

By Bill Husfelt

Superintendent, Bay District Schools

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.”

—[John F. Kennedy](#)

It's been a challenging year (really a series of challenging years for families in the Panhandle) and it's important that we take time this Thanksgiving to be grateful for what we do have while also being supportive of those who have lost so much during the past three years.

As I prepare to gather around my family's table for Thanksgiving I know I join you in being grateful for good health, for children and grandchildren, for older family members who are still with us and for the abundant blessings in our lives. I'm also grateful for the incredible men and women who have made the decision to devote their lives to the care and education of the children of our community. I'd like to take a few minutes to thank them for what they do every single day along with recognizing ALL of those who support this mission in a variety of roles.

I'm grateful for the bus drivers, and other members of the BDS Transportation Team, who get up in the dark to get their buses rolling. They drive thousands of miles each year delivering our students to and from school and their service to our community is appreciated.

I'm thankful for the teachers and support staff members who greet those students each and every day. Our employees have endless grace, love and compassion for their students. I'm especially grateful for all of the band and choir directors, theater directors, coaches, club sponsors and others who volunteer countless hours every year to ensure that all students have the chance to compete and participate in events of their choice. Having coached teams and sponsored clubs myself I know how time consuming this can be and we all owe these volunteers a HUGE collective thank you.

I also appreciate the tireless efforts of our administrators. Leading a school through all of these challenges is not easy and I am grateful to be surrounded by the most amazing administrative team anyone could ask to work with.

Every day we show up to work and flip on the lights, we should be grateful to our maintenance crews, our Management Information Systems employees and the countless folks who work in purchasing, finance and other behind-the-scenes departments. We're a huge organization with more than 3,000 employees and it takes A LOT of hard work to keep everything running smoothly. Those employees aren't in the limelight and don't get nominated for accolades like Educator of the Week but they are all mission critical in my book.

I'm grateful to the hard working men and women of Chartwells and other vendors who provide services to our students and our schools. It's not easy balancing all of the guidelines and restrictions from the federal government but our Chartwells employees manage to do so with smiles on their faces.

Now more than ever, I'm grateful for all of the BDS Safety and Security Officers, Bay County Sheriff's Deputies and municipal law enforcement agencies who ensure our campuses are as safe as they can be. And I'm also thankful for the incredible support our schools receive from all first responders in our community. Several times recently we've seen overwhelming responses from law enforcement and others in crisis situations and it's very comforting to know we can count on support like that.

Every day I am thankful for the families who have entrusted us with their precious children and for the students who come to school determined to do their best. Our students, and our families, have been through so much since the hurricane but we all continue to persevere and do what we can each day to make improvements.

I also appreciate all of the amazing businesses and individuals who continue to support our schools, our athletic programs and our extra-curricular events with donations and other financial support. We could not do what we do without the incredible generosity of these people and I know we all appreciate them.

I hope that your family enjoys a restful and happy Thanksgiving Break and that you're able to take some time to count your blessings during this holiday season. I'm grateful for your continued support of Bay District Schools, our students and our employees.

Stay safe and God Bless!