



**Board Summary: Community Linkage Special Meeting
Wade King Elementary School
April 25, 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 International Baccalaureate (IB) program and [The Bellingham Promise](#). The following were guiding questions:

- *What resonates in The Bellingham Promise?*
- *What's missing?*
- *How do you see your experiences in IB connected to the outcomes of The Bellingham Promise?*
- *What are some of your reflections about the strengths/uniqueness of IB?*
- *How could Bellingham Public Schools strengthen/develop the IB program?*

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

- Phrases such as *all children should be loved* and *the whole child is important* resonated with many.
- Attendees expressed appreciation for the ways in which the district supports its students and observed that teachers demonstrate that they care for all students and families.
- It is evident that different learning aptitudes and styles are embraced. A lot of differences in learning styles are built into the IB curriculum.
- Harder and more differentiated world language classes would be welcomed.
- IB allows students to learn to become problem solvers. Inquiry-based classrooms are emphasized from kindergarten on.
- IB fosters many good community connections.
- IB teachers do a good job modeling risk taking and they are open to being lifelong learners.
- It would be great if IB could be offered to every student, or at the very least, continue through the middle school years.
- IB supports “messy learning,” an approach that is perhaps easier in elementary rather than middle school.

Meeting minutes are attached.



**Official Meeting Minutes: Community Linkage Special Meeting
Wade King Elementary School
April 25, 2018
6-7 p.m.**

Linkage Attendees:

- Families/Students/Community Members:
 - **Kati & Rob Berreth & Owen, Lilli, Emma & Judson**
 - **Curran Cummings**
 - **Esmeralda Ortiz & Merly**
 - **Pam Kuntz & Jack**
 - **Sofia Medina**
- Directors **Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Quenby Peterson**
- Superintendent of Schools **Greg Baker**
- District Leadership and Staff: Deputy Superintendent **Mike Copland**, Executive Director **Rob McElroy**; Assistant Superintendent **Bob Kuehl**; Assistant Superintendent **Simone Sangster**, Executive Director **Ron Cowan**, Executive Director **Kurt Gazow**, Elementary School Principals: **Micah Smith** (Alderwood); **Eric Paige** (Carl Cozier); **Stephanie Johnson** (Wade King); **Lynn Heimsoth** (Sunnyland); **Aaron Darragh** (Columbia); **Pam Pottle** (Northern Heights); Wade King Dean of Students **Paul Gutzler**; Interpreter **Erika Quintanilla**; Sunnyland Counselor **Kari Miller**; Birchwood IB Coordinator **Heather Griffin**; Carl Cozier IB Coordinator **Monica Savory**;

Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions: School Board President Kelly Bashaw called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. Dr. Baker welcomed attendees and invited all to introduce themselves and describe their connections to the school district. He also provided some history on the IB program and plans for its expansion within the district. Currently the district has five IB elementary schools: Alderwood, Birchwood, Carl Cozier, Northern Heights, and Wade King. Other elementary schools are gearing up to begin the application process.

Meeting Purpose – Explanation of Community Linkages: Ms. Diaz Hackler explained the purpose of linkage meetings, noting they are one way for the school board to hear from the community. She described [The Bellingham Promise](#), the district's strategic plan, and said that input from stakeholders at meetings such as this one helps the board when it works periodically on updating and revising the Promise.

Large Group Discussion with School Board: For discussion purposes, attendees divided into two groups. Dr. Copland facilitated one group; Rob McElroy facilitated the others. Following is a summary of responses to the guiding questions:

- **What resonates in The Bellingham Promise:**
 - *All children should be loved.*
 - *The whole child is important.*
 - *All children will be exceptional in their own way.*
 - *The commitment to global thinkers.*
 - *Every child can learn at high levels.*

- **What is missing?**
 - {Parent response}: The document is easy to read and follow. I tried to find problems within it, but I couldn't.
 - {Parent response}: I wonder if [the outcomes] can be pulled off in all schools, given the different structures in schools?

- **How do you see your experiences in IB connected to the outcomes of The Bellingham Promise?**
 - {Student response}: It is cool how our schools are focused on creating a person that will be helpful, and how we will achieve a lot when we work together to help in the community.
 - {Parent response}: I love this school system because of the support the students receive. The teachers care for students and families, even those for whom English is not the primary language.
 - {Parent response}: There is the *whole child* emphasis, and different learning aptitudes and styles are embraced. A lot of differences in learning styles are built into the curriculum.

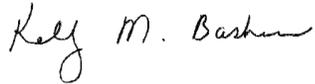
- **What are some of your reflections about the strengths/uniqueness of IB?**
 - {Student response}: We are learning to be problem solvers, to apply what we learned to specific problems, and not to just spit out information.
 - {Parent response}: Assignments involve research, rather than just hearing lectures from the classroom teacher.
 - {Parent response}: From kindergarten on, our children were in globally focused, inquiry-based classrooms. These approaches were not just inferred; they came through clearly.
 - {Parent response}: The concept of thinking through inquiry, and helping our kids to grow – all of our children experienced that. I love those concepts, and the fact they are imbedded in the curriculum.
 - {Staff response}: The cumulative project in fifth grade ended up reflecting positively on the school and on the many different elements of IB. Kids are tackling issues such as domestic violence, homelessness, animal abuse. They feel empowered to take action by raising funds or raising awareness.
 - {Parent response}: The program fosters many good community connections.

- {Parent and student responses}: World language offerings are very much appreciated.
 - {Parent response}: All the kids [in our family] have had phenomenal experiences, but there has been a consistency, even when they had different teachers. BPS has great teachers all around. There has not been one case where we have said, ‘we can’t wait til next year.’
 - {Student response}: My IB experience helped me become more confident. It has helped my classmates become less shy and better able to express themselves.
 - {Parent response}: IB supports flexibility and “messy learning.” This approach is perhaps easier in elementary schools than in middle schools.
 - {Parent response}: In IB schools, teachers “jump in.” They model risk-taking. Teachers seem more open, as well, to be learners.
 - {Parent response}: Students are encouraged to be leaders, collaborators and team players. Kids are leading the learning. Kids follow *their* passions and “own” their learning.
 - {Parent response}: IB focuses on students’ passion and interests versus forced learning; it focuses on fun versus boring classroom environments.
- **How could Bellingham Public Schools strengthen/develop the IB program?**
 - {Student response}: Harder, more differentiated Spanish classes.
 - {Student response}: It was fun to learn Mandarin. It brought me a different world that I didn’t know about. But it could have been harder and it ended in the fifth grade. It would have been cool if we could have continued.
 - {Student response}: Longer classes.
 - {Student response}: I have been challenged {now that I am in middle school} but in a different way. It would have been great to continue what we had been doing in the IB program.
 - {Parent response}: It would be good to see the IB through-lines continue in middle school; for example, focus on character development and more inquiry-based learning. The middle school experience is more segmented; there is less of a trans-disciplinary approach. (However, there is a shift noted in math with the Agile Mind curriculum, which seems to align with the inquiry-based approach.)
 - {Staff response}: Although our IB students have had different teachers, there has been consistency. Our district has supported common planning times and opportunities to collaborate. I hope that continues and grows.
 - {Student response}: Bring more world language to the IB schools.
 - {Staff response}: I believe IB can benefit every student but maybe not every teacher.
 - {Parent response}: Bring the program throughout the district, for every student.
 - {Parent response}: How much do parents know about what IB means? There is room for improvement here.

At the close of the formal meeting, Dr. Baker and Mr. McElroy summarized key talking points and Ms. Diaz Hackler thanked attendees for their participation. She encouraged those in the group to use the school board's Listening Post if they would like to continue to communicate directly with the board. Dr. Baker and Mr. McElroy summarized key talking points.

Adjournment: 7 p.m.

Approved:



Kelly Bashaw, School Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: May 23, 2018