

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

February 12, 2015 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Central Services Board Room

Parents: Parents from several schools were in attendance.

Executive Team/District Staff:

Superintendent Greg Baker

Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland

Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke

Special Assistant to the Superintendent Isabel Meaker

Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe

Doctoral Resident Anda Adams

Note Taker:

Lezlie Fox, Executive Secretary, Communications and Community Relations

Welcome:

Dawn Brand and Trisha Walton welcomed the group and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Superintendent's Update:

Dr. Baker welcomed everyone and recognized how busy everyone is this time of year. He said he hoped to balance the meeting with providing information and getting feedback from the group.

- [The Bellingham Promise](#): He discussed The Bellingham Promise and pointed out that the outcomes (the type of students and graduates we want to develop) are the same, but are now organized into three columns: Knowledge, Character, and Action.
- How to tell the story of The Bellingham Promise in action? Dr. Baker told the group they have been working on the best ways to communicate how Bellingham Public Schools is accomplishing the outcomes. The group viewed The Bellingham Promise website, which will describe the great stories of our students and schools. People can also submit stories, photos and videos. This is in addition to our district and school websites, which will also be updated soon.
- Tanya also let the group know about the district Twitter account and the Spanish Facebook page and that Bellingham Public Schools will be launching a district [Facebook](#) page. She thanked the group for being key communicators and contributing to social media conversations.
- Dr. Baker gave an update on the Promise K and the second GRADS site that just opened at Sehome High.
- Dr. Baker also talked about our One Schoolhouse strategy and equity vs. equality. He showed slides demonstrating this concept that involves a win-win for everyone.
- Dr. Baker reminded the group he had put out an offer for any group of approximately 8–12 to have Coffee with the Superintendent.

- “Walking in the Shoes:” He reminded the group that he is continuing to walk in the shoes of staff and recently spent a day with a food services staff member. He described interactions with families at the evening meal at Shuksan on Thursday and then his time at Northern Heights and his takeaways.
- Blog: Dr. Baker talked about his new [blog](#) and said he welcomes comments.
- Communication about Calendar: Dr. Baker described the 4-year calendar that exists. Two videos will be sent out in the next few weeks that help explain the rationale of the current calendar structure, including the pre-Labor Day start and monthly Friday Staff Learning days when there is no school for students.
- Reflections/Questions: Dr. Baker asked parents to share reflections and questions:
 - Coffee w/ the Sup. Can PTSAs communicate this? Yes, please. Is this something a child could do? A group of kids? Example – her son has a topic he would love to discuss with the superintendent. Dr. Baker said absolutely. He enjoys meeting with students.
 - Two things: 1. Excited to hear about the positions, especially the Wellness Coordinator. 2. Will you be walking in Special Education shoes? Dr. Baker said walking in the shoes of a Lifeskills staff member was on the list. Next up he will be walking in the shoes of a bus driver.
 - One parent invited Dr. Baker to walk in the shoes of a recess duty.
- [School Start and End Times](#): Dr. Baker talked about how Bellingham Public Schools is exploring changing start and end times for fall 2016 and explained reasons why: 1. Research about high school students needing more sleep. 2. State has changed graduation requirements and students will need more credits. 3. Dr. Baker referenced The Promise and a desire for students to take more classes and discover their passions.
- Dr. Baker showed a presentation that he and Steve Clarke are sharing when they visit all high schools and meet with all students by class. He described the process and that the parents might be hearing from their students. He is actively seeking feedback from students.
 - Dr. Baker asked for clarifying questions:
 - Comment: Recognized the shift from elementary to middle school is difficult.
 - Have you thought about extending the year vs. longer days at the middle and high school?
 - We have not explored a year-round calendar at this point.
 - How full are the buses now?
 - Pretty full; it depends on the route. Transportation works hard to maximize so we don’t have empty buses.
 - Question about the high school schedule and a concern that already students have to leave early to travel for sports and get out at 1:00 to get to Anacortes, Sedro-Woolley, etc.
 - Hope is that other districts would be making some changes in starting high school later. Dr. Baker said the point was well taken and said that putting lights on the fields would also help.
 - Have they thought of different levels riding together?

- The proposal wouldn't have elementary, middle and high school students riding together.
 - Have you thought about not offering bus service – especially to high schools?
 - We have met with Whatcom Transportation Authority. There is a potential for more partnership, but they are unable to service all our schools during the times needed and in all of the areas where students live.
 - Have they looked at the simplicity of having every student starting at 8:00 – would it save money? Putting a parent on the bus to watch, is it too simple?
 - We would need approximately 44 more buses.
 - How many students are at each high school?
 - Approximately 1,000 each and less than 200 at Options.
 - Would this give a middle school student the opportunity to earn high school credits?
 - That is not necessarily the purpose. The intent is to offer choices.
 - Question about Special Education buses. Would it be more cost effective to have a person with them on the regular bus?
 - The only students we are legally required to transport are students in special education. There are nuances with door-to-door transportation and smaller buses.
- Dr. Baker gave the group an hour or so to discuss this topic and give feedback. In closing, he asked the group, based upon what you know and that we won't implement for another year and a half, do they give the proposal a thumbs up or thumbs down or sideways? Thumbs up meaning you know you could support. Thumbs sideways meaning you don't know and thumbs down meaning you don't think this will work. The result of the quick poll: All thumbs up and sideways – no thumbs down.

Suggestions included:

- Switching the high school and middle school start times. Comment – sports an issue.
- Everything you have said – my kids would love this.
- Hardest part is elementary. My kids would appreciate it. I know what is driving this is high school and middle school – but one of the challenges is to let the community know what it is like in high school when they haven't yet had a student there.
- If we are doing 30 minutes between elementary & high school – can you switch that?
- With elementary starting first this doesn't let high school students help drop off younger students.
- Estimating there will be a lot of push back from elementary parents who don't have kids ride the bus and say they can't get there at that time. What about an 8:00 am start time – but bus riders get there early?
- High school athletics: Years ago, many of our athletes did a 7th period that was a PE class that was grouped into one. If you were in baseball, for example, you might not have a 7th period.

- Getting the high school there later is great! However, it's a challenge if you have kids at different levels.
- Regarding the elementary 7:45 start—What if we had a soft start with buses arriving by this time with before-school activities and started the instructional day at 8 or 8:15. This would help parents who drive their kids. If you bump back the start time, people will still come at the last possible minute.
- What about morning pick up times? The hope is that no one is picked up before 7.
- Concerned about the 2:15 release on elementary. You can't leave an elementary student alone. Will need after-school activities.

Dr. Baker closed by saying this is preliminary planning. The question is – do we have the ability (with fine tuning of the proposal) that we, as a community, can make change. There is no perfect schedule that meets the needs of all of the community. We would not be presenting it to you if we didn't think it was valuable for students. We are happy to come to PTSAs and meet with other groups or parents to discuss this topic.

Announcements:

Kim Lund, Executive Director of the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation, let the group know that the Foundation is getting ready to launch the Promise Campaign. Kim gave history of the past campaign and said they are looking at how they can grow as a foundation. She said they want to play a big role in helping to fund The Bellingham Promise. The Foundation helped most recently with Promise K and the GRADS Program at Sehome. She showed a poster they are hoping to see in all of the schools. She said their goal for the Promise Campaign is \$200,000. Kim introduced Kathy Dooley who will fill in while she is on leave.

- Comment: Every one of our children benefit from this. Every other child benefits from all the kids' needs being met.
- Comment: Would you be willing to speak to PTAs? Kathy said yes they would, and have been trying to do this.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: March 26, 2015