



300 Kostrometinoff Street  
Sitka, Alaska  
Phone: (907) 747-8622  
Fax: (907) 966-1260  
[www.sitkaschools.org](http://www.sitkaschools.org)

May 15, 2020

To all those who have expressed concern on behalf of Sitka students,

Following Superintendent Wegner's announcement of recent proposed administrative changes, the School Board and Superintendent have been receiving significant feedback from the public. As Board Chair, it is my responsibility to respond on behalf of the Board to communications from the public, however all individual Board Members spend time thoughtfully reading these communications daily. Because of the sheer number of communications addressed to the Board, it was not within my capacity to respond to the specific concerns that were so eloquently articulated by all who wrote to us. The Board feels it is important to be expedient in our responsiveness, so I employed the use of a broad and uniform response meant to clarify the role of the Board in this process and assure everyone that their communications were being read.

Attached is a memo addressed to the Board by Superintendent Wegner where she outlines that which led to a reassessment of her initial proposal. She identifies what changes are the most pressing to implement for next year, and how they can be scaled back to reflect the concerns voiced by our Community. When first asked about this by the Sitka Sentinel, I stated that there is a process to implementing these changes, and that process has carried itself out. Dr. Wegner has met with and engaged in meaningful conversations with administrators, with incoming Interim-Superintendent John Holst also participating in those discussions. The public has weighed in as well, and shown deep care for their community while doing so. These are all steps in the process to effective decision-making, and I assure you, you've been heard loud and clear. You have made it clear that this proposal implemented too much change at a time where consistency and stability are qualities that must be prioritized when assigning administrative leaders. Although there are still necessary changes in Dr. Wegner's decision, Sitkans spoke powerfully and passionately and it has made a significant difference. Dr. Wegner, Incoming Interim-Superintendent John Holst, and I have been closely communicating in recent days to ensure that we are authentically listening and acting accordingly. We have also been in close contact with District legal counsel to insure that applicable policies and processes are being followed with diligence. As you can see in the attached memo, Dr. Wegner's updated decision reflects the result of the many thoughtful discussions that were all held in alignment around that which we all desire - the best possible outcomes for our kids.

Thank you to every parent, student, teacher, and concerned community member that reached out. Every person I have spoken to and heard from aims to deliver only the best for our students. Aligning ourselves around this common endeavour will produce results of immeasurable value, and students who will meaningfully change the world.

Sincerely,

Elias Erickson  
Chair, Sitka School Board



Date: May 15, 2020

Dear Members of the Sitka School Board,

For the past week we have received significant feedback regarding proposed changes to the administrative team. I appreciate hearing from people on topics that are important to them, and thank everyone for taking the time to comment.

The feedback consistently addressed a few main themes, with the most prominent dealing with confusion around my quote in the Sitka Sentinel on May 8, 2020 regarding closing the achievement gap. The other was timing both in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the change in superintendents that will occur after this school year.

This is the time of year when staff position changes are considered and made for the following school year. After completing the planning process this week that included discussions with school administrators, and taking into consideration the feedback that was provided on this topic, Incoming Interim Superintendent John Holst and I have finalized our plan regarding administrator placements for the 2020-21 school year. But first, here are answers to some of the questions posed.

An achievement gap exists when different groups of students have significant and persistent disparity in their academic skills. Historically, we have not made significant progress in closing these achievement gaps. We have always had very talented teachers and administrators; however, we have not always had systems in place so that teachers at all grade levels are able to provide the interventions and supports that are needed for all students to achieve.

In recent years we have begun to remedy this situation and are creating district-wide systems that are customized and implemented by school-based teams. A few examples of these system changes include our Multi-Tiered System of Support for students' academic needs, as well as their behavior and well-being, and Social Emotional Learning where students learn how to recognize and manage emotions, establish and maintain relationships, and make responsible decisions. Individually and collectively, these are backed by evidence to be significant factors that contribute to closing achievement gaps, and these practices help all students, not just those impacted by a gap in opportunity or achievement.

Early implementation data shows progress in implementing these systems, although this is not universal in all schools. The proposed re-alignment was designed in part to specifically leverage strengths that each administrator brings to this collective work, and strategically place them in the schools and positions where that strength is needed based on data that we are seeing from these systems. If we are going to see progress in closing our overall achievement gaps then we need to make sure that these systems, which are showing strong initial results, are successfully and fully implemented.

Looking at the whole of the district, I identified the value that the proposed re-alignment could bring to the outcome of these systemic efforts. Incoming Interim Superintendent Holst and I discussed the potential transitions, and we decided the potential positive impact to this work was too important not to have a conversation with administrators about a possible move to another school or position.

The concerns expressed over the timing of wide-scale changes in placement due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ending the school year without closure were compelling. Additionally, our conversations with the school administrators were very informative. Consequently, Incoming Interim Superintendent Holst and I have scaled back our initial administrator placement plan significantly.

Contracts are being offered which would provide the following school administrative structure for next year. The current Principals at Baranof and Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary Schools and Pacific High School will remain the same, as will the current Principal at Blatchley Middle School who will be joined by the current Principal at Sitka High School. The current Assistant Principal at Sitka High School will move into the Principal position, and an Assistant Principal at Sitka High School is yet to be named.

I hope this context helps to answer the main questions posed by those who provided comments. The input made a significant difference in the final plan for school administrator placement and we are still addressing the need to move forward our improvements to practice.

Thank you for all you do for our students and learning community,



Mary Wegner  
Superintendent