



# Update from the Superintendent

To: All BDS Employees  
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent  
Date: August 18, 2023

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*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 :)*

Thank you for everything you did to help us welcome our students and staff back to school last week. I am confident that the 2023-2024 school year will be our best year ever, and your support and encouragement humble me.

Last week was about settling into new routines for our students and employees, and I appreciate your patience as we worked out new bus routes, schedules, and traffic patterns. While we were all committed to those tasks last week, and will remain so, I also want to make sure you know how hard we're working behind the scenes on the continued safety of our stakeholders and campuses.

In partnership with local law enforcement agencies, our team spent the summer training and focusing on revising our safety protocols throughout the district. I am pleased to remind you that our law enforcement partners are 100 percent committed to the safety of our students.

We have developed comprehensive safety protocols and measures to create a secure and nurturing learning environment in collaboration with dedicated educators, staff, local law enforcement, and community partners. Our approach to school safety encompasses various aspects, including physical security enhancements, emergency preparedness drills, mental health support, and fostering a culture of open communication.

Safety at school, however, begins at home, and we need, and value, your partnership. As the new school year begins, we ask that you consider the following strategies that can help us continue our laser-like focus on safety:

- **Conversation:** Please habitually talk with your student(s) about what's going on at school and about safety-related concerns he/she may have. Encourage your child to contact a trusted adult on campus when/if those situations arise. There are several anonymous reporting tools on our website, and on the websites of local law enforcement agencies as well.
- **Device checks:** Please vigilantly monitor the devices your child can access. For example, we recently sent out information about a very troubling app called Saturn after discovering many of our students were interacting with it. We will keep you as informed as possible about apps to monitor/watch/delete, but the best defense is regular monitoring of your child's online activity, messages and interactions.
- **Appropriate items:** Please regularly check your child's backpack/vehicle/personal items to ensure that only school-appropriate items are on our campuses. Nothing that looks like a weapon (toy or otherwise) is suitable for school. Likewise, no alcohol, vapes, dab pens, or other illegal substances should be coming onto our campuses or buses.
- **Parent Portal:** Please ensure you have an active Parent Portal account with up-to-date phone numbers, addresses and email contact information. This information is vital in an emergency, and we need your help to reach you.

We also want you to know about the behind-the-scenes work we're continuing to do to enhance the safety of our campuses. While we do not go into details, for obvious reasons, about our various safety plans, some of the key strategies in our safety plan include:

- **Enhanced Physical Security:** We have more security cameras on our campuses, and campus perimeters, than we have ever had before. Our schools have secure front offices and systems in place to ensure that only authorized visitors can access our classrooms and campuses.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** We held several drills this summer in conjunction with area law enforcement, and we continue to practice those drills throughout the school year to ensure our students and staff are well-versed in emergency procedures. Additionally, we regularly consult with industry experts regarding drills, procedures and policies needed to provide the most protection for our campuses.
- **Mental Health and Well-being:** We have trained teams of mental health professionals on every campus, and those staff members are dedicated to doing what's needed to support students experiencing mental health-related situations.
- **Community Engagement:** We practice transparent, and frequent, communication, and we want you to know that we value your thoughts, concerns and suggestions. We encourage parents/guardians to reach out to school principals with any safety-related concerns, and we can easily be reached at the district at 850-767-4100 or via email at [BDSComm@bay.k12.fl.us](mailto:BDSComm@bay.k12.fl.us)
- **Technology for Safety:** Using technology monitoring systems like Go Guardian and state-of-the-art communication platforms like Everbridge, we are committed to using every tool at our disposal to elevate our communication and safety-related practices.

Working together, we can create a culture of safety and vigilance that extends beyond the classroom and into our community. We know that students need to feel safe before they can learn, and our Team of Teams is determined to do everything possible to make that happen at all schools and classrooms.

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust in Bay District Schools. We clearly understand our collective safety mission and are committed to executing our plans and procedures as flawlessly as possible.