

September 6, 2022

Dear Aromas-San Juan Unified School District Families:

**I am honored and excited to be your Interim Superintendent, recently selected by your Governing Board of Directors to lead the district. My first day was this past Tuesday, August 30, 2022.**

Everyone I have met has been so welcoming and all have gone out of their way to help me become part of our school family, a family that is focused on helping each and every child succeed. When I say “family,” I include all of us: parents and children, teachers, office workers, bus drivers, food service personnel, maintenance workers, paraprofessionals, staff, administrators, and School Board members. What is also immediately apparent to me is how proud this community is of its schools and its towns. I love the close-knit, small-town feeling that is observable no matter where one travels in the district. I hope to protect and nurture that quality in all that we do!

### **The Heat Advisory - Helpful Guidance from San Benito County Office of Education (SBCOE)**

First, I want to share a document titled *Heat Guidelines* from SBCOE with advice on how to help keep ourselves and our children safe. The weather forecast points to the warmest days being Tuesday and perhaps Thursday after Labor Day. Please know that our building principals will be working with their staffs to alter and adjust instructional settings as needed. This information from SBCOE reminds all of us of the health warning signs to watch for those who may be impacted by the heat. It also has a list of helpful do’s and don’ts we should follow regarding dress and hydration.

### **Checking out the heat situation during my first week**

I walked through classrooms at San Juan Elementary and Aromas and attended both Back-to-School Nights. On one of my visits, I was accompanied by a Board member, too. We are definitely in a stretch of warm weather that can be felt, but I was actually surprised on that day how manageable it was. Inside classrooms, it is definitely cooler than outside in the sun. I attribute that to measures that our wonderful building principals and their teachers and our maintenance staff have implemented. We have only had a report of one student complaining of a headache, but be sure to encourage your child to let their teacher know if they are not feeling well. *We have not had many direct reports and we want and need to know if your child is adversely affected.* Please join us as we remind them to take it easy on the playground at recess. You can help by making sure they wear lightweight, light-colored clothing and come with a refillable water bottle.

### **Here is what I observed last week at our sites**

- Many fans are in operation and strategically placed to circulate and draw air from air conditioned areas into areas that were not air conditioned
- Shades are drawn or curtains are pulled shut to block out the afternoon sun

- Cooling centers are available for use such as the newly air conditioned gymnasium at San Juan Elementary
- New shade structure was completed outside a kinder area
- Water station to replenish student water bottles

**We also brainstormed what we can do in the near future to also provide some relief:**

- We have ordered many more fans to supplement the first lot that has arrived
- We are looking into covering west facing windows with tinted screening to keep out sunlight
- We are adding more blinds and dark drapes that can be strategically pulled when needed
- And we are investigating adding more shade structures and cooling tents.

**What about adding air conditioning?**

The above are short term measures which can be more easily implemented this week. The addition of air conditioning units is complicated and for some sites is not currently feasible due to the age of the building and structural and infrastructure limitations. While air conditioning units are not a quick solution, they are options which the Board of Trustees will review in the coming weeks as they review the status of building projects and available funds. Even so, those would be adjustments made next summer. It takes time to work through the layers of state approvals.

**What can you do to help?**

- Remind your child to stay hydrated and to bring a water bottle.
- Ensure they are dressed appropriately; light-colored and lightweight clothing
- Equip them with sunscreen.
- Talk with them about finding less strenuous activities during recess even as we modify classroom activity. We are finding some children who feel overly warm are running around during recess. We can use your help to remind them to take a break this week.
- Encourage them to report to their teacher if they are not feeling well so we are informed and assistance can be provided
- Communicate with your teacher first, then your building principal if you need us to know something about your child or have questions about any of the above. After taking those steps, you may also feel free to contact me if necessary, but they will have more relevant information for you and it's important to start with them first.

**My pledge**

I am committed to finding some workable solutions and to communicate those with you as they are identified and implemented. I also have an open-door policy and am happy to hear your concerns and to partner with you to find best solutions. You will find that I am honest and direct as I work to be transparent about how we can best solve not only this challenge but many that may face us in the future. I hope that you will join me in this partnership! My school email is:

[bdillvarga@asjUSD.org](mailto:bdillvarga@asjUSD.org). I have only been in the district four days, but I am excited to partner with you as we look for solutions.

**Finally, let me share a little information about me.**

I was born and bred in the Midwest, the child of a single, first-generation parent who herself was an ESL student. I learned early on from my mom how important education was to secure a bright future. I even have her to thank for my persistence in finishing that doctoral dissertation!

I spent a majority of my career in Illinois, first as a high school English teacher and later in a variety of administrative roles (department chair, building principal, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction). I was fortunate to work in three of the finest school districts in the nation in those Chicago suburbs which has helped give me a sense of what is possible if we set our sights high enough.

Eventually, my son Alex—now 30 years old— moved to California for his job, and my husband and I followed soon after to be closer to him. I served as superintendent for three years in Carmel where we still live today, though my son eventually married and took another job in Connecticut. Moral of the story: Never follow your kids! We do not regret our move, however, and it is my personal goal to never see ice and snow again! Though given this hot spell, maybe I might revise that notion!

**Other news to share**

Back to School Nights were well attended at San Juan Elementary and Aromas Elementary, and I am looking forward to a similar event at Anzar High School in the near future.

I will be joining principals at their sites for **informal conversations and coffee**:

Aromas: Tuesday, September 13 @ 8:30 a.m. (In-person in staff lounge; virtual)

San Juan Elementary and Anzar: TBD

**Our next school board meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2022.**