



**Board Summary: Community Linkage Special Meeting  
Options High School  
March 20, 2018**

The Bellingham School Board of Directors and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed audience members, invited guests and district staff to a linkage meeting focusing on the business community and [The Bellingham Promise](#). The following were guiding questions:

- *What resonates in The Bellingham Promise?*
- *What's missing?*
- *What strengths have you observed in our graduates?*
- *How might we better prepare them?*

During the meeting, attendees shared insights and thoughts on the guiding questions. Highlights of comments:

- Language that resonated included *learning is lifelong; all students will be exceptional in their own way; and all children should be loved.*
- References to soft skills (dependability, responsibility, conflict resolution and a good work ethic) should be emphasized.
- Life skills are critical; for example, students should be taught practical skills such as financial literacy and how to live on their own; many do not currently have those skills when they leave high school.
- We should stress the importance of community engagement and encourage students to come back to this community if they leave after high school. Additionally, the district should find ways for young people to build non-competitive relationships throughout the community and county-wide.
- Students need to know what work opportunities exist in the community and that all work has value, even if a position does not require a college degree.
- Our graduates seem inspired and empowered to follow their dreams.

Meeting minutes are attached.



**Official Meeting Minutes: Community Linkage Special Meeting  
Options High School  
March 20, 2018  
7:30 a.m.**

**Linkage Attendees:**

- Community Business Partners/Representatives:
  - Karla Booker, Fred Meyer
  - Jim Campbell, Pioneer Food Service (McDonalds)
  - Lisa Hill, Haggen
  - Shannon Jacoby, Express Employment Professionals
  - Barbara Jenks, Bellingham Cold Storage
  - Cindy Klein, WECU
  - Christin Lunny, Chamber of Commerce
  - Garrett O'Brien, Volanta Corp
  - Guy Occhiogrosso, Chamber of Commerce
  - Rodd Pemble, Sanitary Service Co.
  - Scott Ritchey, SPIE/Technology Access Group
- Directors Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Quenby Peterson,
- Superintendent of Schools Greg Baker
- District Leadership: Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland, Assistant Superintendent Steve Clark, Assistant Superintendent Bob Kuehl; Assistant Superintendent Simone Sangster, Executive Director Ron Cowan, Executive Director Kurt Gazow, Director of Career & Technical Education Jeff Tetrick, Options High School Principal Byron Gerard

**Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions:** School Board President Kelly Bashaw called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. Dr. Baker welcomed attendees and briefly discussed [The Bellingham Promise](#), the district's strategic plan, noting that members of the business community helped with its original development. It is viewed as a living document, and input from stakeholders is critical when the board considers periodic updates and refinements to the document. Linkage meetings are one way the board gathers that input.

Following Dr. Baker's comments, the invited guests, board members and district staff introduced themselves and described their connections to the school district.

**Meeting Purpose – Explanation of Community/Board Linkage:**

Ms. Peterson said the school board views linkage meetings as an opportunity to listen and connect with the community and to strengthen connections with stakeholders. This morning's

discussion, she said, will focus on The Bellingham Promise and the school district's performance as viewed through the lens of local business leaders.

### **Large Group Discussion with School Board:**

Facilitator Steve Clarke asked the group to briefly review The Promise. He then led a discussion based on the following guiding questions. Summary of comments:

#### 1) *What resonates in The Bellingham Promise?*

- The message that all kids matter is implicit within The Promise.
- Language that resonates:
  - The statement about *lifelong learning* and preparing kids for continuous learning after high school graduation.
  - *All students will be exceptional in their own way.*
  - *All children should be loved.* This is very powerful. If we love our children, they will go into the community and love others. It's a great statement. (In response, Mr. Benjamin noted that while attending board conferences and other events throughout the state, the directors are often questioned about this phrase. People are initially skeptical, but ultimately impressed that this phrase is included in the document.)

#### 2) *What's missing?*

- Soft Skills:
  - We have a responsibility to ensure that students understand that education is more than reading, writing and math; soft skills are also critically important. We cannot run our businesses, for example, if employees are not dependable and responsible.
  - Kids are taking their phones into classrooms and the minute they are bored, they are looking at their phones. This is a real detriment to developing a good work ethic. Employees need to pay attention, even if they are bored.
  - Question: In view of these comments, should we consider reordering the outcomes? (From *Knowledge/Character/Action* to *Character/Knowledge/Action*)
- Life Skills:
  - Among the general population, it is important to provide young people with practical skills for living in the real world. Consider offering a "*Living on your Own*" class. It would include lessons on how to fill out a job application and go through the interview process. Kids struggle with that.
  - Home economics or basic financial literacy, such as how to balance a checkbook, are no longer being taught. We have an entire generation that has no understanding of the importance of saving money and planning for retirement. If topics such as these are not taught in high school, it may never happen. (In response, Mr. Tetrick noted that with the introduction of the 4x8 schedule, more opportunities are opening up for students. One example is the new Driver's Ed/Traffic Safety course to be offered in high schools beginning in the 2018-19 school year. That course will include some finance-related topics.)
  - Civics should be re-introduced to the classroom, along with courses that teach the functions of running a business.

- Other comments:
  - Students need to know what work opportunities exist in the community. Many entry-level positions are available in companies willing to train. Kids seem unaware of the options that exist for them.
  - The Bellingham Promise has no specific reference to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs, though there are references to “innovators and scientists.” The concept of STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Arts and Math) is preferable. Twenty or thirty years from now, we will see that art and innovation and technology have so much in common.
  - The importance of a professional relationship among staff and administrators is missing. Do teachers speak respectfully to each other and to all staff and students? That is a model that students respond to. This should rise to the level of district policy. It should be more explicit.
  - The language in The Promise seems geared toward the work force of today. If you look at the transformation taking place in all levels of society, we can see that people are inventing the future. I think that piece is missing. I see a reference to innovators and creators, but to me that is underemphasized. Tomorrow’s workforce will need a completely different set of skills. (Artificial intelligence, for example, will continue to grow in a significant way.) I’d like to see that reflected in our aspirations.
  - I recommend including a reference to “engagement within the community.” How do we encourage students to come back to this community if they leave after high school so they will contribute economically and build the community for the next generation? This might be more easily accomplished if they are engaged with the community at an early age.
  - Recommend adding the word “*hope*”.

3) *What strengths have you observed about our graduates and how might we better prepare them?*

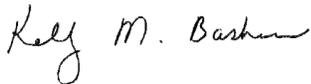
- They seem inspired and feel empowered to follow a dream. That is an important contribution from a public school perspective.
- I want them to understand diplomacy and the intricacies of conflict resolution. I want them to be inspired to be creators and to know they have opportunities within any organization. People need to see that it is a really diverse population that makes a community work.
- As one who sees employees who do not live in the community they work in, I wonder if there are ways to build relationships throughout the community and county-wide? For example, can we encourage interactive, non-competitive activities? Certainly there are many benefits for students to participate in sports, but if they always see those who live in other communities as competitors, we lose opportunities to build relationships.
- I’ve observed a breakdown of school spirit. How do you build community within the schools as well?

- The kids that are going on to college are very well equipped; they are ready for it. For those taking that track, the school district does a nice job preparing them and lives up to the mission outlined in the Promise. Students seem confident that they will be successful. Are there ways to better prepare and build more confidence in those students who are not on that track? We need more emphasis on the value of different types of work. I read that roughly two-thirds of available jobs require a college degree, but only one-third of kids go on to college. We need to get the message across that it's okay to drive a truck, work as a plumber, or be a cashier at McDonalds. Are we really serving the two-thirds of students that are not going to college and will not get the education for the high paying technical jobs that require a degree? If they don't go to college, what are they preparing for?

At the close of the formal meeting, Ms. Peterson thanked attendees for participating, and Dr. Baker summarized key talking points. Mr. Gerard conducted a tour of the new school for some of the attendees.

Adjournment: 8:30 a.m.

**Approved:**



Kelly Bashaw, School Board President

**Attest:**



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

*Minutes approved: Apr. 25, 2018*