



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: April 18, 2021

I hope you had a chance to watch the referendum debate on Tuesday that was sponsored by the Panama City News Herald. I cannot thank the News Herald, and specifically Mike Cazalas, enough for putting this together and I also sincerely appreciate the participation of Alexis Underwood, Dr. Jon Ward and Tho Bishop. As a former social studies teacher, I believe firmly in the power of debate and I'm grateful for any chance I get to brag about the amazing employees of Bay District Schools and all they do for the children in our community.

There are a couple of specific points I'd like to circle back to from the debate but first I want to take a moment to really share some thoughts about Alexis.

Many of you may already know her as the former President of the Association of Bay County Educators. Currently, she serves as their Vice-President. Alexis is a teacher but she's so much more than that and who she is, and what she does, is so very representative of who our employees are and what they do.

You wouldn't necessarily know this from just meeting Alexis but she's a former U.S. Marine and proudly served her country. She holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and worked in the "business world" for 20 years before deciding to become a teacher.

The past few years have been as difficult for Alexis as they have been for many in our community. She recently lost her husband and has taken on the added responsibility of raising a grandchild. She has opened her home to a friend of her grandchild's as well since that student had nowhere else to go.

And in the middle of all of that, she manages to bring her "A" game to her students every single day. Students in her classes know that she loves them as if they were her own children or grandchildren. Alexis is the kind of teacher who takes the needs of her students home with her each night and she will do anything she possibly can to help them overcome the challenges and obstacles in their lives. She's the shoulder to cry on, the snack when they need one and the soft place to fall for countless students and she's a perfect example of who we are and what we do.

Educating children isn't a 9-5 job ... those who are called to this field do so because they genuinely want to make a difference and because they care passionately about children. Our bus drivers, our classroom paraprofessionals, our office staff members, maintenance workers,

administrators and other support employees did not choose this line of work to get rich – they came because they love children.

But we have to pay them a living wage in order to keep them in our community. Our children deserve the very best we can give them and sometimes that costs more. Money doesn't solve all problems but competitive salaries help us recruit, and retain, the highly-qualified staff members that our children need and deserve.

Alexis is just one shining example of the passion and commitment of our employees and I could share story after story of those who have gone above and beyond for our students day in and day out but we don't have the space for that.

I would, however, like to clarify just a couple of things that were discussed at Tuesday's debate and provide you with a link for more information if you're interested.

It's been said that we've done nothing but raise taxes since I've been your Superintendent when, in fact, the complete opposite is true. In the school year 2009/2010, the total millage was 7.623 ... this year the millage is 5.988. Since 2011, the millage has ranged from a high of 7.118 to the current low of 5.968. This is the lowest millage rate that we can find for the past 20 years. This information is available on our website to the public and you can fact check us on your property tax notices.

As you can see, however, if you look at the past 20 years, the millage rate has actually DECREASED by a little more than 30 percent.

Additionally, it's been said that we will make exponentially more money as the local property tax rolls expand due to new construction and increased property values.

In actuality, property values in our community have increased 183 percent in the past 20 years BUT our base student allocation (the only discretionary dollars we have available to use for salary increases) has only increased 26.55 percent in the past 20 years. As more funds are raised locally, the state pulls back what it sends so that all districts end up being funded essentially equally. **So an increase in property values does not generate an equal increase in locally-available funding.**

I certainly wish it did because construction is booming right now.

It has also been shared that our employees have received significant raises each year but even that's not true. During the past 12 years there were three years of absolutely no raise, a year that included some furloughs and several years with 1-3 percent raises. In fact, during the past 12 years, the average employee raise is just about 1.7 percent ... not even meeting the cost of living increases we've all experienced.

This referendum is about more than just raises for employees and I hope you'll give that some thought as you head to the polls. I cannot underestimate the incredibly positive impact that free full-day pre-kindergarten could have on our students, on their families and on our community as a whole. When our most vulnerable students are given the support they need to succeed we all "win" and, more importantly, we set those students up as lifelong learners who will have all of the tools they need to achieve whatever goals they set.

Thank you for your continued support of all of our employees who do their very best every day for our children.

Stay safe and God Bless!

BAY DISTRICT SCHOOLS MILLAGE HISTORY

School Year	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Required Local Effort	5.822	5.956	5.895	5.488	5.203	5.144	4.819
Prior Period Funding Adjustment (RLE)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Discretionary Operating	0.708	0.699	0.674	0.660	0.732	0.664	0.652
Critical Needs (Operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Local Capital Improvement	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.000	1.000
Total School Board Millage	8.530	8.655	8.569	8.148	7.935	6.808	6.471
	(0.1390)	0.1250	(0.0860)	(0.4210)	(0.2130)	(1.1270)	(0.3370)
Base Student Allocation	\$ 3,413.18	\$ 3,537.11	\$ 3,630.03	\$ 3,670.26	\$ 3,742.42	\$ 3,981.61	\$ 4,163.47
Taxable Value	6,658,877,264	7,182,535,373	8,277,375,944	9,207,241,226	12,673,450,592	17,527,622,219	18,608,377,957

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Required Local Effort	5.141	5.375	5.397	5.376	5.163	4.985	4.936
Prior Period Funding Adjustment (RLE)	-	0.077	0.085	0.071	0.024	0.028	0.005
Discretionary Operating	0.635	0.748	0.748	0.748	0.748	0.748	0.748
Critical Needs (Operating)	-	0.250	0.250	-	-	-	-
Local Capital Improvement	0.987	1.173	0.923	0.923	0.923	1.000	1.200
Total School Board Millage	6.763	7.623	7.403	7.118	6.858	6.761	6.889
	0.2920	0.8600	(0.2200)	(0.2850)	(0.2600)	(0.0970)	0.1280
Base Student Allocation	\$ 3,971.74	\$ 3,630.62	\$ 3,623.76	\$ 3,479.22	\$ 3,582.98	\$ 3,752.30	\$ 4,031.77
Taxable Value	18,991,132,748	17,504,689,696	16,444,217,741	15,446,019,322	14,969,023,087	15,068,684,198	15,255,322,318

School Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Inc/(dec)	% Inc/(dec)
Required Local Effort	4.953	4.525	4.303	4.084	3.862	3.720	(2.10)	-36.10%
Prior Period Funding Adjustment (RLE)	0.006	0.002	-	-	-	-		
Discretionary Operating	0.748	0.748	0.748	0.748	0.748	0.748		
Critical Needs (Operating)	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Local Capital Improvement	1.200	1.200	1.290	1.290	1.3376	1.5000		
Total School Board Millage	6.907	6.475	6.341	6.122	5.948	5.968	(2.56)	-30.04%
	0.0180	(0.4320)	(0.1340)	(0.2190)	(0.1744)	0.0204		
Base Student Allocation	\$ 4,154.45	\$ 4,160.71	\$ 4,203.95	\$ 4,204.42	\$ 4,279.49	\$ 4,319.49	906.31	26.55%
Taxable Value	15,680,709,298	16,100,077,896	16,691,764,799	17,551,314,193	17,181,923,189	18,819,541,330	12,160,664,066	182.62%

Facts:

- 1 Over the last 20 years the School District's total millage is **DOWN** 2.56 mills or 30.04%
- 2 Over the last 20 years the Base Student Allocation (discretionary operational) is **UP** \$906.31 or 26.55%
- 3 Over the last 20 years the Tax Rolls (total taxable value) have increased by \$12,160,664,066 or 182.6%
- 4 IF the 1 mill referendum passes next year's millage would be similar to the same rate for the 15/16 schools year
- 5 The State's FEPF funding formula controls base student funding NOT increases in taxable values
(This is most evident in between school year 04/05 and 07/08 when the tax rolls more than doubled and base funding was only up 13.44%)