



Press Release
March 2023

Update from San Juan Island School District Superintendent

Dear Friday Harbor community,

On Wednesday, March 1, the San Juan Public Schools Foundation held the annual Knowledge Bowl at the San Juan Community Theatre. The audience loved watching teams vie for the coveted “goblet of knowledge” trophy, and over \$5,000 was raised for much-needed supplies for staff and students at our schools. As the superintendent, I am extremely appreciative of all that this organization does to support education.

Seeing the large crowd and all the smiling faces reminded me how far we have come since the beginning of the global health crisis. Even though the pandemic and fully remote learning impacted students, face-to-face instruction has paved the way for accelerated academic growth and social emotional learning.

Our students and staff have already received accolades and excelled in a variety of ways this year. A few notable highlights include:

- Elementary students performed in ‘BOTS! A New Children’s Musical.’ The high school presented ‘Sense and Sensibility’ in January and the middle school will perform ‘A Game of Tiaras’ beginning this Thursday, March 16th.
- Art students continue to be recognized for excellence in this state and nationally.
- The Eco-Club was a State finalist in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition.
- Several elementary students were nominated for participation in the National Youth Leadership Forum: Pathways to STEM program this summer.
- The Peer Mediation program in the elementary is successfully teaching students how to solve issues.
- A winter sports athlete was recognized as a WIAA athlete of the week.
- The soccer team won a state title.

- A high school teacher received distinction as a Fulbright Scholar and is currently in Morocco.

The fact is, all students and teachers in this school district do extremely well, and when given the chance to demonstrate this, they shine.

As a district, we are committed to ensuring that each campus has the tools to teach effectively and to give our students the opportunities to achieve. This is why the superintendents and school boards of San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez have been working hard to advocate for funding with legislators. The quality of our schools depends on the fantastic people who work here, and as we live in a very expensive area, recruitment and retention can be difficult.

As a coalition of island school districts, we have combined forces to ensure our voices are heard in Olympia. You can help too by informing our representatives that parity in funding is crucial. Please learn more by visiting supportislandschools.org. Not only are we working together to increase funding, but we have also begun to collaborate operationally. Currently, the director of special education services is shared to improve efficiency. We will continue to search for more avenues for joint efforts.

Being good stewards of your money is very important to us. In 2020, the capital projects and technology levy passed overwhelmingly. Thank you for your support! There were several projects that we were excited to complete. Unfortunately, inflation rose faster than expected and some priority decisions had to be made. Our community is already enjoying the new tennis and pickleball courts at the high school. This summer, more construction is scheduled including the completion of the art room in the STEM building. A new high school science room design has been submitted and could be finished by the start of school. And we are currently reviewing estimates for the fire suppression system in the middle school which has reached the end of its life. All of these projects were on the levy list in 2020. In February 2024 we will be asking for your support by approving a continuation of this levy to maintain the structures and to keep our technology current.

Another project scheduled to be completed this summer is putting a finishing touch on the Griffin Bay School Building. Griffin Bay School is an invaluable resource for our community, providing flexible curriculum which currently serves 45 alternative education students and providing online opportunities to nearly 50 students from the traditional middle and high school.

Although it is only March, we will be heading into the graduation and promotion season before you know it. I heard from someone this week there

are only 11 Mondays left in the school year. At the end of March, seniors will start applying for local scholarships. Spring field trips in all grades are being planned in earnest. Schedules for testing are being developed. And principals are already beginning to plan for the 23-24 school year. The last day of school on June 16 is not that far away.

So, here we go: the home stretch. I remain proud of our school as we continue to offer the best service to this community and its children.

Fred Woods
Superintendent
San Juan Island School District