FINALLY!! At last our students are back in our schools and there are sounds of learning and laughter ringing in the hallways. I am so grateful for the excellent start to the 2020-2021 school year. If ever the term TEAM applied, it is this year. Reopening could not have been possible without the never ceasing work of our district team, our principals, teachers and staff, and our wonderful parents. It is unusual to begin the year with 70% of our students in school and 30% of them participating in distance learning, but it is working. Students on the first day were masked up and ready to learn, and our teachers were so very glad to have them back! Thank you to everyone for a very smooth start. There will always be start up bumps in the road, and I ask you to grant us grace and patience as we work through the challenges of distance learning, long parent pickup lines, and bus adjustments.

We continue to experience strong growth in SJCSD. First day student count revealed an increase of almost 1000 students. Growing by a school a year necessitates adding student stations every year. On August 31, we opened a new academic building at Liberty Pines Academy and began work on a cafeteria expansion there. At the same time, we are in process of building high school HHH and K-8 MM that will open in August, 2021. Even with these new schools, the needs are not fully met, so we are in process of designing high school III with a goal of opening in August, 2022. High school HHH, located to the east of Mill Creek Academy, will give relief to Nease High School, currently almost 1000 students over capacity. K-8 MM will give relief in the Nocatee area. This new school is located on Pine Island Road at the very south end of Nocatee. High school III will be situated in the Beach Walk community and will relieve Bartram Trail as well as providing further relief to Nease.

As your school board representative, I want you to know that I am always open to hearing from you and addressing concerns that you might have. My email is Beverly.Slough@stjohns.k12.fl.us. Please feel free to contact me at any time. In addition, our school board has opened all our meetings to the public via Webex. You may find the link to join the meetings at [www.stjohns.k12.fl.us](http://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us). Our regular business meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 9 am. In addition, we have regularly scheduled workshop sessions on the first and fourth Tuesdays at 9 am. Public comment is welcomed at all our meetings. If you would prefer to attend in person, you are welcome to do so. The meetings are held at 40 Orange Street, St. Augustine.

I will write periodic articles as things of interest to our parents and staff occur. Thanks to our principals for including them in school communications.

Thank you to each of you for your part in making our schools the excellent places of learning that they are. Without our supportive parents and hardworking staff, we could not provide the opportunities that our students enjoy. I am grateful!

Best regards,

Bev Slough

St. Johns County School Board, District 1