

Elementary Partners in Funding Meeting May 7, 2019

Happy Valley Elementary School

Welcome/introductions

Superintendent Greg Baker kicked off the meeting and led the group in introductions. He shared that this group's collective work is in line with what we refer to as "A One Schoolhouse Approach," which is part of The Bellingham Promise, our strategic plan. He said the one schoolhouse theme emerged during his entry plan his first year in Bellingham, and he said that even back then, parents, staff and students had the interest and desire to help others at schools across town by giving more. The district has done a lot in the last nine years to remove barriers for students and families and reduce inequities, but there is more to do. He said he's excited to see how the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation (Foundation) and our elementary parent groups (PTAs, PTSAs, PTOs) can work together to expand our efforts.

History/context

Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Jackie Brawley shared the history and context of these fundraising conversations. Back in March 2017, the district and the Foundation hosted a PTA summit at the District Office, which helped uncover some inequities across our schools. PTAs also expressed a strong interest to focus more on community building, rather than fundraisers. That said, we realize there still is a need and interest to fundraise, and the elementary partners group is trying to determine how we help even the playing field among our schools. Some PTAs fundraise for teacher stipends and field trips, causing inequities across our district for both staff and students.

Bellingham Public Schools Foundation

Executive Director of the Foundation Kim Lund talked about their role. She said they are facilitating because it's eye-opening and heart-opening to see the varying needs between the 22 different schools. And the state, district and Foundation don't have adequate funds to fill to every need.

Q&A

Development Director of the Foundation Elizabeth Boyle helped facilitate a conversation with elementary PTA representatives. The following are comments, questions and answers.

- What should a PTA change/do prior to saying "I'm ready?" One PTA representative recommended reviewing and possibly changing bylaws to support all kids (not just "your" school).
- We should focus on the symbolism and the spirit of the project. We may not raise that much money in the first year, but it could grow.
- It was recommended that all elementary PTAs be transparent with their budget if/when they share a portion of whatever is raised.

- Trust-based philanthropy is important.
- PTAs are asking for simple talking points: e.g. all participating PTAs will give 10% of their budget, and some schools get more money back based on free/reduced numbers. But all schools get some of that funding back.
- Pros/cons and questions regarding timeline. When do we start the pilot?
- What does evaluation look like?
- We want people to give joyfully. This is exciting!
- We're excited to be at this meeting and at the table. This is how we start.
- A wonder if people will give the same, if not more, to their school's fundraisers. We want families to realize that it's not ok for experiences between our schools to be so different. It's a hill to climb, but it's important that we do this.
- Look at outcomes: what are we able to spend per child? I hope that by the end of the 2019-20 year that we are able to say we've moved the needle.
- Some schools expressed they were ready, others need an endorsement from their PTA board.

The group decided to meet with any participating or interested school in June.