



PRESS RELEASE

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BDS Superintendent Bill Husfelt Announces Retirement

Panama City, FL— On Tuesday, January 31, 2023, Bay District Schools Superintendent Bill Husfelt announced his intention to retire effective July 31, 2023. Husfelt, who has been serving an unprecedented fourth term as Superintendent, said the decision to retire was completely personal.

“This community and I have been through a lot together,” he said, “and it’s been my privilege and honor to serve the students and families of Bay County for the entirety of my 40-plus years in education. The decision to retire a year early is something I have wrestled with, and prayed about, but I believe the time is right this year.”

Husfelt, who said he hoped to spend much more time with his family in retirement, thanked all of the dedicated employees of the district for their commitment to the children of our community and said he believes the great work of Bay District Schools will continue. “The Governor will appoint someone to serve out the remainder of my term,” he said. “We have amazing people on our team, and I am confident that whoever my successor is will be able to continue our trajectory of continuous growth and improvement.”

During his four decades in education, Husfelt served as a substitute teacher, a classroom teacher, a coach, an Assistant Principal, a Principal and as Superintendent since 2008. “I have enjoyed each level of my career in education,” he said, “being a part of the entire process from pre-kindergarten to graduation and beyond has truly been an honor and a privilege and I will forever cherish the memories, friendships and partnerships I’ve made during the last 40 years.”

The Superintendent, who isn’t available for interviews today, met with board members (individually), executive staff and principals this morning and then released a statement to the entire district (see below for the statement). “I know this news will cause some uncertainty among our employees today,” he said, “but I really want to reassure everyone that the work they are doing is valued by our community and will continue.”

Husfelt's statement to the district:

“I have learned over the years that there are seasons for everything in life and that seasons change as we adjust and grow older. When I ran for my fourth term as Superintendent three years ago, I intended for my final season as Superintendent to conclude in the fall of 2024. However, it's probably no secret by now that I have tendered notice to Governor DeSantis that I intend to retire effective July 31, 2023. That's a year or so sooner than I previously anticipated, but it's time for me to retire. I know the district will be in great hands with whomever the governor appoints to serve out the rest of my term.

Initially, as many of you may remember, I wasn't planning to run again three years ago, but the hurricane changed all of that. I had a vision and a mission to “fix” everything that the hurricane destroyed to “hand off” the district to my successor as a complete and “fixed” package. We've made incredible strides since the storm, and I am so very proud of all of our employees who have literally “eaten the elephant one bite at a time” to get our district rebuilt. Unfortunately, the FEMA process is beyond my control, and our recovery has not been as speedy as I would have liked. I understand now that I can't dot all of the “i's” and cross all of the “t's” before finishing my season as Superintendent, but that doesn't take away from the incredible progress our team has made. A friend recently shared with me this weekend, “people who were retired always told me you would know when it's time to go.” I know that now is the time for me.

We've faced many challenges together, including the recession that was ongoing when I first took office in 2008, endless state mandates and curriculum changes, a “once in a thousand-year” hurricane, the pandemic and the long-term impact of all of those on the children and families in our community. I have enjoyed working through all those difficult situations with our fantastic team, and I will treasure those memories, friendships and partnerships. Giving back to our community by serving as your Superintendent has been a privilege, an honor, and an experience I will always cherish.

Now, however, it's time for me to give back to Theresa and my daughters and their families, who have supported me throughout my 40-plus years in education. It's time for me to enjoy being a full-time, hands-on grandfather to my 13 grandchildren.

Rumors, over which we all have no control, may swirl about my early retirement but let me assure you that this decision, one that I have prayed over and pondered for a very long time, is my own and is being made for no reason other than I've realized we can't take life for granted. There's so much left I want to accomplish while I still can, and I can't focus on family while serving as superintendent. I have no regrets about any aspect of my career in education, and I am grateful for all of the relationships and partnerships I have fostered during those four decades.

Being Superintendent, and serving alongside more than 3,500 passionate employees and friends, has been an honor and a great privilege for which I will be eternally grateful.

Thank you for all of your loyal support throughout the years and for the support I know you will give to the Governor's appointee. Bay District Schools is an amazing family, and I know we can count on each other going forward because we all care passionately about the children in our community.

I appreciate all of you and am sure our paths will continue to cross in our small community. Stay safe, and God Bless!