looking forward to seeing all of our youngest learners begin their educational journey with us! Remember, the VPK application window opens on **Tuesday, February 18, at 7:30 AM**, and we encourage you to apply early to secure a spot for your child.

Thank you for being part of the Bay District Schools family. We're excited to support you and your child on this important journey toward educational success. The first step in putting the "A" back in Bay is ensuring every student enters school fully prepared and ready to succeed!