

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) to the Superintendent: Key Communications
March 29, 2018

Each school has two representatives on this committee. Laura Lawyer and Holly Miller are co-chairs:

- We are here to learn, have discussions and give input to the superintendent. **Please bring information back to each of our schools, share it, and take back questions or concerns from other parents.**
- Please arrange for a parent substitute to attend PAC if you are unable to attend.

Welcome and Introductions

Holly Miller, co-chair, welcomed attendees and asked them to introduce themselves and share highlights of their plans for spring break. The room was nearly full.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Baker thanked people for attending and welcomed attendees' reflections, wonders and questions:

- An attendee commented on **homework** and asked about changing expectations at different school levels. Mike Copland spoke to the issue, noting that sixth grade is treated as a transition year, with increasing expectations for work completed / prepared beyond the school day.
- Another attendee asked about the appropriate role of **parent clubs as fundraising partners**. Dr. Baker spoke to the possibility of coming back together in a session like last year's summit to identify and clarify who pays for what (district vs. foundation vs. PTAs/PTOs and/or booster clubs). Dr. Baker noted a tension in a recent meeting with booster club representatives wanting more district support, clarity, and equity while also wanting to protect their existing freedom and flexibility. There was a lot of energetic conversation around this topic; after some discussion, Dr. Baker asked about the group's interest in building an infrastructure for this type of conversation, perhaps by convening a parent club council with the district and foundation at the table with parent club leaders for each school. Parents appreciated this idea and requested that high schools be included; perhaps this convening can be coordinated by level.
- The group talked about **upcoming leadership changes** at the elementary level. Dr. Baker described the hiring and selection process, which started with a nationwide posting. Over 60 candidates applied for the first elementary principal opening; the interview team included staff, administrators, parents, and others from across the district. When a second elementary principal opening came up soon after the initial process, it made sense to make good use of the process that had just been completed. He also spoke to his use of the word interim, which is generally used in situations where someone has been promoted from within or otherwise progressed through a shorter community engagement process. Most of the time, the person hired as interim in situations like these will become the permanent hire for that position.
- Dr. Baker was asked about upcoming initiatives and his longer-term vision. He commented that this is a season of focusing on implementing current initiatives well, from facilities to promise kindergarten to technology 1:1. In terms of true blue-sky dreaming, he talked of hopes to one day develop a program that makes it easier for more Bellingham students (all who want them) to be able to take advantage of international learning opportunities.

School Safety

Dr. Baker introduced Jonah Stinson, Director of School Safety and Emergency Management, to share information about how the district thinks about and plans for events that affect student safety.

Jonah noted that his presentation is focused on the topic of active, targeted school violence rather than a broader presentation on school safety in general. He invited attendees to think about the many potential threats and emergencies that schools might face, along with their relative risks and likelihood of occurrence. He shared data to show that the chance of death due to violence in schools has been steadily dropping over the last 20 years; it is now one in 3-4 million. Youth are 40 times more likely to be a homicide victim outside of a school than in one. We are seeing the typical increase in threats and conversations about shooting / violence in the aftermath of the Parkland shooting. It is important to keep this risk in context.

He noted that the Bellingham Promise and our related focus on school culture, equity, and character is an important part of how we think about student safety and violence prevention.

Run, hide, fight: Based on secret service advice, current thinking about active shooter response has evolved to a run, hide, fight model. If you can get away, do so. If you can't run, a lockdown is still a quality response. And if you can't run or hide, then fight as directly and aggressively as you can to surprise and disarm the attacker.

BPS Safety Measures: We think about safety and emergency response in a comprehensive way. Here are some examples of the facets of this work:

- **Structural security:** new school design, safety remodels, panic systems, etc.
- **Coordinating with community partners:** fire, police/sheriff, emergency medical care, incident commanders, etc.
- **Training and education:** three drills per school per year (207+ per year across the district), suicide prevention, digital citizenship, social and emotional health education, CPR / "stop the bleed" training. Targeted staff (transportation, secretaries, annual orientations, etc.) received 30 hours of focused safety / response training last year.
- **Internal systems:** counseling, safety/threat assessments, discipline reviews, event security updates, etc.
- **Incident response:** plans for all types of incidents, from weather emergencies to playground injuries to active violence and more.
- **Emergency Mgmt. Planning:** Planning for mass care, shelter in place, reunification, etc.
- **Safety tip line:** Students, parents or community members are encouraged to text or call **844-310-9560** or visit bellingshamschools.org/safe for confidential, anonymous, two-way communication with our safety staff.

Future plans include school-based triage kits, improved radio communication and interior door lock systems, video, and electronic access systems, in a cycle of work that is never-ending.

What can families do? Talk with your kids about safety. Have a strong family plan in place, with supplies at home and a non-local emergency contact. Know your neighbors and other parents in your child(ren)'s school(s). Keep your contact information up to date. Trust and follow directions in an emergency / reunification effort.

He pointed attendees toward a wealth of information he has added to the district's [website](#). To navigate to the safety page, you will go to [Bellinghamschools.org](https://bellingshamschools.org), click on "Families" and then "Emergency and Safety."

He then welcomed questions.

- An attendee asked about new schools and how existing schools are being modified in response to the desire for increased security in our schools. Each school is different, depending on its age, design, and investments / modifications that have been made over time. Jonah spoke to a few of the investments made through the 2013 bond and those planned with the most recent bond measure.
- A few "what if" questions arose, and Jonah commented, "welcome to my world!" Worrying about uncertainties and "what if" scenarios is the heart of his work. Ongoing risk analysis and ensuring redundancies for key aspects is critical.
- Attendees asked how the schools would respond if students needed to shelter in place for an extended period of time. Jonah noted that schools are naturally well equipped for the level of shelter in place that they are likely to encounter, thanks to the foods and facilities that are naturally on-site.
- Additional questions can be sent to him directly: Jonah.Stinson@bellingshamschools.org.

Opportunity for College Level Classes in our High Schools

Keith Schacht, Director of Student Services, and Jeff Tetrick, CTE Director, shared information about college in the high school, running start, advanced placement classes, and CTE dual credit (formerly called Tech Prep). These are all opportunities for high school students to earn college or university credits for work they complete during high school.

- **College in the High School** allows high school students to take college-level courses during their high school day, earning credit in both high school and college. This requires high school teachers to maintain dual teaching credentials for the classes.

- **Running Start** allows qualified high school juniors and seniors to attend college classes, typically on the community college campus, and earn both college and high school credits.
- **Advanced Placement (AP)** classes are specific courses designed to prepare students to take the associated AP test, which then earns the students either advanced placement or credit at the post-secondary level.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit** program enables students to remain in high school with all the high school supports as they begin a vocational/technical program that leads to a two-year degree or certificate program.

They also shared information about the number and demographics of Bellingham students taking advantage of these opportunities, and the costs and potential credits associated with all of the various classes available to our students.

Parent Shout Outs

- This group is looking for a new chair for next year. Anyone interested, please contact Laura or Holly.
- Whatcom cleaned up at the recent WA Tech Student Association Conference! Students placed in four or five categories.
- Thank you, Grace, for sharing Jami Pittman's information in order to help a student with shoes.
- Parkview's next PTO meeting will host a presentation by the family resource coordinator and launch a spring drive for supplies.
- Birchwood is proud that one of their teachers won the "Great Teaching" Promise Award!
- Geneva third grade teachers are working on interesting projects to support kids as they go much deeper than before in their writing skills.
- Lowell just hosted an in-building Young Authors' Conference, thus emphasizing that every student is a writer, and spending the day celebrating writing together.
- Birchwood language exchange April 10 at 5:30 pm, this time focused on El Salvadorian culture and food. All are welcome!

Next Meeting: April 26, 2018, District Office, Board Room

2017-18 Remaining PAC Meeting Dates: 4/26; 5/31