



Press Release

Update from San Juan Island School District Superintendent

We are just a few days away from closing the book on another successful school year. Excitement is in the air. On June 8th, the graduations for both Griffin Bay School (GBS) and Friday Harbor High School (FHHS) students will take place. The GBS ceremony will be at the Grange Hall at Noon, and then later that day at 5:00 pm FHHS will celebrate in Turnbull Gymnasium.

In addition to graduation, end-of-year activities abound at all levels. Band concerts, field trips, and promotions are part of the rush to the last day. Amid all this, staff are planning in earnest for the 24-25 school year. Before looking toward the future, however, it is important to reflect on this past year.

Over 70 graduates from both Friday Harbor High School and Griffin Bay School will be celebrated. As a community, we should be proud of the accomplishments of these young adults. They completed their coursework in a school system acknowledged for excellence in K-12. In a recent U.S. News and World Report, the high quality of our schools was recognized.

1. FHHS is rated in the top 4% of public high schools in the State of Washington and 7% of the nation.
2. Friday Harbor Middle School was ranked in the top 8% of the state.

Additionally, we realize that the success of our secondary schools is possible because Friday Harbor Elementary prepares students for rigorous coursework. It is proof that the entire system, K-12, works collaboratively and vertically to provide our students with a purpose-driven education ensuring each graduate is ready for college and/or career.

This recognition also demonstrates the quality of Friday Harbor students. Over the course of this past year, we shared with the community through press releases the various awards many of our students received. Several were recognized at both the state and national levels. Students should be applauded for their willingness to extend their learning.

As the Superintendent, I had the opportunity to serve as a panelist for graduating seniors who presented their senior exhibitions. This 20-to-30-minute presentation requires students to reflect on their last four years and then describe how they have influenced their decisions for the immediate future. Yes, as an educator, I love to hear about their plans for the future. What is important to note, however, is that our students demonstrate an ability to reflect honestly on their educational journey. Each of the students I observed could speak well about who they are and about their hopes and dreams. All our graduates should be congratulated for their



openness and candor in their final projects presented to an audience of peers and community members.

The fact is that the excellence we see in our schools is the result of a supportive community, great teachers, and dedicated students. Even our fantastic school board was recognized when the Washington State School Directors Association held their regional meeting here on April 27th. State Superintendent Reykdal was also in attendance. The organization, along with board members and superintendents from surrounding districts, observed what makes SJISD special. They admired the cohesiveness and vision of our committed school board of directors.

We as a district and our board members extend our gratitude to this community for overwhelmingly supporting the capital and tech levy. As good stewards of these funds, a four-year plan has been established and was presented to the board on May 29th outlining the approach for our capital projects. As stated in the levy campaign, the first and most important piece will be the exterior envelope of the secondary campus. Work has already begun preparing bid sheets that will go out in January 2025. The objective is to begin construction in the summer of 2025. If you are interested in viewing the four-year plan presented at that meeting, you can visit the district website.

This fall we are excited to share that we are extending our services to the earliest learners. Last January, we opened the doors to preschool students. The Developmental Pre-Kindergarten (DPK) service was established to provide young students with unique needs access to support. It has been a success. Initially, we were able to initiate this program through the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). For DPK to continue in 24-25, however, additional funding was necessitated. We are excited to report that the Stocker Foundation generously awarded us a grant of \$75,000 so that the DPK doors will remain open. The partnership with the Stocker Foundation has been amazing. This organization previously supported SJISD financially in literacy and STEM endeavors for elementary students. Their willingness to meet our needs in the early learning world is greatly appreciated. In many ways, I would argue that through this grant the Stocker Foundation impacts our entire community.

In addition to DPK, we will run our first full-day Transition to Kindergarten (TtK) class for 17 four-year-olds beginning in the 2024-25 school year. TtK is a kindergarten readiness opportunity. This state-funded program helps ensure that 4-year-olds receive preschool services. The teacher has been hired and supplies are on order. I truly believe that students who attend preschool are more successful on their K-12 journey.

More news for this district is that we will be reopening Stuart Island Elementary School in the fall. The facilities and technology personnel have begun the work to make the building ready for use by August. We are excited to see this small island school brought back to life with students.



I am confident that the 2024-25 school year will be another great one. I wrote earlier this year that a great school and great community go hand in hand. Because of this, we will continue to strive for excellence. The children of this island deserve it.

But now warmer weather is here. Let the fun begin. Everyone at SJISD wishes all a wonderful summer vacation. We look forward to the return in the fall when school begins on August 29th.

Fred Woods
Superintendent
San Juan Island School District