



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: May 23, 2021

Graduation season is upon us and I, for one, am incredibly grateful for the year we've had. While it has been challenging, difficult and stressful ... we made it! Working together we have been able to offer our students the opportunity to attend school for in-person learning every day since we opened in August.

That's amazing.

Not a day goes by that we're not contacted by multiple vendors offering their help and products to assist us in reopening and they are always quiet for a moment when we thank them and note we've been in school since August.

Many states have YET to return to in-person learning and my heart breaks when I think about the opportunities those children have lost and may never regain. While the School Board made the decision to reopen school, it couldn't have happened without the support of both of our unions and ALL of our employees. We are so very grateful to all of our employees for their sacrifices every year but we know this year was more taxing than most.

Despite those challenges, we made it to graduation and we're holding actual ceremonies and inviting guests this year which is so exciting. As I watch the graduates walk across the stage, I think about all of the teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, coaches, support staff members and administrators who have poured their hearts and souls into each of our seniors. While not everyone has a chance to participate in graduation, ALL of us play a role in getting our seniors across the stage.

I am so grateful for the commitment of all of our staff members in the BDS family and those at charter and private schools.

Those sentiments have been echoed by countless student graduation speakers and it's been heartwarming to hear their praise for those who have helped them along the way. Another common theme in graduation speeches this year has been resilience. And I think it's fitting because the hurricane and pandemic have taught us all resilience.

Many graduation speakers have also talked about the impact of Hurricane Michael. As a result of that storm, we learned that material possessions can be taken away in an instant but that

we're surrounded by people who are so much more important. We learned to be #850Strong together after the storm and those lessons served us well during the pandemic.

Whether or not you have a graduate this year, I hope you'll take the time to congratulate our Class of 2021 and to commend them on their resilience. Their high school years have been anything but "normal" and yet they have persisted.

And in the same vein, I hope you'll take a few minutes during our last week of school to thank the educators and support staff members in your "village" and those who have had the privilege of working with your students. Our BDS educators and all of those who serve in support positions have gone, literally, "above and beyond" this year and they have worked together to find solutions to some impossible-looking situations. They are all super heroes in my book.

Our students are super heroes as well. We are so proud of the accomplishments of ALL of our students this year and we're committed to continuing to offer them the very best education possible.

Summer is almost here and I hope you have some great plans for rest, family time and relaxation. I also hope you've connected with your student's school about summer enrichment programs if your student experienced any kind of learning loss as a result of the pandemic. All of our schools are offering dynamic summer programs that differ greatly from previous remediation programs and we're looking forward to an exciting summer of opportunities and learning.

Stay safe and God Bless!