

**Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent
September 18, 2013**

Parents: Parents attended representing sixteen schools - 11 elementary schools, 4 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
Director of Research and Assessment Brian Rick
Director of Teaching and Learning Charisse Berner
Director of Teaching and Learning Steve Morse
Director of Teaching and Learning Mike Haberman
Director of Teaching and Learning Bethany Verner
Director of Teaching and Learning Michelle Kuss-Cybula
Executive Director of Human Resources Nora Klewiada
Assistant Superintendent (Human Resources) Bob Kuehl
Director of Teaching and Learning Amy Carder
Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe
Communications Manager Jacqueline Brawley
Teacher on Special Assignment Jeanette Grisham

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.

Dr. Baker also asked staff to introduce themselves. He stated that this team strives for outstanding leadership and support to staff in our schools. Each District Office team member gave a brief introduction of themselves and what they do and what their focus is this year. The team is becoming more coordinated with each other, not siloed. Today is the first all-district early dismissal, and this team is helping to facilitate professional development across the district. Feel free to contact these team members if you have questions/concerns.

Potential Topics for Agendas:

Committee members were asked to brainstorm potential meeting topics/agenda items for this year. Joanna asked the members to keep in mind that the group is diverse, and if possible to please avoid topics that would be too specific to elementary, middle or high school. Suggested topics include:

- Farm-to-School – central kitchen (which is on the bond).
- More info on teacher evaluations – how teachers will be evaluated.
- One Schoolhouse philosophy – What can teachers and PTAs ask for (field trips, supplies)? What should a PTA do or not do?

- Mountain School – Can the curriculum that is being taught at Mountain School be taught at Gordon Carter at a reduced cost?
- Family Engagement – What is the District’s vision? What happens across the district with conferences?
- Common Core vs. Measurements of Student Progress – Concern that last year teachers were teaching common core math, but it did not align with the Measurements of Student Progress, so students did not learn in class what was needed for the test. Are there misconceptions about Common Core?
- Aligning homework with grade-level expectations. In the past, there have been pamphlets available for parents that contained information about how parents can support students at home. Is teaching aligned enough to provide this districtwide?
- Recess – Playworks for Elementary. What is the purpose? What is it?
- Alcohol/Drug Prevention. What can be done to prevent the number of emergency room visits?
- Highly Capable Learners (HCL) Program - Update.
- Special Education – If this was talked about early in the year, what are the goals, plans, projects in connection with Special Education. If covered later in the year, perhaps an update.
- Middle School Gradebook – Is it possible for the gradebook to show when a “4” is available?

The Co-Chairs will send a survey to committee members to see which topics the committee members would like to focus on this year.

Rachel Williams asked if anyone would be interested in helping with a “School House Talks” (collaboration among PTAs) in the spring. The typical feedback is that it should happen more often, but it does take a lot of energy and planning. Rachel will bring it up in January to see if a committee can be formed for a spring event.

Superintendent’s Update:

Dr. Baker welcomed everyone to this first meeting of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC).

- **Budget Highlights:** The state budget came in in the middle of summer. Additional state funding allowed us to add some teachers to help with class size; hiring a nutritionist to help with health meals; increased support to special education and Highly Capable Learners Program; support for after school tutoring at the high schools; and providing support for new teacher evaluations.
- **Teacher and Principal Evaluation Project:** It is mandated by state law that school districts choose from state-approved teacher and principal evaluation models. Our district has chosen the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership’s 5D+ model.
- **Elementary Family Engagement:** It is no longer mandated that each family receive a parent-teacher conference in November. Elementary schools have the flexibility to arrange parent-teacher conferences, as needed, at different times during the school year. This year, we are providing additional funds to elementary schools to pay for teacher substitutes to support teachers who make arrangements to meet with parents during the school day. This helps preserve instructional time, instead of adding more early dismissals for this purpose.

- One Schoolhouse Philosophy: Dr. Baker spoke to the One Schoolhouse philosophy in The Bellingham Promise: We're part of a school system and community that takes care of all kids. Public education should be free, but it is not. Our homeless coordinators completed an analysis of the school supply lists from two years ago, and the cost for elementary school supplies at the beginning of the year varied from \$20 to \$240, and the schools that had a higher poverty level were at the upper end. It's our philosophy that if it's part of the school day (bell to bell), our school system is working to determine how to fund it. We've taken some steps regarding school supplies, athletic/activity fees, and Mountain School, but there is much work still to do. Just as we think we are making strides in reducing the costs to families, we find another layer that is more complex. Last year, funds were put into the elementary budgets, this year all schools received money in their budgets for supplies and materials. For high schools, we tackled the fee list (class fees, art supplies, tech class). Athletic fees are a little different because they are outside the school day, but fees were cut almost in half for middle school and high school sports. All 14 elementary schools have been sending students to the 5th Grade Mountain School experience. This was funded in a variety of ways – parents wrote checks, PTAs were raising money, teachers were spending their time fundraising and spending their own funds. New this year, the district is paying for each 5th grade student to attend Mountain School. We're working closely with The Bellingham Public School Foundation on system-level initiatives. PTAs continue to play an important role in supporting our schools – we want to get to a place where the PTA is not providing basics, but this is not our current reality. Dr. Baker does not want teachers spending their own money on supplies, nor does he want them to feel they need to ask parents or PTAs for supplies. Teachers should be working with their principal for special requests, and they will decide together if the supplies are truly needed. Other conversations we're pursuing on this topic include Mt. Baker Theater (should each elementary student be funded to attend a base number of trips per year, with extra trips being provided by PTAs) and the rental of musical instruments (should this be a cost to parents)?
- Playworks – Elementary recess is often an unstructured time when unhealthy things can happen – bullying, students being left out. The district has provided “Playworks” training to each elementary school over the past two years (not mandated, but all schools volunteered to participate in the training). The program is not intended to get rid of unstructured play, but to also provide some structure and rules around recess time. Implementation may take some time – schools will be working out kinks as they put the program into place. The intent is not to limit free play, but to make recess time more safe and positive. The program also works to help train older elementary students as peer leaders.
- District Resource Officer – We are continuing to partner with the Bellingham Police Department to have at least one District Resource Officer supporting our schools this year. We are waiting on a grant to provide a second District Resource Officer.
- Early Childhood – We are ahead of most districts in the state by providing full-time kindergarten. We are taking more steps with community partners to provide more preschool opportunities for children.
- Grant Writer – We are partnering with The Bellingham Public School Foundation this year to fund a grant writer to focus on acquiring large-scale grants.

Bellingham Schools Foundation Update by Gennie Clawson, Executive Director:

- The school grant program will be in place again this year, and more information will be shared this fall. Someone asked for an example of past school grants. Some of those are field trips, iPads/technology, etc.
- Gennie envisions working with PTAs and PTOs to campaign together to support our students.
- The Race for Education is Oct. 12.
- The Foundation will run a fall fundraising campaign to give every family, as well as businesses, the opportunity to help.
- View Gennie's Prezi at <http://prezi.com/user/us4ax65iel4w/>.
- Gennie anticipates there will be a Hungry Minds Breakfast (3rd annual) this spring.
- Since the revitalization of the Foundation, \$300,000 has been raised; approximately \$100,000 has been deployed via grants; \$100,000 has been invested; the other \$100,000 is being held in savings.

Bond Facts:

- Dr. Baker shared the "Bond Facts" sheet with the committee. Bellingham Public Schools has a measure on the November ballot for school facilities. Voters will receive ballots in mid-October for the Nov. 5 election. Schools have voter registration forms. Voter registration closes Oct. 7 for the November election. A bond fact sheet is posted at www.bellinghamschools.org/bond, as well as videos about each project.
- Dr. Baker introduced Terry McIntyre, Co-Chair of the Bond Committee.

Announcements

Kirke Mahy Hestad (Columbia) has helped to compile sample enrichment forms, vendor lists, and a sample contract form. If you are interested in taking a look at what she has, she can be contacted at hestad@comcast.net.

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