

FROM: Superintendent Bill Husfelt
TO: All parents/guardians
RE: Expanded options for enrollment
DATE: July 23, 2020



From the beginning of this pandemic, we've tried to do all we can to ensure the safety of our students and our staff. As we approach our previously-scheduled first day of school, and review the feedback from our parents and students, we realize there's a fourth option for school enrollment that we need to offer.

We know that many of you, and your students, want to stay connected to your school of enrollment while enabling your student to join classes remotely and participate from home. Many of our teachers want to stay connected to their own schools and students as well. So, after working closely with the union, we're pleased to announce that we are recommending an expansion of our first option to the School Board on Tuesday and we believe this is, literally, the missing link for many of our families.

If the new expansion (called BayLink) is approved, students can remain enrolled in "brick and mortar" schools five days a week assigned to their teacher of record/scheduled classes.

- Students have the **option to attend "brick and mortar" school in person five days a week**
OR
- Students have the **option to attend school in person five days a week but also may switch to digital learning if/when the need arises** (quarantine, self-isolation, illness)
OR
- Students have the **option to choose digital learning five days a week assigned to their teacher of record/scheduled classes**. This option provides opportunities for students to continue to learn at home while remaining registered at their enrolled school. This model is designed for families who don't feel comfortable sending their children back to school but ultimately plan to rejoin their enrolled school in the future.

Instead of attending their classes in person, students who select BayLink will have the option to watch recorded lessons daily and live lessons as often as possible. Students will be in regular communication with their teacher(s) virtually and via email/phone.

BayLink will allow students who need/want to remain at home to do so while also being connected to their brick and mortar schools and their teachers, classes, advanced academic programs and other services.

We believe this option will give us the proverbial "best of both worlds" in that many students have been hoping for a way to learn at home but stay connected to their schools. Enrollment in BayLink will also naturally reduce the number of students physically present on campus, thereby enhancing our social distancing efforts. Teachers will have smaller classes, hallways and other

common spaces will be less crowded but students who need/want to attend in person will still have the option to do that five days a week.

BayLink students will be able to return to brick and mortar school if that arrangement no longer suits them best. Brick and mortar students who need to quarantine or self isolate will be able to seamlessly transition to BayLink enrollment.

We know that this is A LOT to digest for our employees and our families so the second part of this recommendation is a request for the School Board to consider moving the first day of school back to Thursday, August 20th. We believe this delayed start will give our teachers time to get the training, professional development and support they need to shift to this innovative teaching model that includes in-person and virtual students. We also believe the delay will give our families time to ponder this new option to determine if it's best for their student(s).

If the School Board approves these changes to the enrollment plan, we will be asking parents to log in to Parent Portal to choose from one of the following enrollment options so we can ensure that each option is fully staffed for those students who choose it:

1. Return to brick and mortar school and attend in person (unless prompted to self-quarantine in which case the student would automatically switch to BayLink).
2. Return to brick and mortar school but attend class virtually and participate through BayLink (through Canvas).
3. Withdraw from brick and mortar and enroll in Bay Virtual School.
4. Withdraw from brick and mortar and enroll in the home school program of the parent's choice.

Parents who have previously withdrawn to enroll at Bay Virtual may still choose to return their students to remote instruction through BayLink by simply selecting that option in Parent Portal before the deadline. BDS will take care of re-enrolling the student in brick and mortar school and setting him/her up with BayLink or any of the other options available.

If the School Board approves both recommendations, we anticipate opening up the new enrollment window on 7/28 at 3 p.m. and we will keep it open until 7/30 at 5 p.m. We must close the window then in order to work through the reassignment of students and to begin the staffing process at both virtual school and brick and mortar school.

As you know by now, Governor DeSantis granted school districts additional flexibility yesterday in determining the right start for their school year. Prior to his announcement, we were already re-evaluating our plan on an almost daily basis to make sure we are doing all we can for the safety of students and staff. His announcement just confirms we're on the right track.

We know that this situation is ever-changing and that it has caused a lot of angst in our community, in our employees and for our students. There are no "right" or "easy" answers but working together we can always find a path to do what's best for our students and for our BDS family members.

We also know that this email will cause HUNDREDS of questions to pop up in your minds and we pledge to you that we're developing answers as quickly as we can and we will keep you updated with FAQs, videos and other information as frequently as possible.

If you choose BayLink for your student, please note:

1. Attendance will be taken daily in each course.
2. Canvas will be the primary platform utilized to manage curriculum materials and content. This platform will allow for daily attendance, assignments, assessments, and progress monitoring.
3. Curriculum materials utilized in the Canvas platform will be aligned to district scope and sequence for each course offered as applicable.
4. While there will be robust course offerings through digital learning, some course offerings may be available only in the traditional school settings.

We are in the process of finalizing our parent guide for brick and mortar reopening and will now develop a parent guide for BayLink. Both of those will be added to the resources that are available on our opening of schools website at <http://www.bay.k12.fl.us/school-reopening>. We are committed to doing whatever we can in terms of professional development and tech support to help our teachers transition to this new model successfully. We sincerely appreciate your continued support and trust in us and we're grateful to be your educational partners.