

Influential Women highlights Susan Vickrey, a retired superintendent who transformed schools through innovation.

SAINT GEORGE, UT, UNITED STATES, June 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Distinguished California and Utah Educator Leaves Lasting Legacy in School Reform, Curriculum Innovation, and Collaborative District Leadership

Saint George, Utah — Susan Vickrey is a retired superintendent with a distinguished career in education spanning classroom teaching, school leadership, and district administration. Over several decades, she built a reputation as a transformational leader committed to improving student outcomes, strengthening instructional programs, and fostering collaborative relationships across school systems. Her work continues to influence educational practices and school structures long after her retirement in 2012.



Susan began her career as an elementary school teacher before temporarily stepping away from education to raise her two children. During her early teaching years, she demonstrated strong leadership potential when a principal she worked under faced health challenges. She was asked to step in and assume many administrative responsibilities for most of a school year, an experience that ultimately encouraged her to pursue formal training in school leadership.

Following this pivotal moment, Susan earned her Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Utah. She then became a K-6 principal in Kaysville, Utah, where she gained foundational experience in school management, instructional leadership, and staff development. Her leadership abilities continued to expand as she navigated the demands of school administration while maintaining a strong focus on student achievement and teacher support.

When her husband relocated to California, Susan accepted a principal position at John Gill Elementary in Redwood City. Although she initially faced credentialing barriers in California, she demonstrated persistence by passing the National Teacher's Exam and obtaining a Tier 2 certification from St. Mary's College in Moraga. These efforts allowed her to continue advancing her career in a new state system while maintaining her commitment to educational excellence.

During her tenure in Redwood City, Susan made significant contributions to educational innovation. She designed and opened North Star Academy, a school specifically created for high-achieving students, which continues to operate today based on her original program design. She also launched a Spanish immersion program during the 1993–1994 school year, which evolved into Adelante School, a thriving bilingual education program that remains active and successful.

After spending a year teaching at the University of Utah, Susan returned to California and joined Pacifica School District, where she served for 12 years in multiple leadership roles, including curriculum director, assistant superintendent, and ultimately superintendent. Under her leadership, the district experienced a significant academic transformation, with all schools moving to meet state performance standards. During this time, she also mentored and coached staff members who went on to become school principals, further extending her impact on educational leadership.

Susan concluded her career as assistant superintendent at Sequoia Union High School District, where she served for more than two years overseeing personnel and contract negotiations. In this role, she was responsible for managing complex administrative systems, supporting district operations, and maintaining collaborative relationships with staff and labor representatives.

Throughout her career, Susan emphasizes that education has changed significantly since the 1960s and 1970s and continues to evolve rapidly. She notes that modern education no longer resembles earlier models and stresses that outdated systems should not persist. She strongly advocates for adaptability in the profession, particularly in response to technological advancements and shifting educational demands.

Susan also underscores that teaching is no longer a part-time profession, as it was sometimes viewed in earlier decades. Instead, she explains that it has become a full-time, highly demanding career requiring dedication, patience, and a genuine commitment to working with children and teenagers. She encourages educators to enter the field only if they have a deep appreciation for students and the patience required to support their academic and personal development.

She further emphasizes the importance of enthusiasm in teaching, noting that students are influenced more by what they observe than what they are told. She believes that effective educators must be genuinely passionate about learning and able to inspire curiosity in their students. For Susan, excitement for education is a defining quality of successful teachers and leaders.

In reflecting on her professional values, Susan highlights children's literacy as a central focus throughout her career. She also discusses the importance of employee relations within education administration, particularly in navigating interactions between staff members and teacher unions. She stresses the importance of distinguishing between individual educators and unions themselves, recognizing the complex but essential role unions play in educational systems, especially in California.

Susan explains that she learned early on that meaningful and lasting change in education requires teacher involvement and agreement. Because of this, she built strong and collaborative relationships with unions, which allowed her to resolve personnel matters effectively and implement curricular improvements. She views collaboration and mutual respect as essential components of sustainable educational reform.

Integrity has remained a cornerstone of Susan's leadership throughout her career. Whether working as a teacher, principal, superintendent, or district administrator, she prioritized honesty, consistency, and accountability. She believed that trust was fundamental to effective leadership and ensured that her commitments were always honored in relationships with parents, teachers, administrators, and union representatives.

Above all, Susan attributes her success to her deep care for students. She consistently referred to students as her "little darlings," reflecting her genuine affection and commitment to their success. Her primary motivation throughout her career was ensuring that every student had the opportunity to succeed academically and personally.

Even during 20 years of negotiating union contracts amid California's budget challenges, Susan successfully maintained stability in her districts, never experiencing a strike, walkout, or major labor disruption. Her leadership was later recognized when she was nominated by a former student for inclusion in Who's Who Among American Teachers, a testament to her lasting impact on those she served.

Susan Vickrey retired in 2012, leaving behind a legacy of innovation, strong instructional leadership, and collaborative district governance. Her contributions continue to shape educational programs and leadership practices, benefiting students and educators long after her tenure.

Learn More about Susan Vickrey:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Susan-Vickrey>

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