



Press Release - Wednesday, August 27th, 2025

Update from San Juan Island School District Superintendent

Dear Friday Harbor Community,

The days are getting shorter, the evenings are a little cooler, the smell of freshly sharpened pencils is back in the air. It's a sure sign that the first day of school is just around the corner.

While students were enjoying their summer adventures, our maintenance crew was hard at work. Thanks to your support of the voter-approved capital levy, we made important upgrades over the summer, most noticeably, the high school now has beautiful new siding. The buildings are looking their best, ready to welcome back the students and, more importantly, withstand the winter weather for years to come. The plan is for the middle school to receive the same facelift in the summer of 2026.

The elementary campus received improvements as well. A new rain gutter system was installed, and the Early Learning Center will have a modernized playground for our youngest learners when they return to school. Later this fall, we will install new heat pumps at the elementary ensuring staff and students will continue to stay warm during the winter. We at SJISD deeply appreciate your investment in the schools; it makes a real difference.

We also have plenty to celebrate. Our elementary and middle schools were honored as *Recognized Schools* in the State of Washington for their excellence in educating all students. The high school continues to shine as well, ranking in the top 10% of schools in both the state and nation according to the U.S. News and World Report. Improved state testing and advanced placement scores indicate continued academic growth. These recognitions are a testament to the dedication of our staff, the hard work of our students, and the support of our families.

On August 21-22 faculty and staff kicked off the year by attending the San Juan Institute (SJI), where nationally recognized speakers joined us on island. Topics included collaborative strategies to improve instruction, understanding and managing unique behaviors, and effective implementation of artificial intelligence into the classroom setting. Students



change as do their societal influences. We as educators must continue to learn what makes the most impact today, meeting students where they are while always continuing to challenge them with appropriate rigor. The event was inspirational and energizing while also packed with fresh ideas to make sure every student feels like they belong and is challenged to succeed.

Looking ahead, I want to put something important on your radar. In February, we will be asking for your continued support by renewing the Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) levy. This isn't about building projects; it's about the people and the programs that make our schools run every day. The EP&O levy helps to keep class sizes small, supports our special education programs, and funds essential positions like our full-time nurse as well as other key staff. The state has increased funding for special education, and we are grateful, but it still doesn't cover everything our students need and are mandated by law to receive. Renewing the EP&O levy will continue to fill that gap.

We also want to share some other exciting program news. Just like last year, Stuart Island School will again be open, offering the students there a one-of-a-kind learning experience. And our Early Learning Center is heading into its second year with a big step forward by providing full-day programs for both Transition to Kindergarten and Developmental Pre-Kindergarten. That means more learning, more playing, and yes, a lot more paint and glitter to clean up.

Here we go. School starts on Thursday, August 28, and after an amazing 2024-2025 school year, we are ready for an even better year ahead. We have talented and caring staff, amazing students, and a community that shows up for them time and time again.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with the San Juan Island School District. As we have said before, great communities and great schools go hand in hand.

Fred Woods
Superintendent
San Juan Island School District