



Update from the Superintendent

To: All BDS Employees
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent
Date: January 19, 2024

This is a copy of the Superintendent's weekly message that is sent to parents/guardians. We want to make sure you have the same information as well, so you're in the loop :)

As we enter January, a month dedicated to celebrating National Mentoring Month, I am honored to express my deepest gratitude for the invaluable contributions of our mentors here at Bay District Schools (BDS). Their unwavering commitment and support have profoundly impacted our students' lives, making a positive difference in our community.

At BDS, we recognize that mentors are integral to our dynamic Team of Teams. Their dedication and selflessness do not go unnoticed, and it is only fitting that we take a moment to acknowledge the tremendous influence they wield. In particular, I sincerely thank the mentors affiliated with two exceptional programs in Bay County—the Take Stock in Children program and the Elevate Bay program.

These programs exemplify excellence in community engagement and serve as beacons of hope for our students. The mentors involved in these initiatives are crucial in assisting students in need, providing encouragement, and fostering a positive learning environment. In a community where some students face economic challenges, Take Stock in Children stands out by offering scholarships to these families, aiming to keep students in school and support their journey to college graduation. This initiative encourages academic success and strives to break the cycle of poverty.

Our Elevate Bay Program, under the excellent guidance of Stacey Legg, matches trained, background-checked volunteer mentors with students who could benefit from another caring adult in their lives. Elevate Bay mentors work with individual students or small groups of students, under the supervision and guidance of classroom teachers, on various needs. Some mentors provide academic support; others provide enrichment activities for gifted students. We also have many mentors who serve as invaluable “reading buddies” for emerging readers who need lots of practice and encouragement.

Research has consistently shown that mentorship programs are effective in reducing delinquency and preventing youth violence. Moreover, mentorship programs extend their reach to military youth, acknowledging their unique challenges. Military children often experience frequent moves, leaving behind friends and coping with the absence of a parent on active duty. Mentors not only contribute to academic excellence but have also been shown to alleviate symptoms of anxiety in these students, providing crucial support during times of parental deployment.

As we celebrate National Mentoring Month, let us raise awareness for these impactful organizations that play a vital role in our community. Both the Take Stock in Children program and the Elevate Bay program are actively seeking new mentors, and your involvement can make a meaningful difference in the lives of students across Bay County.

To become a mentor for the Take Stock in Children program, visit bayeducationfoundation.org/programs/take-stock/ and click on the "Become a Mentor" button at the bottom of the page or call Bay Education Foundation at

For the Elevate Bay program, please contact Stacey Legg at leggs1@bay.k12.fl.us or call 850-767-4128.

Your support is crucial in providing much-needed aid to students and enhancing the overall student experience at Bay District Schools. Together, we can make a positive impact on the lives of our students and contribute to the continued success of our community.