

## Summary of Community Linkage Meeting: February 24, 2011

### Exploring the Impact of Early Childhood Education

Under the [policy governance model](#), the [Bellingham School Board](#) is conducting “linkages” as a way to connect with the community and listen.

The School Board’s second community outreach linkage on Feb. 24. focused on listening to early childhood experts, both district educators and community partners from the state’s Department of Early Learning, Northwest Educational Service District (NWESD) 189, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Western Washington University, Opportunity Council, local childcare providers and learning center staff.

The focus was on early childhood education and its role in helping the Board of Directors meet the desired ends or outcomes for students. These Board-adopted governance policies are:

- [E-1, Strategic Mission](#)
- [E-2, Academic Achievement](#)
- [E-2.1 Academic Competence](#)
- [E-3, Life and Learning Skills](#)
- [E-4, Personal Attributes and Ethics](#)

The essential questions the Board explored with the group were:

- How does early childhood education help Bellingham Public Schools achieve the School Board’s ends/desired outcomes for all students?
- From your early childhood perspective, how might the ends/desired outcomes be refined or adjusted to better match our community’s values and needs?
- What do you recommend as our next step(s) in visioning for preschool/early childhood education?

“We heard from many early childhood experts about the unquestionable value of providing a strong educational foundation for our youngest learners and their parents,” says School Board President Ann Whitmyer. “This was a wonderful opportunity not only for our School Board to link with our early childhood educators, but for our staff and community partners to connect about opportunities to work more closely together in the future.”

Linkages are expected to help the School Board with policy work and the Superintendent with operational work on topics of community interest. The Board plans to hold linkages regularly on a variety of topics related to improving student achievement.

The district will offer [full-time kindergarten](#) at all schools starting next fall and will continue to build a vision for preschool and early childhood education.

Meeting minutes and reflections from the Feb. 24 community linkage are posted at <http://bellingshamschools.org/communityboard-linkage>.