



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY LINKAGE SPECIAL MEETING  
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**January 29, 2020 5:30-6:30 p.m.**

**Options High School**

**Linkage Attendees:**

- Representative students, parents/guardians and staff
- Directors present: **Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Katie Rose**
- Superintendent of Bellingham Public Schools **Greg Baker**
- District Leadership and Staff: Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations **Jackie Brawley**; Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning **Steve Clarke**; Deputy Superintendent **Mike Copland**; Executive Director of Teaching and Learning **Kristi Dominguez**; Executive Director of Educational Technology **Kurt Gazow**; Executive Director of Teaching and Learning **Jay Jordan**; Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources **Bob Kuehl**; Executive Director for Family Engagement **Isabel Meaker**; Assistant Superintendent of Finance **Simone Sangster**.

**Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions:** School Board President Douglas Benjamin called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the linkage meeting. Superintendent Greg Baker also welcomed attendees and invited all to introduce themselves and describe their connections to the school district and community.

**Meeting Purpose – Explanation of Community Linkages:** School Board Director Jenn Mason shared that the school board meets each year with various groups. Tonight the board is interested in hearing from students, staff and families and to seek input on the goals we have set for our students through our board policies expressed in our strategic plan, [The Bellingham Promise](#). She thanked everyone for taking the time to be here this evening.

**Small Group Discussion with School Board Members and Facilitators:** For discussion purposes, attendees and board members divided into five groups, facilitated by board members and executive team members. The small groups focused on the following guiding questions:

*Student questions:*

- The Bellingham Promise explains what we want to accomplish for all students. How has your experience matched what is described in the Promise?
- Where do you see yourself in the Promise Outcomes?

- What are some ways you have been able to explore and develop a passion?
  - What has helped you to do so? What is missing that would be more helpful?
- What makes an activity meaningful for you?
- We believe all students are exceptional, what could we do better to meet the needs of all students?

*Teacher questions:*

- The Bellingham Promise explains what we want to accomplish for all students. How has your experience matched what is described in the Promise?
- Thinking of your exceptional students, where do you see them in the Promise Outcomes?
- What are some ways you have been able to support students in exploring and developing a passion?
  - What has helped you to do so? What is missing that would be more helpful?
- What makes an activity meaningful for students?
- We believe all students are exceptional, what could we do better to meet the needs of all students?

*Parents/guardian questions:*

- The Bellingham Promise explains what we want to accomplish for all students. How has your child's experience matched what is described in the Promise?
- Where do you see your child in the Promise Outcomes?
- What are some ways your child has been able to explore and develop a passion?
  - What has helped them to do so? What is missing that would be more helpful?
- What makes an activity meaningful for your child?
- We believe all students are exceptional, what could we do better to meet the needs of all students?

At the end of the small group time, Dr. Baker asked each table group to share briefly what they had discussed. Following is a summary of responses to the guiding questions that were gathered:

- I see myself pursuing my passion for the arts.
- The flexibility at Options High School has been great.
- I've spent the last two year focusing on visual arts using technology.
- Math teacher Ben Goodwin's name came up again and again.
- I don't relate to school use of technology, it can be dull.
- Regarding the math curriculum, there is good energy in elementary and middle school, but the high school curriculum is dry.
- Appreciates being able to pursue passions outside of school and still be able to keep up with class work using technology.
- Have spent time balancing homework, social justice issues, engaging with legislators in Olympia, and exploring new classes such as woodworking and AP environmental science.
- Appreciates that there is recognition for all students being exceptional and valuing student input with opportunities like this.

- Students having a connection with faculty at the school is valuable.
- Student activities are meaningful.
- The district needs to have more staff of color and also staff who are queer.
- There is now a focus on students who are exceptional in their own way.
- It is important to have teachers who genuinely care, and helpful for teachers to have various of ways helping students to learn.
- Action outcomes came up a lot.
- The eight-period schedule and the opportunity to take a variety of classes has allowed me to think of myself as an artist (I now do watercolor outside of class) and to also take band for four years.
- Cross country is a good beginning sport for a lot of students. In team sports, there tends to be a group who have come up through the system which then leads to a closed society with a toxic culture. It's difficult to change that culture. It's good to have a variety of options for kids to pursue.
- Labels are powerful and play into how we see ourselves. If you weren't identified early on as a leader, it's difficult to develop that and leaders get more opportunities.
- When students are pulled out of class for accelerated programs, it leads to other students feeling they aren't "smart" because they aren't also being pulled out.
- When students get to high school and can develop passions, they see themselves differently.
- More opportunities are needed in elementary and middle school to develop passions.
- It's easier to learn math and science when you can relate it to other things, such as music.
- EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) strategies came up in terms of opportunities such as robotic club.
- Opportunities to learn life skills are powerful.
- The Promise is working for the students who are here tonight, but how do we engage those who are not?
- I am thankful to be in a school district that talks about gender neutral bathrooms and high-quality equipment in shop.
- We need to put a high value on mental health. When students are struggling, they want someone to ask them what's going on.
- Be proud of who you are.
- College isn't the only way - every student can be successful.
- Staff members agree that every student in the system is exceptional, and if they don't see it they aren't looking hard enough.
- The size of a group matters when supporting passions.
- It's important that students know they are seen by adults and are included, and there are multiple ways for students to feel included.
- For students who don't see their own potential, we need to be asking them questions, so we can help them find and see their own potential.
- Clubs and extracurricular activities can help students to pursue their passions. Personalized experiences for kids are important, and it's important that the experiences are intentionally designed.
- How do we create meaningful activities?
- We need to make sure students have choice.

- Students need to be connected to the present and to the future.
- Students can and should apply their own personal connection to activities.
- It is important that we continue to do equity work.
- I have a son who is dyslexic who had access to the Barton Orton-Gillingham program in elementary school, but we are not seeing it as much in middle school.
- Electives in high school are important.
- We are a family who moved here two years ago, and we feel very supported by the district.
- The Northwest Career and Technical Institute is amazing for some students.
- I appreciate the woodworking program.
- The focus on diversity is important.
- When highly capable students get to high school there is a rich course of offerings, but how do we offer those types of opportunities to younger students, so they can thrive?
- As a parent, I recognize that the focus on inclusion and the whole child is so important. How do we get everyone in the system to believe it so deeply so that it will change lives?

Dr. Baker thanked everyone for being here. The Promise is a living document that has seen many changes over time. The information shared tonight will affect the direction of the district over the next few years, and the notes from this meeting will be added to the website in the coming weeks.

Ms. Mason stated that the board is interested in hearing student voice, and this meeting has been a highlight for her in her time on the school board. She thanked all who attended.

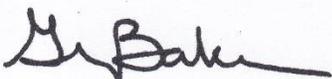
Mr. Benjamin adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

**Approved:**



Douglas Benjamin, School Board President

**Attest:**



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

*Minutes approved:* February 19, 2020