



Press Release  
3/1/2024

Update from San Juan Island School District Superintendent

I want to begin this update by sharing a heartfelt thank you for supporting the capital and technology levy renewal on the February 13th election. Over 76% of the voters said yes to the request made by the school district. The passage of this measure allows us to make much-needed repairs, implement preventative maintenance, and continue robust technological services for our students and staff.

The support this community gives to the public school system is one of the many aspects of why living here is such an amazing experience. Sure, we live in an ideal setting with beautiful scenery and a pace of life that many wish they could feel. It's the people, however, that make this island home. As a principal for 13 years on the secondary campus, I was inspired by the many people who gave of their time, energy, and yes finances to make their school the best that it could be. You have once again done this, and we all thank you. San Juan Island School District truly is a community school system.

So, what are the next steps? This levy request included numerous projects we expect to complete between 2025 and 2028. This takes planning, organization, and prioritization. Therefore, in May we will propose to the board of directors a schedule of when and/or how these projects will be accomplished. This is no easy task as numerous regulations dictate the process to ensure transparency and accountability. Engineering and design, project management, and construction all take time. Overall cost and available cash flow will be the reasons the plan or schedule may change over the years. We will, however, do everything we can to remain good stewards of the funding you so graciously provide to enhance our schools.

I can say emphatically this is a great school district. I am thanking the community for its support, but I want to make sure I thank the students, too. I am always impressed with the effort our amazing students put into their work as well as the kindness they show to each other. No, we are not perfect. We would love to see everyone improve academically on a consistent basis and maintain perfect behavior daily. Even so, by the time students graduate, this school and community have helped shape them into citizens who are well-prepared for life academically and socially.

I was reminded of what we have here last weekend when I attended the girls' basketball state tournament in Wenatchee. Although our team did not come out on top, two qualities of Friday Harbor shined. The first was that there was a large and supportive Friday Harbor crowd. That is a long trip for one game. And yet, parents and others were there in force to cheer on the girls, demonstrating how much our island supports all the endeavors of our children. And secondly, as I watched the

game proudly, I realized that we can fortunately offer a lot of opportunities for students. While the girls were competing in Wenatchee, our ORCA Bowl team was at the state national ocean sciences knowledge competition where they finished fourth. Students are well-rounded in Friday Harbor and take advantage of offerings that match their interests.

Although I have lived and worked here for 17 years, I still remember serving in other districts where extra-curricular participation numbers were low. At Friday Harbor, there is high participation in extra-curricular activities, but the activities do not take precedence over preparing students for life beyond this island. Although we have had, and do have, winning teams, our students strive to be the best they can be in the classroom. It is important to them and this community that we do well academically. As a former supervisor used to say to me, "keep the main thing the main thing;" our athletes do a good job of keeping the main thing the main thing.

As we head into the spring, life for students in the schools seems to get even busier, and before you know it the next crop of seniors are walking across that stage accepting their diplomas. Until that day, though, there is a lot to accomplish. All the schools will begin state and/or school-based testing later in the spring; seniors will spend the month of April applying for the various local scholarships this generous community provides annually; advanced placement testing is just a couple of months away; field trips will soon be seen district-wide; planning for the 24-25 school year, which includes registration and class assignments, begins in earnest; and, our great teaching staff K-12 will lead all students toward a successful finish line. In addition to all this, spring extracurricular options abound including the middle school play which will be performed at the San Juan Community Theatre, five athletic offerings for our students to participate in if they so choose, and youth sports sponsored by other agencies.

The message today is rather simple. Thank you for supporting our school. And thank you students for honoring that support by doing well academically and in extracurricular activities. As I have said in the past and will continue to say in the future, a great community and a great school go hand in hand. The levy support and the game I attended in Wenatchee reminded me of how this connection is alive and well.

Fred Woods  
Superintendent  
San Juan Island School District