

**Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent  
October 16, 2013**

**Parents:** Parents attended representing 16 schools - 12 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 1 high school.

**Executive Team/District Staff:**

Superintendent Greg Baker  
Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke  
Executive Administrator Rob McElroy  
Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe  
Communications Manager Jacqueline Brawley  
Director of Teaching and Learning Amy Carder  
Silver Beach Elementary Principal Nicole Talley  
Athletic Director (Squalicum High School) Patrick Brown  
Alderwood Elementary Principal Stephanie Korn  
Shuksan Middle School Principal Jay Jordan  
Doctoral Resident Justin May

**Note Taker:**

Sheri O'Day, Executive Secretary to the Department of Teaching and Learning

**Welcome:**

Joanna Nesbit and Trish Walton welcomed the group and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

**Superintendent's Update and Pressing Questions:**

Dr. Baker passed out note cards so that anyone who has questions as the meeting is in progress can write them down and Dr. Baker will address them.

Mountain School has been cancelled for four elementary schools due to the government shutdown. Although rescheduling will be challenging, the district and North Cascades Institute will work together to try to provide this experience to students from those 4 schools.

The Attendance Area Committee was recently formed. The purpose of the committee is to recommend scenarios for revised Happy Valley and Lowell elementary school attendance areas to include Larrabee students beginning with the 2014-15 school year. Three additional committees will be starting up soon – the Larrabee Repurposing Think Tank, Highly Capable Learners Program Review Committee, and Math Review Committee. Information will be coming soon regarding those three committees.

**Questions from Parents:**

- *Will the new bond change attendance areas?* No, this is not anticipated.
- *Can the bond pay to reduce class size?* No. Bonds are only for facilities per state law. Levies can pay for staff to reduce class size and the state caps how much we can receive; we are at the cap.

- *Update on Highly Capable Learners?* An outside consultant is conducting a program review. The elementary program is currently occurring at Alderwood and Happy Valley. We have two full-time Teachers on Special Assignment to support the program.
- *Why does a district bus cost more for a PTA than for the district?* We need to research this and provide this information at the next meeting.
- *Springboard English language arts curriculum in our elementary and middle schools – are all schools implementing it and is it aligned to the Common Core?* Springboard is currently in middle and high schools. Yes, it is aligned. Schools have varied levels of implementation. The Department of Teaching and Learning is working with schools on implementation.

### **Bond Update:**

Teri McIntyre informed parents that they can access bond facts and videos at [bellingshamschools.org/bond](http://bellingshamschools.org/bond). Voters will soon be receiving ballots to vote by November 5<sup>th</sup>.

### **Project Free Education**

- Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke facilitated a conversation about how Bellingham is a leader in the national conversation about public education being free. Our school system is trying to eliminate financial roadblocks for students/families, and create more consistency across schools. This subject touches every student, every household, every classroom. As we move through it, we are finding things that we didn't know.
- Parents shared reflections from the article: Many families can't afford supplies/fees and this creates inequity; not being able to pay course fees can impact college applications/readiness; whether you can afford it or not is not the issue; puts a burden on student/family to request a waiver/support; parents are paying for so much that the state is not funding; how extra-curricular/enrichment activities are being paid for – all schools – Title I and not have needs. There is even inequity among booster clubs and PTAs.
- *What have we done so far?* Alderwood Principal Stephanie Korn talked about elementary schools eliminating school supplies in recent years. Shuksan Middle School Principal Jay Jordan talked about how middle schools eliminated school supply lists. Pay-to-play fees for activities/athletics were also reduced this year. Mountain School for fifth graders is also being funded. Five Title I schools are receiving healthy snacks, and we want to expand to other schools. Shuksan serves dinner two nights per week as part of a federal program – any person under 18 from any school can eat for free; response has been great. Especially at high schools, we have much work to do.
- *Parents worked in small groups to categorize expenses currently being charged bell to bell; for extra-curriculars; and other/community program expenses for children to provide feedback on next steps.*

### **Announcements**

Joanna Nesbit asked if there were any announcements. Kate Foster stated that she is working with Department of Teaching and Learning Director Steve Morse on prevention of substance abuse, and also highlighted that the State Youth Summit in Yakima is coming up.

Dr. Baker thanked everyone for coming and the meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.