



Update from the Superintendent

To: All BDS Employees
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: September 23, 2022

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 :)

Communication is a very important priority for us at Bay District Schools and that's why I create these updates weekly and encourage our schools to remain in constant contact with you, our stakeholders.

That commitment to communication, however, can have its downsides as never a year goes by that we don't get a few complaints about over-communication! We do know that the vast majority of our parents/guardians genuinely appreciate our efforts to keep them informed during calm times and times of crisis. So, this week, I'd like to take a few minutes to ensure we're all on the same page about what we communicate (where and when) so you know exactly what to expect.

ROUTINE UPDATES

Our schools can use Everbridge and PeachJar to update you with information about routine, non-emergency events like open houses, PTO nights and fundraisers. Those calls and texts should come after hours since they are non-emergency in nature, and, of course, you're entirely in charge of when you check your email to see PeachJar updates from our community and us.

Additionally, we send these weekly updates and record video versions of them for employees and other stakeholders. BDS puts together a weekly newsletter for our more than 3,500 employees and we submit monthly updates to several area publications including the Beach Chamber and MyPCB Life Magazine. We also maintain a very active presence on social media.

SAFETY UPDATES

With almost 30,000 "citizens," Bay District Schools is really like a small city in terms of numbers, and that means, on any given day, things are going wrong in various places all the time. And when something goes wrong, or is of concern, we do all we can to keep our stakeholders in the loop.

If there's a lockdown at your child's school, an investigation into a disturbing comment or an alert about a dangerous object on campus, our administrators will endeavor to keep you updated about the situation via Everbridge. That only works, however, if we have an accurate cell phone number on file as your child's primary emergency contact. Every time we make an Everbridge alert, it's alarming to see the number of calls that can't go through due to inaccurate or non-working numbers. Please, please check your Parent Portal account to make sure you can be reached in the event of an

emergency with your child or an important safety update from his/her school. **We know you want to be contacted but we simply can't do that if we don't have your contact information.**

Please know that during a crisis or emergency, our focus is 100 percent on the safety of our students and staff. That means we're not going to be able to check students in or out of school, answer the phones or be as responsive to email as we'd like. We know these situations can be very disconcerting, but we need your understanding so we can focus on the tasks at hand and ensure our entire campus is as safe as possible.

It's also important for you to be aware that we're releasing as much information in "real-time" as we can which means situations may not always be as they appear and updates will be made. A perfect example happened a few weeks ago when a middle school student had seizure-like symptoms and told administrators that he/she had ingested a tainted brownie. We made that alert to parents at that school immediately. Later, we discovered there wasn't a brownie and that the student who had to be rushed to the hospital actually "took a hit" from a THC-laden dab pen. And so we made another update. Depending upon the severity of the situation, there may be information we have that we can't release without compromising an investigation so, again, we will share as much as we can, as often as we can, but please understand that sometimes there are limitations for good reason.

We also encourage you to follow us on Twitter at @BayDistSchools for regular safety updates about situations happening throughout our community.

SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATES

All of our schools do their best to have an active presence on social media because we know that's convenient for many of our parents/guardians. We enjoy sharing news about school activities and the extraordinary accomplishments of our students and staff, and we know our community looks forward to those good news stories. **However, please be reminded that social media is NOT the place for settling disagreements or sharing concerns.** We definitely want to hear from you if you have a concern about something but we want to do so in a manner that's confidential, respectful and solution-oriented which can't happen on social media. If you have a concern about something at your child's school, please always reach out to the principal. In the event you're not able to reach a satisfactory resolution, you can always email us at BDScomm@bay.k12.fl.us and we will do our best to help you.

During an emergency situation, we do our best to keep social media updated when that's appropriate but we also have to be careful about compromising a situation by over-sharing which is why we can't always answer your questions in detail. And again, our focus during a crisis is always going to be on the safety of those around us so updating social media does not take precedence over the tasks at hand.

DOJO/NEWSLETTERS/FOCUS

Many of our schools use Class Dojo to also keep parents connected to school and some have monthly or even weekly newsletters. Additionally, we can use FOCUS to send important alerts to parents and

we encourage you to regularly access your Parent Portal account for information about your child's attendance, grades, any disciplinary reports and overall progress towards graduation.

If you need help setting up a Parent Portal account, or resetting a password, please reach out to your child's school office for assistance. We will be glad to help you get connected to us! Additionally, please talk with your friends and other parents/guardians about Parent Portal to make sure they are aware of the importance of activating their accounts. Currently, some of our schools have less than 30 percent of their parents connected through Parent Portal which means we only have 1/3 of the emergency contact numbers we need.

And that's very concerning.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement. We know the safety update calls can be alarming but we are committed to ensuring you know what's going on at your child's school. With as many students, staff and campuses as we have, there's always something going on and we do appreciate your understanding.

Stay safe and God Bless!