

By Bill Husfelt
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It's hard to believe the holidays have begun already and that 2022 is winding to a close! I hope everyone reading this had a restful and relaxing Thanksgiving and that you're all looking forward to Christmas and the New Year.

It's equally mind-boggling that our 2022-2023 school year is almost half over. The next few weeks will be full of holiday activities for all of our students, but it's also "crunch time" for some of our high school students with semester exams looming right before Christmas Break. Now is a GREAT time for all parents/guardians to check in with their children about how things are going thus far this school year. **It's easy for parents/guardians to take charge of that themselves by checking Parent Portal which provides real-time access to grades as they are uploaded by teachers.** Students can also access their grades so there are no excuses for our older students when it comes to knowing where they stand and what they have left to do to secure the semester grades they are hoping for. Parents/Guardians can access Parent Portal at the link provided on the screen as well as in the description of this video [Parent Portal \(bay.k12.fl.us\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...). Those who don't yet have accounts can simply call the school for assistance. There's an app for this program so parents/guardians (and students) can easily access all of the same information on their phones.

It's also a good time for parents/guardians to check in with teachers to see if there are any concerns or assessments that need to be made up or redone. Again, it's very easy to connect with teachers directly through Parent Portal but parents/guardians can also call the school to connect with the school counselors, who can facilitate parent-teacher conferences and other services.

And we definitely encourage all parents to check out the FREE tutoring services being provided at almost all of our schools. Many schools have tutoring both before- and after-school and some of our high schools also offer lunchtime tutoring for those students who can't get to **school early or those who can't stay late in the afternoons.** All tutoring services are offered free of charge to our students.

The best indicator of success for a student is the involvement of his/her parents/guardians/other family members so we hope everyone will take the time this week to ensure Parent Portal accounts are updated with accurate emergency contact information. We also hope parents/guardians will check in on their student's grades and attendance to make sure they're in the loop with what's going on at school. Again, if anyone needs help, our school counselors are just a phone call away.

Our graduation coaches are also just a phone call away, and they are absolutely passionate about making sure all of our high school seniors graduate on time. Each high school has a graduation coach who is dedicated full-time to helping seniors overcome obstacles, solve problems and develop the resources and strategies needed to graduate and move on to whatever post-secondary plans the student has in mind. If you know of a high school senior who is struggling with "senioritis" as we call it, please don't hesitate to call the high school and ask for the graduation coach. Sometimes all a student needs is some intensive one-on-one time with another adult who can also provide on-site, daily accountability. You'd be hard-pressed to

find a group of folks more committed to the graduation process than our graduation coaches, and I encourage all parents/guardians to reach out to them asap if their help is needed. I'd like to close this week with a heartfelt "thank you" to all of those in our community who will step up in the next few weeks to make sure none of our children go without Christmas cheer. I know many of you will buy presents and clothing and gift cards to donate anonymously. Others will bring cupcakes and party snacks and other items for classroom parties and special events. Many of the employees reading this will have already dipped into their pockets to pay for field trips for students unable to afford them and other special treats. They do this, and you do this, not for the public "thank you", but for the satisfaction of knowing that we live in a community that takes care of our children and I want you to know how grateful we are to everyone who helps. If you are looking for a place to donate your resources, or time, this Christmas season please don't hesitate to call your neighborhood school or call our Office of Communications at 850-767-5282. There are needs, large and small, throughout our schools and we'd love to get all of you connected to a worthy cause that matches your resources and/or time commitment. God Bless, and stay safe!