



Press Release
November 22, 2024

Update from San Juan Island School District Superintendent

Dear Friday Harbor community,

Author Richelle E. Goodrich writes "Thanksgiving is not only being aware of the abundance of good in the world but embracing it." As we enter this holiday season all of us at SJISD are mindful of the amazing community we live in, the schools that employ us, and the people in our lives who bring value to our existence. I can say without a doubt that one of the reasons our school system is so good is because there are employees who embrace the abundance of good and are not just aware of it. They put their hearts and souls into their work for the betterment of our children, and therefore, our island. As the superintendent, I cannot say enough how proud I am of the nearly 130 people serving this district.

My gratitude does not stop there. This island community supports schools, and this partnership leads to continually improving educational opportunities. In short, I want to say thank you to Friday Harbor for being there for our children and our staff.

This community's overwhelming support for the Capital Projects Levy last February is just one way you demonstrated a belief in this school system. These funds will help us maintain and improve the physical buildings and structures that make up our schools. As we shared during the campaign, first and foremost on the list of needs is repairing the exterior envelope at the secondary campus. Many of you who drive by the high school and read our electronic sign notice the deterioration of the siding. We initiated the process by hiring a company this fall to determine all that needs to be done. We plan to go out to bid by March of 2025. This process takes time because even though the levy was approved in February of 2024, dispersal of the funds does not begin until 2025. Being good stewards means taking each step slowly as cash flow allows. Depending on any unknown setbacks, we hope to see construction commence next summer. I will keep you updated if that changes for any reason.

The residents of Friday Harbor support the schools in so many other ways too. The Public Schools Foundation (PSF) is an organization that meets monthly to raise money for equipment and supplies teachers need. The State does not always provide enough funds for non-employee-related costs. The PSF ensures there are adequate art supplies, lab equipment for science classes,



opportunities for students to attend academic competitions, new books and reading materials, and several other necessary items. Likewise, the San Juan Island Community Foundation and The Stocker Foundation have generously made contributions to assist us in the development of Griffin Bay School and the Early Learning Center.

Service organizations such as the Rotary Foundation of the San Juan Islands, Soroptimist International, Kiwanis Club, and the Lions Club find additional funding for several initiatives. Beyond the extraordinary amount of money these groups provide each year to graduating seniors, they work to limit the effects of food insecurity, purchase materials that will enhance literacy, and partner with the school system to raise funds for specific programs like STEM and the arts. In addition, we partner with other agencies such as the Family Resource Center, Safe San Juans, and the County's Health and Community Services. These collaborations are invaluable. Together, we work to educate the whole child preparing them for a lifelong journey.

There are also many individuals who support the schools through participation in Parent-Teacher-Associations, Purple and Gold Booster Club, and Band Family and Friends. The tireless efforts of these parents and/or patrons allow our students to participate in various extracurricular activities.

This island, this village, puts our children first, and because of that students receive the best. I have always said we are not perfect, but we are very good and striving each year to be better. The efforts of all as shown above are what make this island's education system so special. The result is that parents often share with me how prepared their children were for the rigors of college and/or career. As a father of children who graduated from here, I can personally attest that SJISD students are ready for the future.

Looking back at the first three months of school, I will say it has been a great start. As I shared with you at the beginning of the school year, two new programs were opened. The first is the early learning center located on the elementary campus. Each day 27 of our earliest learners participate with the goal of achieving kindergarten readiness. The team leading the classes works diligently to provide these children opportunities to grow both academically and socially-emotionally. In addition, the one-room schoolhouse on Stuart re-opened with three students and a dedicated teacher who are all appreciating the opportunity to learn in this unique setting. I would love to report that everything has gone smoothly, but the truth is that like with anything new, there have been some bumps along the way. Stuart Island School has not been in use for over ten years. Several facility enhancements, therefore, were mandated. We are learning a lot about how to run a school like this in a remote area. The same is true for the early learning center. Bringing pre-kindergarten



students onto the campus is new to us, but this gets better every day. It has been enjoyable to witness just how far each child has grown in such a short time.

The fall sports season just ended. The participation numbers were extremely high again, and the winter season promises to be the same. Our first band concert will be on December 10th, and the high school drama production of Romeo and Juliet is set for January 16-19, 2025. Our students are active and pursuing their passions in clubs, sports, music, theatre, art, and academics.

A friend said to me the other day, "Be thankful for everything that happens in your life; it's all an experience." This press release echoes that statement. I cannot predict what the future holds, but I do know that because we work and live in a location where we are dedicated to each other, we will continue to have reason to be thankful. We at SJISD want to sincerely express how appreciative we are to share in this experience.

From all of us at SJISD, we wish you all the best this holiday season.

Fred Woods
Superintendent
San Juan Island School District