



Attendance Areas PreK-12 Standing Committee

September 13, 2018

3:30 to 5 p.m.

Welcome

Co-chair Jay Jordan, executive director of Teaching and Learning, welcomed the group of returning and new committee members.

Introductions and Review of Objectives

Jay asked everyone to introduce themselves and share if they are a returning or new member of the committee.

Team Norms

Jay asked that a few minutes be spent reviewing the team norms together. Everyone agreed to use the norms as presented.

A History of the Committee

Co-chair Steve Clarke, assistant superintendent, Department of Teaching and Learning shared that each person on this committee brings a certain perspective. Please bring that to the table as the meetings progress. There will also be a time when you need to step back from your individual perspective and think about the broader 'one schoolhouse' perspective.

Steve reviewed the history of the committee's work with a PowerPoint and reminded the committee members that this committee's charge to review and adjust attendance areas started close to two years ago, with a focus on Squalicum and Cordata overcrowding; balancing the number of students between Bellingham and Squalicum high schools and lower the number of students attending Cordata Elementary. This past year was focused on our middle school boundaries. Shuksan and Whatcom have higher enrollment that we would like, Fairhaven is about where it needs to be and Kulshan has lower enrollment that we would like. There is a possibility that some students from Shuksan could move to Whatcom and some current Whatcom students could move to Kulshan.

With the passage of the bond in February 2018, there are three elementary schools that will be rebuilt by 2022. Steve talked about the need to consider re-drawing boundaries for these three elementary schools (Alderwood, Parkview and Sunnyland) to accommodate the increased capacity they will have. Currently, they have the capacity of approximately 300 students, this will increase to approximately 450 students per school. The expansion of two elementary schools will change the middle school boundaries.

Educational specifications design advisory committees for Alderwood and Parkview have been formed and are working on these specifications. This committee can help to determine what those possibilities could be and the timeline for the shifts.



[Policy 3130](#), Student Attendance Areas, includes consideration factors for determining attendance areas including feeder patterns and transportation. It is important to keep in mind when considering how one school feeds into the next level that it is better to have a substantial amount from each school rather than 99 percent to one school and 1 percent to another. The committee feels a 75/25 split is a minimum. If an attendance area shift showed less than 25 percent heading to one school, there is more work to be done.

The committee expressed an interest in aligning with what we are doing at the middle level with the expansion of Alderwood, Parkview and Sunnyland. A decision was made to pause and gather input from families and work out the attendance areas of feeder schools with the new capacity at these three schools. No attendance area changes will be made this year.

Where Did We End in June?

The committee ended with seven elementary scenarios that could play into the middle school scenarios.

Jay asked the committee members to share experience and reflections about the committee's work in the spring.

The share out included:

- There is not a 'perfect' answer. All scenarios had positives and negatives.
- One challenge is transporting students out of their neighborhood which can influence a school community.
- Our recommendations may influence funding for schools (like federal and Title 1 funds).
- Our recommendations may influence significant change and change can be hard.

The Detailed Work of the Summer Sub-Committee

A small sub-committee met over the summer and looked at our seven scenarios. The sub-committee explored ways to minimize the number of moves and still accomplish our goal. They looked closely at the recommended options for middle school and then identified the elementary options that aligned. The sub-committee did not finalize any decisions, it tried to create more detailed options.

Steve reviewed the elementary schools that split their enrollment into more than one middle school. He then spent time reviewing the various scenarios that have been brainstormed and created thus far by the committee.

What is the Work of the Committee Moving Forward

Jay shared that there would be no attendance area shifts until fall of 2020. We will work towards a recommendation this year and the following year prepare for the implementation and time line. He added that the district will need to determine whether making all recommended moves at once or making incremental changes is easier on students and families. The committee discussed pros and cons of a two-year process; our continued focus on equity; best practices for communications and gathering feedback; and future growth.

There was discussion regarding whether some of the proposed scenarios should be eliminated so the committee can focus on the remaining, more viable scenarios. There was discussion about



the best way to communicate with families and gather feedback and how to engage with families who speak languages other than English.

Some committee members recommended creating a video to help explain this work.

Jay will reach out to principals to help our committee have better family representation at each school.

He talked about how attendance areas are a part of a school's culture and he noted that there is an emotional component to attendance area changes. Part of this committee's charge is to keep the community informed of our process and the committee's rationale.

Review Consideration Factors

The committee again referred to [Policy 3130](#) regarding attendance areas. The consideration factors are not in priority order and all should be considered, and it may be that one factor could contradict another.

What are the tools we use to engage in this work?

Jay explained some of the tools used in working with tiles and natural boundaries. He walked through how tiles are labeled and moved to create scenarios.

Ideas were developed and Chris Behee, who works in the city of Bellingham's planning department, has spent time mapping those concepts for the committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.

2018-19 Meeting Dates: 10/25, 11/29, 1/31, 2/28, 3/28, 4/25, 5/23