

To: Parents and Guardians

From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent

Date: August 3, 2023

On behalf of more than 27,000 students and 3,500 employees, it's my honor to welcome you to Bay District Schools. We are going to have an outstanding year, and we're grateful for your partnership, support and encouragement as we commit ourselves to the academic and personal success of all of our students.

Between my military career and my tenure at the City of Panama City, I have dedicated my life to public service, and I am honored to continue that mission as your Superintendent. Public education is the foundation of any productive society and vibrant community, and I am excited to have the opportunity to help support the great work that is happening at Bay District Schools.

I am not an educator by profession, but I have spent my entire adult life in public service (first in the military and later with the City of Panama City). From those experiences, I know that empowering people to do their best work is where the magic happens.

Obviously, I have A LOT to learn during the upcoming weeks and months, and I want you to know that I take that responsibility very seriously. I am an ardent believer in the book *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World* (authored in 2015 by General Stanley McChrystal and others), and I believe in systematic approaches to systemic issues.

In fact, you may hear me mention the phrase "team of teams" frequently, and that is a reference to this book's advocacy for building teams. The book offers five key lessons that I think apply to every large organization and are priorities I think we can all embrace. Those basic tenets include the need to:

1. Ensure we can quickly adapt to unpredictable situations
2. Remove any barriers that get in the way of collaboration and learning
3. Leverage technology
4. Empower people to make sure they have the tools they need to succeed
5. Focus on problem-solving

Student safety is our number one priority, followed closely by academic excellence for all students. We have strong partnerships with all local law enforcement agencies (and our own safety and security team), our local military bases, chambers of commerce, business community members and faith-based organizations. We look forward to leveraging all those resources to support our students and staff.

On a more personal level, my wife Karen retired after 30 years as a classroom teacher with Bay District Schools, and both of our children (Taylor and Thomas) graduated from Bay District Schools. I have been supporting public education my whole life, and serving as your Superintendent just formalizes my commitment to our children and to our entire community.

Thank you for your continued trust and partnership. Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year.

We can do this!