



## Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents/Guardians  
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent  
Date: November 30, 2023

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*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*

—Nelson Mandela.

I am delighted to share some exciting updates about our annual Excellence in Education program, which is a wonderful tradition that allows us to celebrate and recognize the outstanding individuals who make up our exceptional Team of Teams at Bay District Schools.

This program is a testament to our commitment to excellence in education, and it all begins with a rigorous selection process at each of our schools. Each year, our more than 3,500 employees identify and honor exemplary educators in three categories: Teacher of the Year, Support Employee of the Year, and Rookie Teacher of the Year. These individuals are truly the best of the best, embodying the values, dedication, and expertise that define our educational community.

I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to our program sponsors, Buffalo Rock and the Bay Education Foundation. Their generous support makes it possible for us to recognize and celebrate the remarkable individuals who contribute to the success of Bay District Schools.

Some of the most enjoyable moments of this program are the surprise visits to the Top Five finalists in each category at their respective schools. The joy and excitement on their faces as we celebrate their achievements are truly heartwarming. These employees exemplify excellence and deserve every moment of recognition and appreciation.

I also want to recognize the dedicated committee members who work tirelessly to select the very best candidates for these awards. Their commitment to this process is evident in the outstanding individuals who emerge as winners. During the past five years, we have had three state winners and four state finalists among our Excellence in Education winners, including our very first State Teacher of the Year, Adrianna Swearingen. These achievements are a testament to the exceptional talent and dedication we have within our district.

This year, while celebrating the contributions of all 3,500 employees, we're highlighting and recognizing the incredible work of the following individuals who have been named as finalists in their respective career fields:

### **Support Employee of the Year**

Roy Monroe from Cedar Grove Elementary School  
Ashlyn Ward from Chautauqua Charter School  
Kerrie Russell from Margaret K. Lewis School in Millville  
Thaddues Evens from Oscar Patterson Academy  
Theresa Ashley from Patronis Elementary School

### **Bay Education Foundation Rookie Teacher of the Year**

Christina Horimoto from Bay High School  
Patrick Ferguson from Breakfast Point Academy  
Elizabeth Jones from Deer Point Elementary School  
Erica Jones from Patronis Elementary School  
Rebecca Denney from Tyndall Academy

### **Teacher of the Year**

Ashley Williams from Deer Point Elementary School  
Sharon Gilson from J.R. Arnold High School  
Kenny Kirkland from Patronis Elementary School  
Amber Averett from Southport Elementary School  
Erin Brack from West Bay Elementary School

Due to state deadlines for application submission, we have already announced Theresa Ashley from Patronis Elementary School as our 2023-2024 Support Employee of the Year. You'll learn more about Ms. Ashley as this process progresses, but I want you to know that our selection committee was moved to tears after hearing about all she does for her school and our entire community. She's a shining example of true servant leadership, and I am so proud that she's a member of our Team of Teams.

Our Excellence in Education finalists and winners exemplify what "right looks like" in Bay District Schools. They demonstrate the passion, innovation, and commitment to student success that make our district truly exceptional. We are immensely proud of their accomplishments and their positive impact on our students' lives.

As we progress with the Excellence in Education program this year, I encourage you to join us in celebrating these remarkable individuals. They are the heart and soul of our district, and their contributions to our educational community are immeasurable.

Thank you for your continued support of Bay District Schools, and please join me in applauding the excellence that exists within our Team of Teams.