

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent

June 11, 2014

Parents: Parents attended representing 14 schools – 10 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 1 high school.

Executive Team/District Staff:

Superintendent Greg Baker

Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland

Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke

Executive Administrator Rob McElroy

Assistant Superintendent Bob Kuehl

Executive Director Nora Klewiada

Director of Teaching and Learning Brian Rick

Director of Teaching and Learning Michelle Kuss-Cybula

Director of Teaching and Learning Trina Hall

Early Childhood Education Coordinator Kristi Dominguez

Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe

Communications Manager Jacqueline Brawley

Note Taker:

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

Welcome:

Dr. Baker welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending this unscheduled meeting on short notice.

Superintendent Update:

- Dr. Baker shared that, while looking at the Squalicum High School yearbook, he saw evidence that the Bellingham Promise is alive and well at Squalicum. He passed the yearbook around so that parents could take a look at it.
- He set a goal over last summer that he would “walk in the shoes” of a student from each grade, PreK through grade 12. It has been a great adventure and a wonderful experience understanding the different perspectives across grade levels and the district.
- Dr. Baker noted that he failed to acknowledge Joanna Nesbit at the May 21 meeting, the last official meeting of her term as Co-Chair of PACS. He thanked Joanna for her work and dedication to the committee and presented her with a basket of flowers.
- Since the May 21 meeting, two elementary principals were announced. Janae Hodge, current Assistant Principal at Shuksan, will be the principal at Alderwood; Mylo Allen, current Dean of Students at Cordata, will be the principal at Parkview.

- A tentative agreement has been reached with the Bellingham Education Association (BEA) for a teachers' contract. Numerous hours have been spent in negotiations over the school year. The biggest challenge is around time and how to get it all done – teaching, planning, assessment/evaluating, professional development, etc. A four year contract will be finalized Thursday night at the School Board meeting. A large amount of time was spent in negotiations to develop the school calendars for the next 4 years. The hope is that, as you engage with other parents, you will have a deeper understanding of the rationale for how the calendar looks. Our goal is that students receive high quality instruction during the 180 days that school is in session. Some of the highlights with regards to the calendar include:
- Approximately one day per month (2nd Friday of every month) will be a non-student day when staff will collaborate and attend trainings. This will decrease the amount of time a teacher is out of the classroom (decreasing the need for substitutes) but it will also increase the school year calendar a little. Over time the hope is to collaborate in order to determine some enrichment opportunities for students that would be available on those Fridays. It will take some time to work out funding possibilities and supervision.
- Early dismissal will move from Wednesday to Thursday, which will enable a head start for staff in preparation for the non-student day on Friday. There will be two all-district early dismissal days – the day before Thanksgiving break and the last day of school for students in June. All other early dismissals at the high school level have been eliminated. The middle school will have a monthly early dismissal, and all early dismissals for middle school will be at the same time (12:15 p.m.). Elementary early dismissals will be every Thursday at 1:15 p.m.
- The non-student days in November will be used for parent-teacher conferences, keeping in mind that parent engagement is more than one conference in the fall, and teachers and/or parents are encouraged to be in contact as needed throughout the school year. There is a possibility that the student day will be extended in future years, although that will not happen for the 2014-15 school year. Extending the school day would enable students to receive more instruction and allow more room for electives. It will likely be explored first at the high school level, and it will take some investigation to determine how it can be accomplished (keeping in mind constraints with regard to transportation).
- This calendar will enable us to be in compliance for the 1,080 hours necessary for the school year.
- Seniors will attend through the end of the school year. That is good for the seniors and good for the rest of the students. Dr. Baker has seen evidence of teachers needing to modify classes for seniors beginning in May because they have a different last day than the rest of the students.
- For the 2014-15 school year, the first day of school will be after Labor Day. In future years school will start prior to Labor Day. The benefit of starting before Labor Day is that it allows more instruction time prior to the state and district assessments (graduation requirements), as well as more instruction time before the Advanced

Placement (AP) tests in early May (which has an economic value). There were over 2,000 AP tests taken by Bellingham students this year. If we use the tuition costs of the University of Washington as an example, it is estimated that students and families would save upwards of \$2.3 million on college tuition (based on pass completion rates of 60% scoring a 3, 4 or 5). This would result in less tuition paid by families and lower student loans for our students.

- Dr. Baker passed out the [2014-15](#) school calendar. The purple days are non-student days; yellow are elementary early dismissals on Thursdays; and green are early dismissals for both elementary and middle school on Thursdays. Note that there are two green dates in November for conferencing.

Dr. Baker asked if there were any questions:

Question: To clarify, the last day of school is a Monday.

Answer: Yes.

Question: The second week of November is very choppy.

Answer: November 11th is a holiday that has no flexibility as far as moving it.

Question: Why is the purple day in May not on the second Friday?

Answer: That is a date for Advanced Placement (AP) testing.

Question: Is June 12 a day for professional development or grading?

Answer: It will be a time for teachers to start preparations for a very busy time of year – including grading and preparation for report cards.

Question: Has there been any thought to swapping elementary and high school start times?

Answer: It will take a lot of energy to figure out how that can be done. It is a complex puzzle, and so far we have not found the answer for how to do it.

Question: Will kindergarten students continue to start on a different day than the rest of the students?

Answer: Next year kindergarten students will attend on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for half days. We will determine after this year if adjustments should be made to that schedule.

Question: Will there be a Promise K program next year?

Answer: The plan is to offer Promise K again, and it likely will begin the week after spring break.

Question: Is it expected that there will be more regularity for middle school conferences?

Answer: There will be a set time for conferences built into the schedule, and having the November non-school day will be helpful in order for the teachers to fit the conferences in. It will likely still be a building decision about how the conferences will be structured.

Question: Have graduation dates been determined?

Answer: We will be meeting soon with the high school principals to determine graduation dates. They will most likely occur the weekend most close to the last day of school.

Question: Why was there an early dismissal the day prior to Memorial Day?

Answer: That was as a result of the snow day on the day before winter break (which was a half day).

Dr. Baker then previewed the calendars for 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18:

- For [2015-16](#), school will start August 26 (the Wednesday before Labor Day), and the last day is June 15.
- For [2016-17](#), school will start August 24, and the last day is June 15.
- For [2017-18](#), school will start August 23, with the last day being June 14.

All of the calendar information will be on the website following the School Board meeting on June 12. The Communications Office will be developing a “Q&A” to address anticipated questions.

Announcements:

- Todd Guiton announced that the Lowell PTA has a surplus in their budget, partly due to Mountain School being paid by the district. They are making a donation to the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation in the amount of \$3500 (\$2500 being earmarked for Strings and \$1000 for general Foundation purposes), with the possibility of another gift when the PTA closes out their books at the end of the month.

Next Meeting: September 17, 2014