



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: February 18, 2022

New York Yankees and Bobby Bowden ... what do these two things have in common?

If you're a sports fan like me, you've already tied them together as just two examples of incredible legacies of excellence. The Yankees have won more World Series Championships than any other major league baseball team and they've amassed a lengthy history of records, streaks and success. Coach Bowden had 33 consecutive winning seasons at the helm of Florida State University and had a significant impact on hundreds, if not thousands, of athletes during his tenure.

These two are famous for streaks and wins and excellence ... they are teams of success.

While there are a plethora of other teams and coaches who have also experienced similar successes, those other programs perhaps haven't received as much press or recognition for a variety of reasons. It doesn't make them any less worthy, however, and that brings me to my point: We have incredible advanced academic programs available at ALL of our high schools. Each program celebrates its own successes, but you may not hear about all of them.

Without a doubt, **ALL** are helping students achieve their academic goals and dreams and they are all exemplary. It's really just an extreme numbers game ... the more students a school has in total, the more successful students they can celebrate. This doesn't mean the successes or achievements are any less significant at other schools, it just means our bigger schools have more students and so they will, naturally, have higher numbers of successful students. We're here to celebrate ALL students and I'm just grateful for each one of our advanced academic programs and the students and staff who make them successful.

It is "recruiting season" right now for our most advanced students and many schools are reaching out, offering open houses and tours and sending home information about their programs. I hope our parents will take the time to look into all of the programs, and tour them all, before making this important decision.

I have often said that schools do not make students successful, it's the students who make the schools successful. Additionally, we can't overlook the incredible contributions made by involved parents ... parental involvement is THE number one contributing factor to a student's success.

But what really sets our programs apart is that each one of them enables students to experience high school in a unique manner. Each school is unique and I firmly believe that students should tour schools so they can see the programs first hand to figure out where they feel most at home.

Deane Bozeman, for example, has an award-winning agriculture program that is helping future veterinarians, medical professionals and scientists gain first-hand experience into the “science side” of agriculture as well as the hands-on side. These students literally run a working farm and they are involved in critical environmental projects, experiments and other assignments that have real-world implications. Bozeman offers students many options from Advanced Placement (AP) to Dual Enrolled (DE) and Career and Technical Education (CTE), all of which allow students to earn college credit while still attending high school.

Our Rutherford High School International Baccalaureate (IB) students are also serious scholars who are learning the tools they need to change the world in the very near future. Sierra AnnaMaria Czubaj is our BDS Sunshine State Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Scholar and we’re proud of her and her classmates who are very committed to their studies. Sierra was recently recognized at a BDS School Board meeting along with other nominees. Rutherford also recently won the “Stuff the Bus” trophy for their incredible work each year gathering toys and other donations for children in need at Christmas. Somehow, Rutherford students collected MORE toys than they have students which is a notable accomplishment. Rutherford promotes service-learning and volunteer opportunities to all of their students and we’re impressed by the number of different ways their students find to “give back” to their community.

Bay High was the first school in the United States to open an Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) program and our Tornados are definitely experiencing a renaissance of sorts as hurricane-delayed construction projects finally come to fruition. By the time you read this, we will have hosted the grand opening of the St. Joe Community Foundation STEM Building and we’re simply delighted to see the state-of-the-art technology that the building brings for students. Hoa Nguyen, who attends Bay High School, was recently recognized as our alternate for the Florida Sunshine State STEM Scholars program and we’re very proud of all that he has achieved. Through AICE, Bay High students can select from AP, DE, CTE and AICE coursework and many of them choose to take additional classes on campus at Gulf Coast State College. Right next door to the new STEM Building, the Barbara W. Nelson Fine Arts Center is taking shape and we know our students are very excited to take the stage in that building once complete. Downtown Panama City is experiencing a real resurgence and we’re excited to be a part of that with the renovations and new construction taking place at Bay High.

Lynn Haven is experiencing exponential growth and that’s led to A. Crawford Mosley High School being closed to out-of-zone enrollees because they are over capacity. Their Mosley Advanced Placement Program for Success (MAPPS) is a very popular option with students who want to take advantage of pre-med studies and those who want to access advanced academics while also balancing sports and other extra-curricular activities. Mosley, like our other high schools, has a long tradition of success with MAPPS but, unfortunately, this program is only open this year to students who live in their zone. Students who live outside Mosley’s zone can apply for hardships in May but these will be extremely limited this year since the school is already full. Mosley students can choose from AP, DE and CTE coursework and many have the opportunity to complete internships in their chosen career fields.

As many of you know, Panama City Beach is also growing by leaps and bounds and J.R. Arnold is definitely seeing that growth in their Collegiate Studies program. Arnold students can choose from a wide array of DE and AP while also taking advantage of the school’s extensive CTE courses (many of which also lead to college credit and industry certifications). Arnold recently started a “power hour” that gives students a chance to meet with military and college recruiters during the lunch period. Power Hour

participants can also choose peer- or teacher-led tutoring sessions during this time frame. Our Marlins manage to excel in the classroom and in their extra-curricular activities. Arnold has collected an impressive trophy case for individual and team championships in recent years.

I believe firmly in school choice (when the school has the physical capacity to accept out-of-zone students) and I am positive that we have an advanced academic program that's a great fit for every student who is looking to be challenged in a college-prep, rigorous academic environment. I feel blessed to be the superintendent in a district that offers parents such an array of amazing choices and I am excited about the opportunities these programs provide for our students.