



Bellingham
Public Schools

...where *every* student learns

Bellingham School District New Superintendent
Dr. Greg Baker's Plan of Entry:

*“Listening and Learning to Strengthen
Relationships for Student Success”*

Last Updated: July 14, 2010

Plan of Entry

Introduction

The superintendent is responsible for fulfilling the mission of our district and schools – improving student learning. This role provides essential leadership to obtain and develop quality staff, secure and manage funds and facilities, and encourage and maintain communication between the schools and the public. The purpose of this entry plan is to provide a structure to support Dr. Greg Baker’s transition as superintendent for Bellingham Public Schools as he listens to students, staff, families and the greater Bellingham community to:

- Build public trust and strengthen engagement in our schools;
- Update the needs, objectives and work priorities of the school district as outlined in the district’s existing strategic plan to prepare all students for successful futures; and
- Identify the district’s strengths, improvement opportunities and challenges.

The transition activities outlined in this plan are designed to help Dr. Baker accelerate the changeover by gathering critical information quickly about the needs of the children, staff and the school system and community; establish a strong community presence early; assess the district’s strengths, challenges and opportunities for improvement; identify critical issues; correct weaknesses while honoring the work of the past; and create a community network of contacts and resources that will help advance the school system.

Special consideration has been given to include a diversity of stakeholders in this plan and voices that may not be heard through traditional forms of communication.

The stakeholders mentioned in this plan are in no way a comprehensive list of all community organizations. If a district stakeholder group was inadvertently omitted, please contact the Superintendent’s office at 676-6501. We want to be inclusive.

It should be noted that the work of entry occurs simultaneously with the responsibility of leading and operating the district.

This entry plan has three distinct phases:

- Phase I: Pre-Entry
 - Spring 2010
- Phase II: Entry
 - July 1 – December 31, 2010
- Phase III: Development of Summary Report and Strategic Plan Updates
 - Fall 2010 – Winter 2011

Transition Goals

1. Foster a smooth and successful transition of leadership.
2. Enact a structure for the superintendent to get to know all of the people involved in running the district, listen broadly and learn comprehensively about Bellingham Public Schools.
3. Ensure multiple perspectives and voices are heard and build strong relationships with stakeholder groups, including a foundation for connection and communication with parents.
4. Structure the transition to focus on building relationships in support of student achievement.
5. Learn the history and norms of the district, and their effect on how the organization functions now and may function in the future.
6. Review organizational structure, climate and key work priorities to ensure alignment of resources, efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of all students.
7. Determine concerns/issues in regard to improving children's performance that need to be clearly examined and addressed.
8. Set clear expectations for the superintendent and others.
9. Use data and feedback gathered to update the district's strategic plan.
10. Formulate priorities and a plan to accomplish them.

Outcomes

The expected results of implementing this entry plan shall include:

- A summary report of observations and key findings shared in 2011; and
- Updates to the district's Target Objectives, Measures of Progress and Work Priorities in the existing District Strategic Plan.

Structure

The superintendent will engage in a purposeful effort to listen to the community and learn about Bellingham Public Schools. The following activities will be core components of the entry plan:

- School visits and meetings with school staff.
- Meetings, interviews and Listening Posts.
- Cultivation of a working relationship with the district's five labor associations and their leaders.
- Cultivation of relationships with a diversity of district families, business and community leaders.
- Cultivation of a working relationship with the School Board of Directors.
- Data analysis and document review.
- Communication with local media for reporting to the public.

A. First Day of School Welcome Activities, School and Classroom Visits

On the first day of school, the superintendent will invite a diverse group of community leaders and elected officials to join in welcoming students at several schools.

Operating with the belief that spending time in schools and classrooms provides the foundation for learning about the district as well as relationship building, the superintendent will have visited every school by the end of September.

Dr. Baker will also set a goal to spend one half day or full day in each school prior to winter break in December. The principal and staff will create the agenda for the superintendent's day to allow Dr. Baker to experience their school as a learner and to provide the opportunity to visit every classroom to get to know staff and students. By December 17, 2010, the superintendent will have visited every classroom in the district.

B. Meetings and Interviews

The superintendent will conduct a series of meetings and key informational interviews to hear from members of the community, policymakers and other stakeholders. During these meetings or interviews, Dr. Baker will listen for information from stakeholders about:

- *What should he know about our Bellingham community?*
- *What should he know about Bellingham schools?*
- *What is working well and should be sustained?*
- *What needs attention and could be improved?*

Meetings or informational interviews will include, but are not limited to the following:

Educational Stakeholders

Students

- Superintendent's Student Advisory Council
- Student Alto and MECha Latino Leaders
- Student Leadership classes
- Recent graduates
- High school drop outs

Parents

- Parent Advisory Council to the Superintendent, PTA leaders, Booster Club Leaders
- GRADS program advisory group
- Title I School Improvement Parent Advisory Group
- English Language Learner (ELL) parent groups
- Home visits, including Sterling Meadows community conference center
- Private and home school connections

Staff

Conduct meetings/interviews with administrators and staff with additional questions for organizational analysis:

What do we need to start, stop and continue doing?

What support is needed for success?

- School classified and certificated staff, including start-of-school meetings with secretaries and departmental in-services with food services, maintenance and transportation, and during classified professional development on state waiver days
- Collective bargaining/labor management groups: Bellingham Administrators' Organization (BAO), Bellingham Association of School Employees (BASE), Bellingham Education Association (BEA), Service Employees International Union Local 925 (SEIU) and Teamsters Local Union 231
- Central office staff
- Principals and Superintendent's Leadership Team

Educational Partners

- Higher education officials from Western Washington University and Woodring College of Education, Northwest Indian College, Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Technical College
- Whatcom County Superintendent's Group and local superintendents, including Northwest Educational Service District (ESD) 189
- Lummi Nation K-12 schools director and tribal leaders
- Career and Technical Education Advisory Group
- Homeport and Discovery, alternative learning programs
- Early childhood and Headstart
- Whatcom County Retired Educators Association

Community Stakeholders

Local Government

- Mayor, County Executive and other elected officials
- Chiefs of public safety organizations and local emergency response leaders
- Legislative contacts and League of Education Voters
- Bellingham Public Library director

Business

- Bellingham Chamber of Commerce, Northwest Economic Development Council and technology Alliance Group
- Northwest Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Whatcom County Realtors Association
- Farm to School Advisory Group and School Garden Collective

- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) leaders from Alcoa, ConocoPhillips, BP Cherry Point, SPIE
- PeaceHealth Hospital and local health/mental health professionals

Nonprofit and Local Partners

- Bellingham Public School Foundation, Dollars for Scholars and Whatcom Community Foundation
- Whatcom Hispanic Organization, Whatcom County Human Rights Task Force, community chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Latino/a Educational Achievement Project (LEAP)
- F.A.C.E.S. Northwest Board of Directors (runs a summer school program for children with autism), Arc of Whatcom County (includes Parent Coalition and Down Syndrome Outreach Groups), Special Olympics Washington, Max Higbee Center and Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
- Bellingham service organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions Club, Operation School Bell, Soroptimists, City Club (Will attend a meeting or be a guest speaker, and will join a local service organization after getting acquainted with the community.)
- Nonprofit community organizations that support district families such as Opportunity Council, Northwest Youth Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Whatcom County, Boys & Girls Club, Communities in Schools, Brigid Collins, YMCA, YWCA, Catholic Community Services, Whatcom Volunteer Center
- Arts and music leaders such as representatives from Whatcom Museum of History & Arts, Children’s Museum, Allied Arts, Mayor’s Bellingham Arts Commission, Whatcom Symphony, Northsound Youth Symphony, Mount Baker Theatre, Bellingham Children’s Theatre and Theatre Guild
- Religious leaders
- Bellingham Neighborhood Association leaders/Mayor’s Neighborhood Advisory Commission (MNAC)

C. Fitness Fridays, Listening Posts and Customer Satisfaction

Dr. Baker will share his passion for running and wellness by encouraging students, staff, parents and community members to join him for a before-school morning jog through local neighborhoods on “Fitness Fridays” beginning Sept. 17, 2010 through Oct. 29, 2010. Runners and walkers will have an opportunity to visit afterwards with the superintendent over a healthy morning snack at a neighborhood school.

The superintendent will also convene some Listening Posts this fall for interested community members to have “Coffee and Conversation with the Superintendent.” The purpose of the Listening Posts will be to provide an opportunity for parents, community members, students, staff and other interested parties who have not been part of other interviews to provide input, ideas and their perspective about Bellingham Public Schools to the superintendent.

In addition, the district will reassess community perceptions and priorities in summer 2010 by conducting a Customer Awareness and Satisfaction Survey.

D. Data Analysis and Document Review

The superintendent, working with the Central Administrative Team and Leadership Team, will conduct an analysis of performance indicators and examine a wide variety of data sources, particularly student achievement data, to discern trends, patterns, areas of accomplishment and opportunities for improvement. Student outcomes on standardized tests, value-added data, dropout and graduation rates, staff and student attendance rates, truancy and discipline data, Advanced Placement (AP) course enrollment and passing rates, SAT and ACT scores, college-bound rates, and other relevant indicators will be disaggregated by program, ethnicity and geography, and carefully studied.

Dr. Baker will review all critical documents, the district's organizational chart, employee handbooks, policy and procedure manuals, district and school strategic plans, and all commissioned studies by outside agencies.

Additionally, operating and capital improvement budgets will be closely assessed from the lens of effectiveness and efficiency, along with their alignment to the educational goals of the district and the needs of the children we serve. The current budget development process will be evaluated, as well as how the district is meeting its goals and the service expectations of our community.

Written reports and presentations about Bellingham's use of resources, personnel, organization, leadership and/or academic outcomes will be carefully studied.

E. Board Relations

Dr. Baker will meet individually with the School Board of Directors to develop a strong working relationship. He will also meet with the School Board in a retreat format in summer 2010 for the purposes of Board professional development, visioning and planning.

F. Media Relations: Communicating with and through the media to ensure public understanding of, and involvement in, the mission of the schools

The superintendent will engage local media to introduce himself and to deepen his understanding of issues important to the Bellingham community.

The superintendent will seek to better understand both the internal and external communications opportunities in Bellingham.

Conclusion

This Plan of Entry will afford the superintendent the opportunity to listen, observe and learn from a variety of community members while gaining an understanding of the local context of the city and the school system. The entry plan will serve to help the superintendent begin to formulate ideas and frame strategies to improve our school system so that we increase student achievement for all students while simultaneously closing the achievement gap and ensuring success for every child.

The entry plan culminates with the development and presentation of a Summary Report in 2011, outlining the superintendent's findings, observations and next steps.

Many of the ideas from this plan came from others, in particular: *“Entry: How to Begin a Leadership Position Successfully,”* by Barry Jentz and Joan Wofford; *“Entry: The Hiring, Start Up and Supervision of Administrators,”* by Barry Jentz, Dan Sheever, Jr., Stephen Fisher, Meredith Howe Jones, Paul Kelleher, and Joan Wofford; *“So Now You’re the Superintendent!”* by John Eller and Howard Carlson; and Dr. Alan Ingram’s *Superintendent’s Plan of Entry for Springfield (Mass.) Public Schools.*