

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Middle School Conferences Committee December 1, 2011

AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Purpose of Our Work
3. Norms
4. Reading and Dialogue
5. Homework
 - a. Chapter 9 “Scaling Up”
 - b. Participation in committee field trip to Shuksan Middle School

NOTES

Committee Members Present:

Ann Buswell
Chuck DeVange
Criss Forslund
Trina Hall
Jeannie Hayden
Ben Hayes
Andrea Hood

Laurie Hoyt
Michelle Kuss-Cybula
Teri McIntyre
Josh Meese
Tina Perona
Kenn Robinson
Tanya Rowe

Sara Strommer
Karen VandeBossche
Tom Venable
Cat Wallace
Ronni Weston
Peggy Zehnder

Introductions

Members introduced themselves, including their affiliation with the district, their motivation to serve on this committee, and their hopes for the process.

Overview

Tom provided an overview of today’s agenda, as well as the larger picture of the agenda plans for the three sessions.

Copies were handed out of the book, [Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships](#) which will be used as a basis for learning and study of family engagement. Committee members will use the book throughout their participation in the committee.

Committee activities will include three meeting sessions, with homework in between each.

Day One – Research –Best Practice – Introductions, Purpose, Definition of Task, Beginning research

Homework, in preparation for second meeting

- Readings – Read Chapter 9 of [Beyond the Bake Sale](#)
- Participating in Turning to One Another at SMS

Day Two – Examining our current reality, including analysis of survey results as a collection of evidence

Homework, in preparation for third meeting

- Readings – Chapters 10 & 11 of Beyond the Bake Sale

Day Three –Defining the Ideal - engage in teams within the context of One Schoolhouse – building contextual models in terms of how we engage families – and what structures would be included in order to support - discuss pro's and con's of each model, from different perspectives – refine, define.

Questions at this point?

Will committee members get a copy of the survey results? Yes, at the 2nd meeting this information will be shared and analyzed as part of the process.

Are there requirements for communicating with families as per legislative parameters? Yes, this will be included in our readings and discussions.

What is the history of the Student Led Conferences ... how'd we get here? Peggy Zehnder responded by sharing that the SLC project was initiated in 1994 when KMS opened and it began as a pilot at KMS for one year. It has been a building based project with review and monitoring at the school levels.

Is the model the same across the schools? The response by committee members is no, while student led conferences take place across the middle schools, the model is different in each school and in some places different across the classrooms in the same school.

Review of Purpose/Charter

Some points regarding the task of the group:

Broadening our vision and perspective of how we engage and partner with families.

Our tasks/outcomes – Members of the Bellingham School District, BEA, and community members working together to:

- Develop a model of family engagement that supports increased student achievement through improved communication and reporting of progress and performance across our four middle schools.
- Consider possible changes in scheduling (similar to the elementary early release schedule) that provides middle school staff with increased opportunities for collaboration and communication with families about their child's learning throughout the year.
- Submit committee recommendations to Dr. Baker.
- Survey BEA members on parts of the models recommended to Dr. Baker for additional feedback.
- The superintendent determines the final model using recommendations and feedback gathered from the committee and BEA members.

Please note: this committee is not charged with the elimination of Student Led Conferences.

Norms were reviewed and discussed.

- Notes will be posted following each meeting
- Homework will be completed prior to the arrival at the next meeting

Researching Best Practice – Reading & Discussion regarding Parent-School Partnerships

Participants broke into groups in order to read and discuss the first 5 chapters of Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships.

Groups Shared out Key Points from the chapters assigned, followed by discussion and clarification.

Ch 1

Key Ideas:

- School, community, family partnerships matter for student academic success
- Four ways that family/school partnerships could look –
 - Partnership school
 - Open-Door-School
 - Come if we call school
 - The fortress school

Discussion

- If the partnership school is the goal, what would that mean for conferencing? If you looked at all the things on the checklist for the Partnership school – if all those things were in place then conferences would be essentially obsolete because conversations, dialogue, involvement are constant
 - Raises the questions: Is the Partnership School a reality for public schools? How do perspectives play into it? Is each school really, truly one type or the other? The parents, students, circumstance play into the perspective.
 - Other questions: do all students need a conference? In what form? What is the most purposeful? Is it one size fits all for every student?

Ch 3

Key Ideas

- Are you really open to being a partnership school?
- The chapter is based around four Core Beliefs
 - All parents want the best for their children
 - All parents have capacity to support their child's learning (pg 32)
 - Parent and School staff should be equal partners (pg 37-38 chart)
 - The responsibility for building partnerships rests with the school and faculty first and foremost, especially school leaders

Discussion, primarily related to the core beliefs

Ch 4

Key Ideas

- “Above all do not rely on conferences to build relationships with families”
- The chapter is about how to build the relationships, to get families to join the school community
- Idea: Family Center in the school – a dedicated place in the school for families

Discussion, primarily related to the idea of family centers and the variety of ideas presented for different ways to involve parents rather than conferences.

Ch 5

Key Ideas

- Parent involvement – how to do parent involvement was the focus of this chapter. Some ideas included: not limiting to the school day, look at who we are serving and when they are available; look at the vocabulary/language being used, accessibility; back to school nights linked to standards; School Newsletters – linked to learning (pg 96), newsletters effective communication

- Helping parents understanding the standards, understanding what the expectations are for a 3, 4, etc – and how related to the work of the class and the standards – clarity of what we really do in school
- Checklist at the end of the chapter is a useful tool

Summary Discussion:

- This book challenges us in some ways– i.e.: home visits, relationships, parents visiting classrooms at any time they want (pg 63)
- To do some of these things we would need: Policies, trust building, core beliefs, etc.
- Thinking about family engagement in the broader sense, rather than just related to conferencing

Homework for next time:

--Read Chapter 9 of Beyond the Bake Sale

--Visit SMS to take part in Turning to One Another

Wednesday, December 7th from 11:30-12:30 (half day sub for teachers)

or

Thursday, December 8th from 11:30-12:30 (full day sub for teachers)

Next Meeting: December 8th 1:00-3:00 in the Board Room at Central Services.