



Press Release
June 12, 2023

Update from San Juan Island School District Superintendent

Dear Friday Harbor community,

The last month of school is always a whirlwind with State and AP exams, senior exhibitions, field trips, and celebrations. This activity, which may appear hectic, all has a purpose and culminates with promotions, graduation, and the last day of school. As I look back on this past year, I can sincerely say it has been a great one. Our community should take pride in our schools. The San Juan Island School District might be considered a small school system, but we think and act big so that our children receive the best.

It is worth reflecting on the 22-23 school year to remind us how far we have come since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. Assemblies such as the *Día De Los Muertos* celebration and a spring dance party occurred in the elementary building. Middle school teachers held a hobby day so young students could be introduced to various activities outside of the core curriculum. The high school witnessed large participation rates in performing arts and athletics. In short, this year our students enjoyed a variety of safe and fun events that felt “normal.”

I am so proud of our graduating seniors who persevered despite much of their high school world being turned upside down by COVID. They remained committed; they made the best of the situation and on Saturday, June 10th both Griffin Bay School and Friday Harbor High School graduated over 70 students combined. Thank you, seniors, for who you are after what you have experienced. You deserve to be recognized.

Regarding recognition, there are so many students, and teachers, who deserve to be acknowledged for jobs well done. Our art program continues to lead the way with both national and State awards. The Eco-Club was a State finalist for the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition. We saw young writers win awards at the local and State level in an essay contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution. And of course, as we shared in the fall, the soccer team returned to the island with a State Championship trophy. These are just a few of so many achievements that could be listed. The impetus for all this success begins in the classrooms. San Juan Island School District is filled with great educators dedicated to excellence. One teacher was even recognized as a Fulbright Scholar; a distinction which provided our students the opportunity to meet with educators from Belarus over Zoom.

In addition to the work done in the classroom, we were able to complete some projects thanks to the generous support of the capital and technology levy you approved in 2020. The tennis and pickleball courts are the most noticeable. We love the fact that the community can utilize this venue. The new art room in the STEM building will be completed this summer and we plan to use this space to integrate design, engineering, and manufacturing. A new fire suppression system is being installed in the middle school, improvements to the high school science and culinary rooms are underway, and each student



has access to a personal Chromebook. Due to the generosity of this community, we can do these things to ensure that students are given the best opportunity to succeed in a safe and modern environment.

We are proud of what has been accomplished and are cognizant of where we hope to continue to achieve more. The pandemic, as previously reported, was hard on students. We as a district must stay diligent and consistent, continuing to raise the academic bar as well as paying close attention to each child's social and emotional well-being.

To that end, at the May and June board meetings, our action committees presented to the board plans to reach our goals as outlined 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.

Simply put, these goals represent our desire to make sure **all** feel a sense of belonging when they walk through our doors, that **all** have the opportunity to achieve at the highest level, and that **all** will be introduced to concepts that are relevant and prepare them for life in the 21st century.

As the sun sets this school year, planning for next fall is in high gear. Scheduling, hiring, deep cleaning the buildings, and preparing meaningful activities are underway. Yes, we had a great year, but we look forward to having an even better one in 2023-24.

One of the projects we will be working on this summer is developing the needs list for the upcoming capital projects and technology levy scheduled for February 2024. As stated earlier, several projects were completed in the last four years. We strive to be good stewards of the public's money. This levy helps us maintain the quality of our buildings and ensure that our technology keeps pace. We will send out more information in the fall.

For now, we wish all of you a happy summer. There is nothing better than living life on San Juan Island during the months of June, July, and August. We are blessed to live and work here.

Fred Woods
Superintendent
San Juan Island School District