



SAN CARLOS SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Mary Jude Doerpinghaus **Interim Superintendent** **San Carlos School District**



Mary Jude Doerpinghaus is serving as the Interim Superintendent for the San Carlos School District during the 2017-18 school year. Ms. Doerpinghaus joined the district in 2008, and has served as the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services since 2013. Prior to that she served SCSD as the Director of Student and Educational Services, the Director of Special Education Services, and the Coordinator of Special Education Services. Before joining SCSD, Ms. Doerpinghaus worked for the Palo Alto Unified School District, sharing an elementary principal position and serving as a Speech-Language Pathologist. She also worked at California State University-Hayward as a clinical supervisor and spent the early years of her career working as a Speech-Language Pathologist in Texas and Ohio. Ms. Doerpinghaus holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Disorders from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, a Masters of

Arts in Speech & Hearing Services from Indiana University, and a Masters in Educational Administration from Santa Clara University.

Why did you decide to go into education?

One of my younger brothers had special needs, and I witnessed on a daily basis the effort my parents made to help him to learn to speak, read, write and accomplish the little things that you and I may take for granted. Unfortunately, the support system that we have today for children with exceptional needs just did not exist at that time. My parents set a great example for me in serving and giving to others as our family was also very active in the local foster care program. I also had the opportunity to volunteer with a local Special Olympics organization during high school years. It's from these early experiences that I knew I wanted to work in an educational capacity, specifically supporting children with special needs. Watching these kids work so hard and then seeing the joy in their eyes when they accomplish even the smallest task gives one an amazing feeling to have been a part of that success. Truthfully, I always felt like I was receiving so much more than I was giving. I determined my area of concentration when I was exposed to classes in communication disorders early in my undergraduate studies, and I was hooked. After working about two decades in the schools, I decided to pursue work in an administrative capacity.

What inspires you in your work as an educator?

Early on I realized the impact we each can have in this world by our interactions and contributions to others. The educational field is simply tops in terms of potential impact -- just think about how many students each of us has touched over the years. We educators challenge thinking, nurture compassion, foster inquiry and creativity, support students and families through challenges, and lay the very rigorous educational foundations needed for our learners to pursue *their* passions and maintain a life-long zest for learning. So what inspires me as an educator? Learning! Ultimately, it is seeing our students' exponential growth and learning, but it also involves our own learning and growth as well.

What do you love about your job?

I love the joy of learning and seeing it on kids' faces. I love the vision of where we are headed as a district -- that our educators focus on academic rigor but also embrace the whole child. We care about their academic success as well as their physical well-being, their social-emotional well-being, and we allocate resources so that children are in a position to reach their true educational potential. As many know, I commute from the East Bay and have done so for many years. San Carlos is a very special place, with very special people. People often ask me, "How do you do that commute?" I tell them, "The people I work with are worth the commute!" We believe in our Strategic Plan. We believe in and support one another. We believe in our students and their right to the highest quality education possible.

What makes you especially proud of SCSD?

Our work to provide quality, rigorous education blended with our focus on the 5 C's and Habits of Mind: Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Citizenship and Student Ownership. In this world, we need every last one of those skills—strong academics and strong 21st Century skills. I am also proud of our collaborative approach toward education. We are all partners in educating our students, and define the term "educator" broadly. Everyone takes responsibility for our children's growth and development, not just the teacher in the classroom-- our office staff, our bus drivers, our custodians, our parents, our administrators, our educational partners, etc. Each are responsible in their commitment to do their part to prepare our children for high school, college and beyond.

What is the best thing about the San Carlos School District?

The teamwork and innovation! The Board, the staff, the students, the community -- we all collaborate. Our board is focused on high quality education first and foremost, but has an appetite for innovation, taking educated risks, and supporting staff to be inquisitive, innovative and creative. We all desire for learning to be exciting and engaging and that sometimes involves trying "new" things. I believe that a love of learning is extremely contagious, and this love can and should be a lifelong passion. I believe we support this in SCSD. In addition, there is so much that can be learned from trying something new and even making mistakes. Adults attempting "new" ideas that are well thought out helps our students to see this modeled. In turn, students may try something new or challenging and can learn from their failures. Our working together to share successes (and mistakes) with one another both within the district, and outside of our community will support our collaborative effort to provide engaging and high quality education for students.

What are your goals in serving as Interim Superintendent?

My goals are to lead and support staff in keeping the momentum of the priorities already outlined in our strategic plan and LCAP. As such, it is my goal to keep the fire burning on initiatives already in process without adding more to everyone's platters. Additionally, it will continue to be critical that I work closely with SCEF, our PTA leaders, Sequoia Healthcare District and other partners as well. Finally, it is my goal to communicate, communicate and communicate more so we all stay abreast of the status of our district work, challenges and successes!

Since my heart has been and always will be with the kids and ensuring they are safe and progressing in their learning, I plan to visit the sites frequently. The knowledge of understanding what's happening at our school sites will help us to refine and improve our practices. I also want to foster the value of "we" among all our staff. We are a collective group, working on a collective vision. It takes every single person in our district to educate our students -- custodians, groundskeepers, secretaries, support providers, para-educators, district staff, teachers, parents, community members, etc. Everybody has their role and it is important to our collective success in achieving our vision for our students that *each* of us fulfills *our* part to the best of our ability. I pledge to do my best serving as the district's Interim Superintendent.

What are your dreams for SCSD students?

Our strategic plan is visionary, my dream is for us to achieve our outlined vision for each and every student. I want for them what I want for my own kids: to be well-rounded, able to achieve *their* highest potential, happy, problem-solving and contributing citizens. I truly believe there's a career and future of happiness for each kid, no matter what their personality or talents. Raising well-educated, inclusive, good human beings is what we want, for our own children and for the children we serve in our schools.

How did you make the transition from speech therapy to administration?

I started my career working in a children's hospital clinic but quickly knew I wanted to be a part of a school system team and as such I worked in schools for the majority of my career. During my time in Texas, I was asked to take on a coordinator role for a county special education collaborative and thoroughly enjoyed this work. After returning to Palo Alto, a respected leader strongly recommended that I look into the administrative certification program offered by Santa Clara University. Upon completion I had the opportunity to share an elementary school principal job in Palo Alto. From there, I served as our SCSD Special Education Coordinator, and the rest is history.

How did you end up in California?

My husband Chris and I were raised in the Midwest and are card carrying cheese-heads (Go Pack Go!), with the headgear to prove it. After stints in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio, we succumbed to a long-standing desire to live in the Bay Area, and moved here in 1992 so that my husband could pursue law school. We moved to Texas in 1999 when my husband had an opportunity to join a start-up company during the dot-com boom, but our hearts were always in California, and so we returned to the Bay Area in 2004 for good.

Do you have a family?

My husband and I celebrated our 33rd anniversary this past summer, and we have two children. Our daughter Allison takes after me in her desire to work with special needs children. She just started the doctoral program in Occupational Therapy at Washington University in St. Louis. Our son Evan is a senior in high school, a huge gamer, and planning to study engineering in college.

What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?

My hobby is scrapbooking--such a wonderful way to capture life's moments. I also enjoy traveling, gardening, going to the movies, and just hanging out with the family (which is often on a volleyball court).