

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

October 23, 2014 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Birchwood Elementary School

Parents: Parents attended representing 14 schools – 10 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 2 high schools.

Executive Team/District Staff:

Superintendent Greg Baker

Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland

Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke

Executive Administrator Rob McElroy

Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe

Doctoral Resident Anda Adams

Birchwood Principal Matt Whitten

Food Services Director Mark Dalton

Note Taker:

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

Welcome:

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

Superintendent's Update and Pressing Questions:

Dr. Baker welcomed everyone to the new Birchwood facility and thanked principal Matt Whitten for hosting at Birchwood this morning.

Updates included:

- Dr. Baker talked about the fall edition of our [Inside Schools](#) community newsletter that was just mailed to 60,000 households in Bellingham.
- The [superintendent's blog](#) is now launched, and Dr. Baker looks forward to receiving any feedback that you may have. It is hoped that this will be another tool for communication and updates.
- A [bond update video](#) was shared this week, which gives information about where we are with the bond projects.
- Shuksan was named this week as a recipient of a [21st Century federal grant](#) in the amount of \$1.3 million (to be used over the next 5 years). The grant will help provide before and after school activities for students and will help with student transportation for those activities. A coordinator will be hired to be on-site managing those activities and the necessary logistics.
- The second cohort of our Aspiring Administrators Program, which supports our key strategy of great teaching and strong support to ensure outstanding leadership in every school, was recently formed. The cohort is made up of teacher leaders from across the district who may be interested in pursuing administrative opportunities. The

group meets monthly and also fills in for principals to give them an opportunity to act as a principal designee for one or more days.

- Two committees were recently formed. The [Family Partnership Program Advisory Group](#) is now meeting to support homeschool families, and a visioning advisory group for our Gordon Carter Conservation Site near south Lake Whatcom.

Dr. Baker drew names from a basket to give parents an opportunity to ask any question:

Are all doors except the main entrance to a school to be locked during the school day?

The safety needs and logistics vary by each school location. Sehome High School is an example of a school that has multiple entrances and exits. All schools have safety plans and principals can answer site-specific questions.

A Squalicum High School parent talked about the successful Nick of Time heart screening event that was held there recently. Squalicum students were able to sign up for a heart screening, and the simple screening could possibly lead to a referral. The event included an amazing number of volunteers (physicians, fire department personnel, etc.). Another parent asked whether this opportunity would be made available to other school sites? The event was held at only 2 Washington sites this year, and Squalicum was chosen. Tanya shared that Director of Teaching and Learning Director Steve Morse is excited about new leadership of the organization and the possibility that there may be more access in the future for other sites.

A parent asked about the upcoming [Go Public documentary film screening](#).

Kim Lund, Executive Director of the [Bellingham Public Schools Foundation](#), has seen the film which shows a “day in the life” of a California school district from several perspectives (teachers, para-educators, administrators, etc.). The screening is at the Pickford at 6:30 p.m. on October 28.

Tour of Birchwood

Over four years ago, the district office was slated to undergo a retrofit. After many conversations, it was decided that the retrofit would be part of the next bond in order to move the Birchwood rebuild project up. This necessitated closing Birchwood for three years and the Birchwood students to attend the newly built Cordata Elementary.

Matt Whitten talked about the new Birchwood facility and how it is a centerpiece for the Birchwood neighborhood. Some of what Matt shared included:

- Many students walk or ride their bikes to school, and there is only the need for one bus.
- The building honors the traditional look of the former Birchwood building, with many new features (including high efficiency air flow, low noise, and natural light). The color theme is modeled after a birch tree.
- There are approximately 300 PreK-5th grade students. Approximately two-thirds of the students were previously at Cordata, and one-third were previously at Alderwood.
- Birchwood is pursuing becoming an International Baccalaureate school.

Matt led the group on a tour of the building and the garden area, and then fielded questions from the group:

Is there anything that you would change about the new building?

Matt shared that he thinks the building is a “home run.” The only thing that he would change is the location of the principal’s office. He spends more time in the conference room, which is near the front of the office, rather than his office, which is back in the corner overlooking the parking lot.

Do the goats live in the school garden?

They do at this time, but Matt is not sure how long they will be here.

Dr. Baker again thanked Matt and acknowledged that opening a new school is quite an endeavor, and Matt and his staff have done an outstanding job.

Healthy Menus and Efficiency of Lunches

Dr. Baker introduced Food Services Director Mark Dalton, who gave an update and covered the topics of recess before lunch and breakfast in the classroom.

- Mark noted that he has been with the Bellingham School District for over six years. The Food Services Department serves 6,000 to 6,200 meals per day (breakfast and lunch), as well as snacks. He talked about some of the challenges for sourcing food.
- Currently the fresh fruit and vegetable snack program is at eight of our schools (Alderwood, Birchwood, Carl Cozier, Cordata, Parkview, Roosevelt, Sunnyland and Options). They try to serve what the kids like (apple slices, carrots, oranges, cucumbers, etc.). Teachers decide whether the students take a break for snacks or if the students are able to access the snacks throughout class time.
- A dinner program was started at Shuksan Middle School last year, wherein anyone 18 or under could receive a free dinner two nights per week. The program was extended to four nights per week this year, and there are approximately 90 to 100 dinners served on each of those nights. It is a free program funded by the USDA, and Shuksan is eligible for the program because of its high free/reduced rate and because they have a full kitchen. Starting in November, the dinner menus will be available ahead of time. Parents pay \$4 for the dinner, and typically there are only 3 or 4 parents per night. The kitchen is staffed by district staff.
- Mark talked about “Harvest of the Month,” a program which introduces farm fresh produce or locally preserved foods to thousands of students in our schools. He noted that there are volunteer opportunities within the [Farm-to-School program](#), and if you know of someone who is interested, please let Mark or the school kitchen staff know.
- The district received a \$10,000 grant from Taco Time that will enable Alderwood Elementary to purchase the equipment for a salad bar for students.
- There are currently nine school gardens in the district. Whatcom Middle School has a large school garden, and the students are able to harvest the food (under the supervision of a garden educator) to be used for school meals.
- Mark explained that currently Food Services uses a “heat and serve” model, where highly processed food is cooked in the morning, kept warm and delivered to schools.

Thanks to the recent [bond](#), the district will have a centralized kitchen that will enable us to purchase more raw products that are then prepared in the district, and it will also allow the district more control over the ingredients. It is exciting to look toward the future of meals in Bellingham Public Schools.

- Mark talked about “[breakfast after the bell](#),” which is gaining momentum across the state of Washington, especially at higher poverty rate schools. Currently, students arrive for breakfast 10 to 15 minutes before school starts. For breakfast after the bell, a tote containing milk and a protein product is delivered to the classroom, and students are able to help themselves to the breakfast and sit at their desk and eat quietly for the first 15 minutes of instruction. It is free to everyone in the class and takes away some of the stigma of eating before school for free/reduced students. The Alderwood cafeteria serves approximately 80% of their students each day for lunch, but only 120 students take advantage of the breakfast. Schedules would need to be adjusted so that every student would have access to the breakfast (which would include students who have P.E., library, etc. first thing in the morning). The model for middle and high schools would be a little different, perhaps “grab and go” for middle school, and a later serving time for high school, such as 9:20.
- There are currently three elementary schools which have recess before lunch (Alderwood, Birchwood and Cordata), which is considered a best practice in food service. With recess after lunch, students rush to eat lunch and get to the playground. Some kids do not eat their food, or not as much food. Teachers report that when students eat following recess, they are more settled when they return to class, and there is less wasted food. It does necessitate some buy-in from teaching staff and takes some creativity for scheduling. The layout of the building and traffic flow can be challenging in some buildings.

Announcements

Kim Lund of the [Bellingham Public Schools Foundation](#) talked about an opportunity to receive \$5,000 in matching funds from Phillips 66 in support of STEM opportunities for our elementary schools, if we are able to find community support of \$5,000. There will be a fundraising event to support this on November 12, 5:30-7:00 pm, at the Bellingham Golf & Country Club. More information on this event can be found [here](#).

Dr. Baker thanked everyone for coming and the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Next Meeting: November 13, 2014