

Community Linkage Meeting: Connecting with Leaders of Service and Nonprofit Organizations January 26, 2012

Community Linkage attendees included: Dave Harding and Melinda Yost of YMCA; Christina Newell and Lisa Costello of Catholic Community Services; Cheri Kilty and Ann Suloway of YWCA; Lynn Templeton of Boys and Girls Club; Byron Manering of Brigid Collins; Dennis D'Amelio of Communities in Schools; Colleen Haggerty and Bliss Goldstein of Big Brothers/Big Sisters; Anna Williams, Bellingham Bay Rotary Club; Greg Wegrich, Kiwanis Club; Annette Aley, Soroptimist International; John Marshall, Fairhaven Lions; Riannon Bardsley, Northwest Youth Services; Dee West, Opportunity Council; Ron Dickerson, Mark Costello and Rod Goss of Bellingham Central Lions Club; Chelsea Wells and Marty Stauffer, Kiwanis Club.

President Kelly Bashaw called the meeting to order and, on behalf of the School Board, welcomed service and nonprofit organization leaders.

Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed the group and thanked them for their time to discuss the education of our students. Dr. Baker turned the meeting over to Director Ken Gass who explained the purpose of the meeting.

Dr. Gass explained that policy governance guides the Board. The purpose of the meeting was for the Board to gather input from service and non-profit organization representatives about the skill sets and personal characteristics that are desired in our graduates and future community leaders.

Attendees were divided into groups with at least one Board member and one Executive Team member in each group. The Board asked the leaders to explore the following questions:

- What are the ideal citizen characteristics and qualities that your service or nonprofit organization values in our students and graduates? What do you seek in our future community leaders?
- Provide feedback on the draft of [The Bellingham Promise](#).
- How can Bellingham Public Schools strengthen its relationship with your service or nonprofit organization?

Following the small group discussions, Executive Team facilitators shared key points:

- Deputy Superintendent Tom Venable shared that the district is partnering with organizations and working on ways that organizations can participate and support schools.

The group also expressed a need for:

- Increased flexibility in how and where students are served (i.e. instructional services are provided on-site at Northwest Youth Services for runaway youth).
 - Increased use of school facilities to serve as hub/community center would increase use, ownership, and encourage successful passage of future bonds.
 - Focus on citizenship, positive attributes and attitudes commonly associated with success.
 - Exposure to enriching and meaningful experiences that level the playing field.
 - Emphasis on the “widest range of vocational and educational options to support a diversity of life choices.”
- Human Resources Director Nora Klewaida shared that our local youth organizations offer programs that promote citizen characteristics and attributes by developing multiple assets.

Partnering with other organizations who are working toward and exposing students to these assets over time equals success.

The group also expressed a need for:

- Continuing to connect with other organizations who are working toward those ends—safety, physical and emotional support, and positive role models and monitors.
- Providing multiple opportunities for students to experience success. How do we support children in schools who experience adverse experiences? One suggestion is to support good parenting skills. Children’s success in school depends on schools and parents working together and youth organizations reaching out to families.
- Director of Communication and Community Relations Tanya Rowe shared that the Lions Clubs are connected with Dollars for Scholars. The Lions would like to see students with a sense of service to their community and the ability to communicate their goals and future dreams. They would like to see systemwide character and leadership programs that encourage students to focus on service to others, not just academics.

The group also discussed:

- Lions Clubs see inequities from school to school and have helped high schools with budget fundamentals (band uniforms) that should be provided by the district. They get requests to contribute to the guide dog program, Scared Straight, iPads, etc. How can the district channel these funds?
- One concern is over the graduation/dropout rates. One way to participate would be as community advisor in the Culminating Project.
- Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan facilitated the Kiwanis and Rotary clubs. The Kiwanis would like to see students develop a sense of compassion and service to others (consider what others need, not just their own needs).

The group also discussed:

- They would like to see students contribute more than just “showing up” and doing something that is not required or doing the right thing. Another characteristic is leadership—setting goals and following through to achieve them. Incorporating community members into the schools is one way to model this characteristic.
- Kiwanis have already developed character building and academic support programs in the schools such as K Kids, Super Reader, Terrific Kids, and dictionaries to 3rd graders at the elementary level; Choices and Builders Club at the middle school level; and Key Club (service) at the high school level. They recommended having school members be part of Key Club.
- Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Steve Clarke’s Lions and Rotary members talked about the belief statements in the Bellingham Promise.

The group also discussed:

- One characteristic is developing well-rounded students. How do we intentionally get kids involved and reach out to their community? Suggested starting early, in elementary school, and involving adults.
- Connecting students with service organizations that foster a desire in students to be of service to their community. Recognize student efforts for those who want to give back and do something valuable with their lives.
- Include service organizations in the classroom and provide opportunities for students to be of service.

School Board President Kelly Bashaw thanked the group for coming and participating in the linkage and offered tours of the school.