



SOUTHEAST ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

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March 27, 2020

To All Southeast Island School District (SISD) Teachers, Parents, Students and Concerned Community Members:

The members of SISD Board of Education would like to thank everyone who attended the last board meeting for their participation. February's meeting was the best-attended school board meeting in a long time. Input and participation from parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in each of our district's communities is what will help to develop a strong working relationship between the board, school administration, teachers, parents, students, and community members. We would like to encourage everyone to attend future board meetings; we highly value your insights and will ensure that questions and concerns that are relevant to our district are addressed in a timely manner.

Best practice identifies that board members should not enter dialogue with the public during a board meeting. The public comment period is a time for members of the public (you!) to inform us of your views so that we can consider these views during our deliberations or, if the comment is about an issue not on the agenda, ensure that it is addressed appropriately and in a timely manner. Occasionally, it may be appropriate for the Superintendent or Board President to respond with brief, factual information at the meeting. We value and encourage input from ALL SISD stakeholders.

We understand that, from time to time, members of the public and staff need help working through concerns about district procedures or with SISD personnel. Board policies found in Article 1000, Community Relations, identify the process for addressing different types of complaints from the members of the public. We encourage those who have concerns or complaints to resolve these problems early and informally whenever possible. Most complaints can be resolved through informal discussions with the employee or employee's supervisor. If informal channels do not work, the next step is filing a complaint using the formal complaint process. As individual board members, we do not have the authority to resolve complaints and will refer the complainant to the Superintendent.

A few points we would like to clarify:

1. SISD board members do not currently receive any monetary compensation, nor do we receive any benefits. While Board Bylaw 9250 does identify that board member may receive a stipend for board business, both the original and revised budgets that we approved this year do not include any funding for board stipends. Everything we do is because we care about our schools and communities and want the very best for the children who attend SISD schools.
2. The budget cuts this past year made it necessary to make some tough choices. A lot of thought and effort went into making the effect of those cuts as minimal as possible. These cuts were not made lightly and the intent was to keep as many teachers as possible in the classrooms in order to better serve the students of this district. This is not something that is unique to SISD; if you follow the news you will know it is affecting everyone in the state, from the Alaska Marine Highway System to the University-level institutions.
3. We recognize that we can do a much better job of communicating to teachers, families and communities, and we are committed to making those improvements starting with this letter. If you have ideas you would be willing to share that will help us to communicate more effectively, please feel free to share. One of the difficulties we face, which is unique to our state, is a lack of data coverage in many areas and lack of technology use by a fairly significant number of our

community members. We would love ideas on how to better reach people who cannot be reached through email, social media, or community postings.

4. We would like to address the concerns regarding the offer of a 3-year contract to Sherry Becker. We recognize that change is never easy and that the initial hiring of Mrs. Becker brought change into a school district that had not had a new Superintendent in more than a decade. A new Superintendent, combined with the deep budget cuts imposed by the state, created a perfect storm. As a board, we weighed and discussed the documents and input voicing concerns and those that expressed words of support. We listened to public comment carefully and, during executive session, we spent time in debate and discussion prior to making our final decision. We truly hope that the schools, teachers, parents and community leaders will partner with the SISD Board of Education to create a productive and safe atmosphere for everyone involved by supporting Mrs. Becker in her role as SISD Superintendent.
5. An SISD Budget Workshop will be held on March 31, 2020. During this workshop, we will be discussing the changes in staff positions for this coming school year and this will include how these changes will affect the FY21 SISD budget. As you will see from the Draft FY21 Budget posted in our Board Agenda packet, we are expecting our FY21 revenues to exceed expenditures. There were some concerns about the position changes at the February Board meeting, so we wanted to describe some of these changes for you.
 - a. Enrollment is projected increase by at least 10 students due to the addition of our new Correspondence program that will be serving students district wide, including students in communities that have had a school closure due to enrollment dropping below 10 students.
 - b. A Special Education Coordinator position has been created and this position will be covering the following duties: Special Education, 504, Gifted and Talented Student Services, Intensive Special Education Center-Based Program Coordinator, Special Education Substitute Teacher, District Testing Coordinator, Correspondence and Home School Programs Coordinator, etc.
 - c. The Assistant Superintendent/Area Principal will be the site administrator for all school sites district wide. This position will also oversee Activities, Food Services, and Transportation.
 - d. The Thorne Bay School will have one less high school teacher; however, the newly-hired Assistant Principal will be teaching 1-2 high school courses, one of our elementary teachers will be teaching one high school course, and some of our high school courses will be covered by distance.

We hope that each of you is staying safe and healthy. While we had hoped to send this letter to you in early March, the challenges of navigating the uncharted waters of the COVID-19 pandemic and rapidly transitioning to a distance-delivery model for our students resulted in a few delays. Thank you for your patience. We continue to welcome questions and suggestions from everyone.

Respectfully,

SISD Board of Education