

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

June 2, 2011

Schools Represented:

Elementary Schools:

Birchwood
Carl Cozier
Columbia
Happy Valley
Lowell
Northern Heights
Roosevelt
Silver Beach
Wade King

Middle Schools:

Fairhaven
Kulshan
Shuksan
Whatcom

High Schools:

Sehome
Squalicum

Co-Chairs: Gennie Clawson and Sharon Stahl

District Staff: Superintendent Greg Baker
Deputy Superintendent Karst Brandsma
Director Tanya Rowe, Communications & Community Relations

Note Taker: Nancy Merry, secretary to the Superintendent

Welcome

Co-Chairs Gennie Clawson and Sharon Stahl extended a welcome to all and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Ms. Stahl asked how many expected to participate next year and encouraged them to invite others from their school to participate. The goal is to have two representatives from each school attend the Parent Advisory meetings.

Sharon Stahl thanked Gennie Clawson for her work with PAC as co-chair over the last two years. Ms. Clawson has taken on the role of Executive Director of the Bellingham Public School Foundation.

The group nominated Rachel Williams to be co-chair with Sharon Stahl. The motion carried.

In planning for next year, the meetings will remain the first Thursday of each month, beginning September 8. Meetings are scheduled from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. in the Board Room.

Deputy Superintendent Karst Brandsma thanked the group for their involvement with the District. Mr. Brandsma started with the District as Interim Deputy Superintendent in October 2009 when Dr. Vedra left. He provided support to Interim Superintendent Sherrie Brown and during the transition to Superintendent Baker. Brandsma will be leaving the District June 16. He remarked that he has worked with several districts over the years and Bellingham is an outstanding community with great support for their schools. As one of his final projects, he is reviewing the student discipline policy manual and how the Rights and Responsibility Handbook will be made available to students and families. The Deputy Superintendent's office would like to include parent feedback on these changes. If you are interested in volunteering to attend a meeting at 9 a.m., Wed, June 8th in Room 217, let Nancy Merry know this week at nancy.merry@bellingshamschools.org or 676-6501.

Debrief on May 16 Event

Rachel Williams reported on the Inter-School Conversation held at Bellingham High School on May 16, facilitated by Faith Stewart. There were approximately 49 in attendance who selected 12 topics to discuss, including:

1. School Supplies
2. Increased academic challenge for middle school HCL students and other capable learners
3. Fundraising
4. Before-school extracurricular activities at the middle school level
5. Destination Imagination—a creative problem-solving enrichment program (www.idodi.org)
6. Student safety and bullying
7. Parent communication and technology
8. Before- and after-school enrichment opportunities for elementary schools
9. Farm-to-School Program
10. Parent involvement in PTA activities
11. Ad hoc high school discussion
12. Anti-bullying

Those who attended completed a survey after the meeting. Ms. Williams reviewed the results. (Copy attached)

Other issues discussed by the group included:

- The possibility of holding similar meetings in the fall and spring of the 2011–12 school year.
- Possibility of setting up a Facebook page to communicate and host ongoing discussion. Suggested a sub-committee meet to discuss and implement some of the suggestions for communicating with schools and establishing a place to share information.
- Name the group “BSD Parent Organizing Group,” “School Community Conversation” or “School House Talk.”
- Establish a virtual “file drawer” for schools to share information.
- Have participants send in topics ahead of time with the ability to add topics the night of the event.
- Have different topics for each school level. Others felt a mixed group was better to allow parents of elementary and middle level students to become familiar with high school issues.
- Invite families of all levels.
- Rotate meeting to different schools.
- Clearly describe the event so families will know what to expect.

As a follow up to one of the discussion sections during the “Inter-school Conversation” night, there will be a workshop about putting together a PTA/PTO website. It will be in the biology building at WWU on Tuesday, June 7. If you would like to attend, contact Rachel Williams to RSVP and get details at racheljowilliams@yahoo.com.

Bellingham Public Schools Foundation

As Executive Director of the Foundation, Gennie Clawson explained she has been working to revitalize the Foundation. She reviewed the history of the Foundation and progress to date.

The Foundation seeks to have long-term sustainability and support on-going, well-rounded and coordinated development efforts. The District receives support through voter-approved levy dollars, PTA/PTO support and the Foundation. The Foundation provides funds for items not covered by state or federal funds, which helps extend District dollars. The Foundation's Board of Directors is working to establish a true partnership with the District and to support the community's interest in schools and cultivate support for new and unmet needs as identified by community members. They will be the fundraising and marketing arm of the District and act as an agent for reducing the achievement gap by identifying and addressing disparities between the schools and ensuring funding is aligned with need.

In establishing a working partnership with the Foundation, the District will host their website, establish a district phone number and provide working space in the Central Services building.

Several methods are planned to raise funds, including a "Run for Education" on October 8 in partnership with Communities In Schools.

There are many ways families and the community can help the Foundation, including making a monetary gift, joining their volunteer corps, staying current, participating in the Run, and spreading the word. Contact the Foundations at supportbpsf@bellingshamschools.org.

A suggestion was made that the Foundation could be a conduit for forwarding information about available grants.

Levy

Greg Baker indicated that the next renewal of operating and technology levies will be in February 2012. A committee will be established.

Update on Staff Leadership and Budget

Leadership Update

Dr. Baker announced the District has hired five new elementary principals—Micah Smith, Cordata; Matt Whitten, Geneva; Nicole Tally, Silver Beach; Thomas Gresham, Columbia; and Kate Baehr, Larrabee. Interviews for high school principal were held the week of May 31 and middle school principal the week of June 6. The District worked to make the hiring process transparent with the interview team including staff, families and administrators. The interview team recommended their top five candidates but did not identify them for specific schools. The positions of Director of Transportation and Director of Educational Technology are currently open.

Budget Update

Dr. Baker gave a budget update based on recent information from the state. One of the largest cuts to K-12 education is a 1.9 percent salary reduction for certificated and classified/non-exempt staff, and 3 percent for administrative staff. The cut represents \$179 million statewide. For our district, this represents approximately \$755,000 less in state funding for staff compensation. Dr. Baker indicated it will take time to work through the implications of these legislative decisions but it is his responsibility to ensure each employee group is treated fairly and equitably. He has met with the

labor association leaders and will work closely with all staff groups. He emphasized that in spite of two years of severe budget cuts, the District remains in a strong position with a sufficient fund balance, due to the passage of the supplemental levy. More information on the budget will be provided on the District website prior to the end of June. (www.bellinghamschools.org)

School Supplies Update

Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe reported work on school supplies is underway through the School Supplies Work Group. Currently, teachers have been asked to not send supply lists home. Additional meetings led by Kenn Robinson are scheduled to finalize recommendations. It was recommended that families and stores need to be informed to prevent them from purchasing supplies that might be provided by the District.

Dr. Baker thanked the group for their feedback and involvement throughout the year.

Announcements

Lynn Tyler King asked members to forward the name of their parent organization chairperson to her as well as vendors used. She will put together a list.

Next Meeting

9:30 a.m. September 8, 2011, District Office Board Room (first meeting of the year)