FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Honoring a Legacy: Principal John Patton Announces Retirement from South Whidbey High School

After more than three decades of unwavering dedication to education, South Whidbey High School Principal John Patton announced his formal retirement, effective July 1, 2026. Principal Patton's departure marks the conclusion of an extraordinary chapter for the South Whidbey School District, where he has been a cornerstone of leadership, sportsmanship, and school spirit.

A Lifetime of Dedication to South Whidbey High School

Principal Patton's impact on generations of students, athletes, and staff is immeasurable. Over his distinguished career, he has worn many hats, leaving a lasting legacy in every role:

- **15 Years as SWHS Principal and six as Assistant Principal:** For nearly two decades, Principal Patton has guided South Whidbey High School with steady leadership, excellence, and a deep care for the student body.
- **A Champion for Athletics:** Before taking the helm as principal and assistant principal, he served for many years as the school's Athletic Director, fostering a culture of teamwork, integrity, and Falcon pride.
- **30+ Years in Education:** A career defined by service, mentorship, and a relentless commitment to helping young people succeed.

He successfully guided us through high academic and athletic achievements, enrollment declines, the major transition and expansion from a 9-12 campus to a 6-12 campus, and the massive construction project that impacted the high school staff first.

We will be bringing on an experienced interim principal for the upcoming school year to support us through this transition. I already have a few strong candidates in the queue. More information will be provided in the coming weeks.

In his retirement notice, Principal Patton expressed his deep gratitude to the community that supported him throughout his journey:

"Thank you School Board members, I've always felt well supported by you always, even [in] challenging times. Also, thank you to Dr. Clifford for her support this past year. She has been a great addition/hire and I have no doubt our district will be taken to the next level under her leadership... It was an honor to serve as SWHS Principal, Go Big Blue!"

Celebrating a Great Leader

While Principal Patton thoughtfully acknowledged the bittersweet timing of his announcement, the district and larger community will undoubtedly view his retirement as a well-deserved next step after a lifetime of giving back. As Dr. Clifford noted, "Working alongside him has been a true gift, and his departure will be deeply felt across the entire South Whidbey community."

We thank Principal Patton for his exceptional service, his unmatched dedication, and the incredible legacy of leadership he leaves behind. Please join us in wishing Principal Patton the very best in his well-deserved retirement. Go Big Blue!