



Feb. 8, 2017

A Message from the Attendance Area Advisory Group

Dear Squalicum, Bellingham, Shuksan and Birchwood Families,

Earlier this school year, Bellingham Public Schools shared information about the growth happening in north Bellingham, and its current and future impact on school enrollment. Families also received information to apply for consideration to serve on the Attendance Area Advisory Group.

Our group has been meeting weekly this winter. One of the issues we've been studying is the attendance area between Squalicum and Bellingham high schools. Enrollment is currently about 245 students more at Squalicum, and SQHS is running out of room; Bellingham High School is currently under-enrolled. Balancing enrollment among our high schools creates better course choices/schedules and opportunities for students.

Our advisory group is comprised of students, parents and staff. We have been thoughtfully considering how to make this adjustment. Today, we emailed and mailed a letter and survey for feedback to the 138 families most affected by our proposal.

Our proposal is to change most of Birchwood's attendance area from Squalicum to Bellingham High School (specifically the area south of I-5, near Greenwood Ave and west of Squalicum Parkway and Meridian). Please **click here** to see the map.

In the current proposal:

- **Current juniors** who live in this area are welcome to finish their senior year at Squalicum High School. To do so, they will need to submit a transfer request by March 15 (using the special form posted here or at school offices). These special transfer requests for juniors will be approved. School bus transportation to/from Squalicum would not be provided. Students may or may not be able to access a bus to Squalicum from a nearby neighborhood stop, depending on how many empty seats are available per the courtesy busing guidelines in procedure 6600.
- **Current freshmen and sophomores** who live in this area would attend Bellingham High School for their sophomore through senior years, unless they make a transfer request by March 15 (using the form posted here or at school offices). For those requesting a transfer to remain at Squalicum, school bus transportation would not be provided. Students may or may not be able to access a bus to Squalicum from a nearby neighborhood stop, depending on how many empty seats are available per the courtesy busing guidelines in procedure 6600.
- Current **Shuksan eighth graders and future high school students** who live in this area would attend Bellingham High School.
- Students who have **siblings** who will be Squalicum seniors next year may choose to submit a transfer request by March 15 (using the form posted here or at school offices) to

remain at Squalicum. School bus transportation would not be provided. Students may or may not be able to access a bus to Squalicum from a nearby neighborhood stop, depending on how many empty seats are available per the courtesy busing guidelines in [procedure 6600](#).

Our committee used the following [policy 3130](#) criteria to develop our attendance area proposal:

- Minimize disruption of student's established learning programs.
- Keep siblings in the same elementary, middle or high school, whenever possible.
- Provide overall balance of student enrollment related to facility size, taking into account future growth patterns.
- Provide a reasonably balanced socio-economic relationship in all schools.
- Provide the most efficient and feasible means for student transportation to and from school, including whether safe routes to school might exist, minimizing travel time and transportation costs.
- Keep neighborhoods together, whenever possible.
- Maintain feeder school patterns so that elementary/middle/high school attendance areas coincide and students stay with the same cohort as they progress through school levels, whenever possible.
- Follow natural boundaries and utilize existing physical boundaries such as major roadways to delineate boundaries, whenever possible.

In looking at which neighborhoods to select for this adjustment, our advisory group also considered proximity to Bellingham High in selecting this area (approximately 2 miles to BHS and 5 miles to SQHS); students in this area could make this adjustment together; and north Bellingham is growing and projections show more adjustments will likely be needed in future years to create space at Shuksan and Squalicum. For more rationale, please see our [Q&A](#).

Next Steps: Our group will review the feedback from the [survey](#), share more of our rationale at the input meeting, and take input into consideration at a parent input session from **6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15 in the Birchwood Elementary School cafeteria**. Our advisory group will meet to consider the input on Feb. 16 before submitting a recommendation to the superintendent during the week of Feb. 20. The superintendent will then consider our recommendation, make a decision and communicate with families. **We anticipate a decision by the end of February/early March to allow students to register for courses at their high school in March.**

If you have questions about your address and proposed attendance area, please contact us (360) 676-6512.