Family Feedback Remote Learning, October 2020

Bellingham Public Schools sent a request to families to gather feedback about remote learning on Oct. 7. Families were reminded to give input in a message on Oct. 15 with the form closing on Oct. 16. The form was also shared via social media channels. A total of 2,163 people gave their feedback.

Respondents:

Of the respondents, 1,828 identified as parents/guardians, 226 identified as students and 35 identified as a community member or neighbor.

To encourage participation from our families whose first language may not be English, 74 responses were from staff who assisted in filling out the form. Responses were received from families whose home language was Spanish (18), Punjabi (19), Russian (14) and Ukrainian (6).

The top five responding schools were Sehome High (267), Bellingham High (207), Squalicum High (163), Geneva Elementary (116) and Silver Beach Elementary (115). The lowest responding schools were Cordata Elementary (47), Bellingham Family Partnership Program (28), Alderwood Elementary (27), Options High (26) and Community Transitions (3).

Questions:

**Bellingham Public Schools has started the school year fully remote, which of the following best describe your child’s experience this year so far?**

All 2,163 respondents answered this question. The highest number of respondents selected “as expected” with 701 responses, next was “better than expected” with 611 responses, followed by “worse than expected” with 364 responses.
Why would you describe your experience that way?

1,856 people responded to this question.

Common themes:

- Appreciation for interactive and live learning
- Better organized and engaging than the spring
- Challenges keeping track of assignments and different links for working parents

Representative comments:

“*My children have been engaged, feel like they are making connections, and their teachers have been amazing!*”

“I was probably most nervous about the amount of screen time. The program you all have created is interactive, adding community to my child’s life, has started to progress his academic experience forward (rather than just treading water), and he is getting enough breaks from the screen. The regular conferences with his teacher are a fantastic addition, and really make the school from home more possible. I feel more empowered and supported as a parent this time around.”

“My 7 year old first grader has no device and no teacher, she wants nothing to do with packets and having anyone in our house teaching, time is the biggest issue both my husband and I work full time.”

Please rate your satisfaction with the following during the COVID-19 school closures:

Overall, respondents selected that they are satisfied with all of the following, “ability to contact child’s school or teacher,” “remote learning opportunities,” “technology or device support,” “school meals,” and “access to school supplies and materials for lessons.” The category with the
closest responses was “remote learning opportunities” with nearly 15 percent of respondents reporting they were “dissatisfied.”

How comfortable are you having your child return to school in the near future?

A total of 2,144 people responded to this question. The highest answers were “extremely comfortable” and “comfortable” both with 497 responses. These were followed by “extremely
uncomfortable” with 444 responses and “uncomfortable” with 441. A total of 265 respondents selected “neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.”

As you think about the learning needs of your student and the timeline for returning to school in person, how urgent are you feeling about speeding up that return?

A total of 2,143 people answered this question with the highest number selecting “not at all urgent” with 800 responses. Followed by “moderately urgent” (469), “somewhat urgent” (441) and “extremely urgent” (433).

In Stage 2 of our Reconnect Plan, we are focused on helping students return to in-person instruction who are struggling most with remote learning. Do one of the following apply to you or your family?
396 people answered this question with 205 selecting “Special Education Services.” followed by “other” with 137 responses and “home language is not English” with 46 responses.

Other responses included that their student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), they are single or full-time working parents, concerns about child falling behind academically, concerns about lack of socialization and screen time.

**When thinking about your child returning to school, rate your level of concern:**

Of the 2,128 responses for this question, 932 respondents selected a high level of concern for “potential challenges for students to maintain social distancing,” followed by “adequate safety measures for cleaning and personal protective equipment” with 691 responses and “risk of schools closing again if health conditions change” with 690 responses.

For low concern respondents selected “transportation challenges for my family,” as their lowest concern with 1,753 responses, followed by “access to teachers and staff for academic support” with 1,453 responses and “my child or someone at home is high-risk for serious health problems,” with 1,247 responses.
Anything else we should know?

1,085 people responded to this question.

A variety of topics were shared including:

- Concerns about going back to school (how will students’ distance, wear masks, air filtration, other safety protocols, etc.)
- Expressions of gratitude
- Concerns about remote learning not working well for their child and also appreciation for remote learning working well for their child
- Comments about children’s mental health/social emotional health

Representative comments:

“Given the circumstances, I’ve been very happy with Bellingham Schools in taking the health and education of my son very seriously. I appreciate all the extra work everyone has had to do in order to help our kids learn.”

“I think it would be very unsafe to go back to school. The virus is just going to spread more.”

“As other schools have opened I think it’s clear it can be done and would prefer opening up sooner rather than later.”

“My high school student is showing signs of mental health issues I never would have imagined. I don’t feel very comfortable with a return to school because of COVID risks, but I am less comfortable with continued isolation and screens as their primary access point to human interaction.”