

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) to the Superintendent Meeting
January 21, 2016 – Central Services Board Room
Key Communications

Each school has two representatives on this committee. Attendees introduced themselves and shared their connections with the school district. Dawn Brand and Grace Munson are co-chairs.

Remaining 2015-16 meeting dates: 2/25, 3/24, 4/21, 5/19

Superintendent's Update

- **Promise Kindergarten: PK** starts in February. 64 students are currently enrolled in our early entrance kindergarten at four of our elementary schools.
- **Start/end times:** We're currently working with our high school staff to figure out what schedule would work best with a potential shift in start/end times. We're strongly considering a 4x8 schedule at the high school level to allow for more time for electives for students. There's a lot to like about the eight-period schedule, which includes bringing calmness to a student's schedule and creating more balance and time for homework. No schedule is perfect, and there are some concerns from staff that we're working to solve/process. Once we figure out internally what will work best for our staff, we'll be sharing out details to engage students and families.
- **State legislature is in session:** It's a short-session, and there is big tension around the budget and whether the legislature is going to fully fund education in our state. Many are wondering what will happen to the "levy cliff" (school districts' cap on levies up to 4%) and whether the legislature will allow school districts to continue to collect levies at that rate while they figure out state funding issues. Another big issue at the state level is the constitutionality of charter schools.
- Dr. Baker answered questions from parents, including the role of **homework** and what we're learning about its impact (or lack thereof) in our students' learning. He said some elementary schools are taking steps to re-define homework. Kristi Dominguez, Director of Early Childhood, and Steve Clarke, Assistant Superintendent, talked about how homework can get in the way of a parent/student relationship. They are looking at ways to shift the definition of homework, from so-called "drill and kill" assignments (which create a lot of stress) vs. more engaging/meaningful work outside of class.

Director of School Safety & Emergency Management/District Resource Officer

- Director Jonah Stinson and DRO Chris Brown with Bellingham Police presented our district's comprehensive safety plan, including best practices with structural safety (building/site-specific); community partnerships; incident coordination; district systems and continuity of operations plans (COOP); training and education.
- Jonah and Chris answered questions/comments from parents; topics included training for staff and volunteers, drills, social media, student hotline and police presence at our schools.

Staff Learning

- Director of Early Childhood, Kristi Dominguez and Director of Teaching and Learning, Anda Adams, presented information about our Staff Learning Days (also known as "Purple Fridays"), which mostly occur on the second Friday of the month. Some of these Staff Learning Days include choice classes for professional development. The Department of Teaching and Learning focuses its efforts on the core key strategy in the Bellingham Promise: Great Teaching with Strong Support. Building a calendar which includes these opportunities for staff to learn and collaborate while also maintaining a 180-day calendar for student learning is not easy; many regional districts pull teachers out of the classroom and get substitutes and/or cut back on days students are in school (ex. 175).
- The Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA both provide quality child-care for students after and before school, and both offer opportunities for early release days and Staff Learning Days. Kristi and Anda fielded questions.

Announcements

- Chef Ann Cooper is presenting at Mt. Baker Theatre next week, Jan. 27. The "renegade" lunch lady will be talking about revolutionizing the way we think about school lunches. Everyone is invited to this free event. You can watch [this TEDx talk](#). Cooper's work with Bellingham Public Schools coincides with the building of a new central kitchen.

The meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

Next Meeting: February 25, 2016 Lowell Elementary

