



SAN JUAN ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Press Release – November 6, 2008

School Board Opens to Considering Proposals From Community to Replace Crumb Rubber Underlayment with Wood Fiber

At a special school board meeting held Wednesday evening, the Board of Directors opened to the consideration of proposals from the community for the replacement of the crumb rubber underlayment of the “Big Toy” with a wood fiber product. Board Chair Boyd Pratt said, “While there is no conclusive scientific evidence that the crumb rubber is hazardous to the health of our children, I am moved by the high level of concern expressed by many of our community members during the past several meetings.”

Board members have heard community concerns regarding the crumb rubber at several PTA and school board meetings since the beginning of the school year. Further, the board has read scores of emails, letters and articles that have been received. Mr. Pratt, summarizing the thoughts of board members said, “First and foremost the health and safety of our children has been our primary concern. If the community can propose an underlayment solution that provides a similar margin of safety, the board is open to considering such a proposal.”

The Board had also become increasingly concerned about the divisiveness that this issue has caused among some in the parent and school community. Maintaining a positive school climate conducive to learning and positive social interactions is of utmost importance to the board. In order to move forward in a constructive manner, the Board requested that the community form a committee representing broad interests and concerns and select a leader with project management experience. Board member David McCauley, Principal Gary Pfleuger, and Supervisor of Maintenance and Operations Rod Turnbull will represent the school district on the committee.

Board members took action to set parameters for any proposal to be considered. Parameters include:

- ∞ Public notice must be provided that a committee is being formed
- ∞ The project proposal must be comprehensive and identify funding sources, and other required resources such as firm commitments of any volunteer labor, equipment or materials
- ∞ The replacement wood fiber product must provide fall protection at least as good as the documentation of the wood-based alternative presented at the board meeting
- ∞ Comprehensive research of the proposed product must be completed and reported to identify any potential health or safety concerns

- ∞ Any proposal drafted must be thoroughly vetted to the community for comment and input prior to Board consideration
- ∞ A goal of zero cost to the District is to be the basis of planning
- ∞ The project schedule must make shut down of the facility as short a time as possible
- ∞ The District will provide necessary security fencing during the project

The Board looks forward to considering proposals meeting the above the guidelines. In the meantime the "Big Toy" will remain open for use and the crumb rubber will be maintained at required depths to ensure the safety of our students. The Board appreciates the dedicated efforts, past and present, of those involved in creating a safe and enjoyable playground for all children.