



Update from the Superintendent

To: All BDS Employees
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: June 2, 2022

Many of our graduates have shared incredibly positive thoughts with us about their educational experiences in Bay District Schools. Still, the message I received recently from Rutherford graduate Hailey Brock is extraordinary and I want to share it with all of you.

“My experience at Rutherford High School has been unsurpassable,” she wrote. “Oftentimes, people think of this school negatively compared to the others in the district, but I can guarantee that I was able to reach my full potential because of Rutherford. The teachers and staff are incredible and invested in the students and the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum is like no other. Through Rutherford, I have made amazing connections with others and challenged myself academically every day.”

According to RHS Principal Coy Pilson, this year’s graduates from Rutherford are an exemplary class. The class, he said, amassed a record number of honors and distinctions including

- Eleven members who enlisted into a branch of the US military and will ship off to Basic Training or their Advanced Individual Training (AIT) immediately after graduation.
- The highest collective scholarship offers for a graduating class in recent memory. Students were offered in excess of \$7.2 MILLION this year.
- Members of the class of 2022 were instrumental in the establishment of the Drone and Aerospace Technology program, which partners with Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and supplements the curriculum of the RHS JROTC.
- The Class of 2022 is the reigning Jennifer Alvis Memorial “Stuff the Bus” Champions.

They collected and donated more than 10,000 toys during their high school careers. Additionally, according to Pilson, the class of 2022 saw a 35 percent increase in IB Diploma Candidates and a 100 percent increase in IB Certificate candidates from the previous year, making them one of the most academically accomplished and competitive classes from Rutherford in quite some time. And, we cannot forget the Class of 2022 Valedictorian Jonathan Walker who was nationally recognized for being accepted to 27 of the nation's most prestigious universities including Harvard, Yale, Duke and MIT. Jonathan’s scholarship offers, which included funding from many Ivy League schools, totaled several million dollars. After much consideration, Jonathan has decided to attend Duke University.

According to Hailey, those amazing scholarship numbers and the increase in IB diploma recipients are definitely due to the passion and commitment of Rutherford's faculty and staff. Despite her 4.77 grade point average and her third-place class ranking, Hailey said she has always struggled with self-confidence but saw her way through that with the help of her teachers. "No matter how good my grades were or how many teachers told me how well I had been doing, I could never believe that I was worth commending in that way," she said. "However, the amazing teachers at BDS, especially those at Rutherford High School, slowly showed me that my accomplishments and hard work are worth commending and never went unnoticed. My teachers have truly encouraged me to take pride in my work and that is a lesson I will always take with me."

Those sentiments were echoed by Hailey's classmates Mark Miller and Richellyn Munsayac. Richellyn, who plans to attend Gulf Coast State College to pursue a career in surgical technology, noted that school employees played an integral role in her graduation. "BDS employees helped me throughout my time as an RHS student by providing me with an ample environment for learning," she said. "From our administrative staff to the community of teachers built here, I show up to school every day with a positive attitude knowing that I have a support system."

Mark, who wants to become a game warden one day, said the non-academic lessons he learned as a BDS student are every bit as important as the academic classes taught.

"I learned that you can do anything you put your mind to," he said. "People might belittle you, say you are weak, or haven't done anything, but you just keep going. People might even lose complete faith in you, you might even lose complete faith in yourself, you will break down, but you just remember to go one more day, and keep going because you believe in yourself."

As a baseball player, Mark said he learned plenty on the baseball field and he wanted to make sure he thanked those who helped him athletically as well as academically. "I would like to thank my family and my teachers who have had to deal with me," he said. "I would also like to thank the greatest left-handed pitcher/coach that a right-handed pitcher could ask for and that's Coach Patrick Coffin."

Hailey also had a few specific people she wanted to thank in addition to her family. "I want to thank all of the amazing BDS employees I have met along the way, including my second-grade teacher Mr. Roe, as well as Mrs. Briscoe, Mr. Brown, and Mrs. Mirkinson. These amazing men and women will never know just how much of an impact they have had on me and countless others. Thank y'all for everything."

As far as advice for incoming freshmen, Richellyn suggested they remember "that every student is on a different path, and the most important thing is that you do your best and excel in every aspect you can. Comparing yourself to others won't help with either of those goals unless you find that comparison a great personal motivator."

While noting the myriad of challenges faced by this class, Pilson quickly points out the community they built due to those obstacles. "These seniors are very close and tightly-knit," he

said, “their heart for service allowed them to often recognize the needs of others before their own!”

Congratulations to the Class of 2022 from Rutherford High School ... we are so very proud of all of you and we look forward to hearing from you in the future as you accomplish your goals.