



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: May 16, 2021

Graduation is one of my favorite times in the school year and I am so grateful that our graduates can gather in person this year, with their families, to appropriately celebrate this milestone in their lives.

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend a few minutes with the Valedictorians and Salutatorians from our high schools and I was struck instantly by their resilience. All of them spoke eloquently about overcoming challenges in their lives this year and in previous years as a result of Hurricane Michael. All of them, however, also touched on the incredible support they have received from their families and from our Bay District Schools family as a whole.

While school will always be about academics and extracurricular activities, I think that we're also all about relationships and I am so proud to be the Superintendent in a community that places such a high value on those relationships. Our teachers, support staff and administrators literally pour themselves into our students each and every day and the results are evident as our seniors walk across the graduation stages grinning from ear to ear.

If you've never attended a BDS graduation, you're certainly invited. Covid has changed a few of our practices and you'll notice the inclusion of "masks expected" and "no masks expected" seating areas this year but most of the ceremonies themselves remain unchanged. We celebrate our graduates with all of the pomp and circumstance they deserve and take time to honor their journeys and thank all of those who supported them along the way.

Faculty and staff play important roles in our graduation ceremonies and it's always a pleasure to hear the senior speakers thank those who have played particularly meaningful roles in their lives. While those who teach, and work with, our seniors get to hear those heartfelt messages it's not an exaggeration to say that they truly apply to all within our system. Graduation begins in pre-kindergarten and all of the teachers and support staff who work with students along the way have a stake in graduation.

Last week, while attending one of our amazing senior recognition ceremonies, I met a student from one of our high schools who is literally worth a million dollars. She applied for, and received, scholarship awards in excess of ONE MILLION DOLLARS and that's simply incredible. I also recently had the pleasure of meeting another student who is the first in her

family to attend college and she's going to be attending THE Harvard University. That's also incredible.

And I had a chance recently to hear the story of a soon-to-be graduate who lost her mother this year during the pandemic and who gave birth to her own daughter at the same time. This student, who is also a Valedictorian, plans to further her education at Gulf Coast State College and wants to do all she can to make her mother proud. And that accomplishment is also just incredible.

These students, and many more, have overcome countless challenges this year and have fought battles we may never know about. They are resilient, they are strong and they are going to achieve great things in a world that needs many great things!

The next two weeks are exceptionally busy for our schools as we wrap up the current school year, begin making plans for the next school year and take the time to honor our graduates. I hope, as a community, that we will continue to thank all of those who have invested in our graduates and have helped them achieve their dreams.

Congratulations to our Class of 2021 graduates ... you have beyond proven yourselves #850Strong and I hope you know how proud we are of you and how excited we are to share in your graduation celebrations.

Stay safe and God Bless each of you!