



Press Release
December 2, 2022

Update from San Juan Island School District Superintendent

Dear Friday Harbor community,

I have written previously that I love the holiday season. The bright lights, festive decorations, and amazing cookies are some of the traditions of the season I enjoy most. Sure, the temperature might be dropping, but there is still so much to celebrate. This is especially true in your schools.

The last two years we modified schedules, wore masks, and closely monitored COVID outbreaks. This September, however, students returned to a school that resembled what life was like pre-pandemic. Hallways were full; collaborative projects in classrooms resumed; and customary events were restored. High school students experienced the homecoming parade and dance, the middle schoolers hiked on Orcas, and the elementary school hosted a Day of the Dead celebration as well as a veteran's assembly.

The most exciting news is that the boys soccer team brought home the class 2B **State Championship** (the only other title in school history was in 1986). Congratulations to Coach Brett Paul and all the athletes.

There are so many success stories just from the first three months of school I could share that warm the heart. We really do have an amazing school community. This is not to say, however, that we haven't experienced our share of difficulties. COVID remains a concern and the district continues to follow guidance given by the State and local Departments of Health. In addition to COVID, the regular viral season is upon us causing higher than normal absence rates. Although we want all students here every day, staying home when sick is a good decision. We appreciate the families supporting us in this manner and the flexibility of teachers working with students who cannot attend.

No matter the situation we are facing, the district is committed to continual improvement. Students deserve it. To that end, this month we begin creating action plans for the two goals in our strategic plan.

They are:

1. Within three to five years, the San Juan Island School District will reduce achievement gaps by engaging students, families, staff, and the school community to identify barriers and develop solutions
2. Within the next five years, the San Juan Island School District will create college and career pathways through a robust STEAM program by expanding Career Technical Vocational opportunities and the Arts

In addition, your school board members have been actively collaborating with directors from the other districts in the San Juan Islands. The goal is to speak as one voice to our legislators. The disparity in State funding allocation between larger school districts and those that are smaller limits what we can offer consistently. Your local directors recognize that we live in a very high cost of living region and to attract,



retain, and support our staff, parity is a necessity. For more information and to learn how anyone can help, please visit <https://supportislandschools.org/>.

One important change and contribution that has been recognized this fall is the inclusion of student representatives to the school board. We want to increase student voice in our decisions. I want to personally thank Aaron Orozco and Rylee Drew for providing a report each month on the state of the school and for giving input on decisions that are made.

The reality is we respect the participation and voice of everyone. San Juan Island School District serves Friday Harbor. We hope to make sure that everyone belongs.

Who we are and what we believe in can be summed up in our cultural values as listed on the district website. They are:

Engage the Community

I will commit to engaging others in the process, and I will be an active participant in the school community.

Advocacy

I will create safe and productive environments that embrace self-advocacy.

Cultivate Equity

I recognize, value and respect individual needs, identities, cultures, interests, and strengths of all.

Provide Opportunities

I will provide opportunities to help you be successful on your path.

Cultivate Global Awareness

I will keep current on global issues and integrate these topics into community conversations and activities.

It is important to notice that the definition of each value statement begins with the word I. We all, no matter our role in this great community, play a part in making this school system the best.

There is no doubt that together we can continue to accomplish great things, even if there are a few bumps in the road. In my third year as your school superintendent, I remain proud of the work we do. And although my door is always open for conversation, I will make sure to send out an update four times a year with the next one coming by the first of March. Until then, enjoy your holiday with family and trust that in the new year we, as a district, will continue the work to ensure a quality education.

Fred Woods
Superintendent
San Juan Island School District