



Update from the Superintendent

To: All BDS Employees

From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent

Date: September 15, 2023

This is a copy of the Superintendent's weekly message that is sent to parents/guardians. We want to make sure you have the same information as well, so you're in the loop :)

While a school system is responsible for teaching academics and providing students with opportunities to explore extra-curricular activities and electives, I firmly believe that we're also responsible for teaching our students to be kind, productive citizens. With the assistance of our parents and guardians, grandparents and other relatives, community members and business leaders, I am confident we can help our students achieve their dreams while ensuring they are ready to navigate the volatile, unpredictable, complex and somewhat ambiguous world they face after graduation.

Those life lessons are obviously woven into history and civics classes but are also infused into our language arts curriculum and other aspects of the educational system. From pre-kindergarten through graduation, our students learn to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and learn about the meaning of those words. They hear the National Anthem played by our bands and orchestras, they see the posting of the colors by our many dedicated JROTC cadets, and they witness audience members at all of our events participating in these displays of patriotism.

I am proud of that and our commitment to modeling good citizenship for our students. Recently, I had the honor of attending Patriot/Hero Day activities at Breakfast Point Academy and J.R. Arnold High School. I was so impressed with the community's participation and how the students honored those who lost their lives on that fateful day. Remembering and honoring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice is so important. I commend all who were involved in these ceremonies and those that took place throughout our community.

Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis recently signed House Bill 1537, which declares 9/11 as a day we celebrate those heroes. The law also requires Florida's students to receive explicit instruction related to 9/11, including lessons on:

- The historical context of global terrorism
- A timeline of events on September 11, 2001, including the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and United Airlines Flight 93
- The selfless heroism of police officers, firefighters, paramedics, other first responders and civilians involved in the rescue and recovery of victims and the heroic actions taken by the passengers of United Airlines Flight 93
- The unprecedented outpouring of humanitarian, charitable and volunteer aid occurring after the events of September 11, 2001
- The global response to terrorism and the importance of respecting civil liberties while ensuring

safety and security

Next week we have another opportunity to celebrate, and model, patriotism as we recognize Constitution Day in our schools.

Constitution Day is a nationally-recognized celebration of the impact of our U.S. Constitution. Celebrated on September 17th each year, Constitution Day will be observed in our schools on Monday, September 18th. Many of our schools plan special lessons for this day, and we look forward to participating in some of those.

If you'd like to teach your child more about the meaning of the U.S. Constitution, and all it stands for, our Florida Department of Education has an excellent resource website with materials you can use. You can access these free resources at

<https://www.fldoe.org/academics/standards/subject-areas/constitution-day-celebrate-freedom-wee.stml>.

I'd also like to thank the Moms for Liberty Bay County Chapter for providing pocket Constitutions to all eighth graders in our schools this month. Moms for Liberty, led by Janet Pattison, is an organization comprised entirely of volunteers, and we appreciate their commitment to this project and the distribution of these free resources for our students.

In a press release this summer, Governor DeSantis had high praise for all teachers involved in civics education.

"Understanding the founding principles of our nation is the key to protecting and maintaining our republic for generations to come," Governor DeSantis said in the press release. "Florida teachers are leading the way in civics education, which is demonstrated by our student success, especially when compared to the rest of the nation. Congratulations to our educators who have taken advantage of Florida's unique civics professional learning opportunities." More than 10,000 teachers statewide, including many from Bay District Schools, recently completed the Civics Seal of Excellence training, a 50-hour online program designed to highlight America's history, civics, and government.

I'm grateful to all of our educators who are infusing citizenship and patriotism lessons into their classrooms. I encourage all of our parents and guardians to do the same at home. Together, we can ensure that the students who graduate from Bay District Schools are positioned to positively impact our county, state, country, and world.

Thank you for your continued partnership with us and your commitment to our expectations of excellence for every member of our Team of Teams, including our students.