Dear Community,

The wisdom of the ages tells us that a way to overcome tough times is to pour ourselves into loving and helping others.

Our Bellingham community and district has been rocked by tragedy a few times in recent months and years, making our work even more laser-focused on how we can support all our students, families and staff.

Over the course of the past decade, we have developed and refined The Bellingham Promise. Most recently we have updated it with additional language on equity, diversity and inclusion, emphasizing the support and needs of all students.

To achieve what we have thus far, it takes an equity-focused school board. Their outstanding leadership in this area was honored when they received the Excellence in Equity award in Washington state. (See more on page 7.)

Our district success is also the result of a high performing and dedicated staff, all supported by a visionary community with a deep love toward our 12,000 exceptional students.

You may have also heard that the district was recently recognized with the state’s 2020 superintendent of the year award by the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA).

This is a great honor and reflects the hard work of all of our staff. I dedicate it to the equity-focused staff we currently have, to those we have recently lost, and to the loving community in which we live.

Here’s to 2020 and moving forward together!

GREG BAKER
Superintendent of Schools
The Bellingham Promise

Vision
We, as a community, make a collective commitment to Bellingham’s children. We will empower every child to discover and develop their passions, contribute to their community, and achieve a fulfilling and productive life.

Mission
We collectively commit that our students are cared for and respected, and that they will graduate from our schools prepared for success. All students will be exceptional in their own way, with strong character, a passion for learning, and ready for the widest range of educational and vocational options to support a diversity of life choices.

Core Beliefs
We believe:
- all children should be loved,
- the whole child is important,
- every child can learn at high levels,
- early learning and development are critical,
- learning is lifelong and essential to a high quality of life,
- compassion and service build community,
- teaching children to do their best involves self-reflection and reaching higher,
- diversity enhances a strong and healthy community, and
- together we achieve more than alone.

Outcomes
We develop students and graduates who are...

- readers and writers,
- scientists and mathematicians,
- historians and global thinkers,
- artists and performers,
- artisans and technicians,
- multilingual readers and speakers,
- skilled users of technology and information,
- leaders, collaborators and team players,
- dependable and responsible people,
- confident individuals who continuously challenge themselves,
- respectful and compassionate humans,
- honest and ethical individuals who act with integrity,
- healthy, active individuals,
- critical thinkers and problem solvers,
- effective communicators,
- innovators and creators, and
- well-rounded community members engaged with the broader world.

Key Strategies
We will accomplish this by focusing on...

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
We envision and strive for a more diverse, inclusive and equitable organization. Focus areas include, but are not limited to, race and ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, language and culture.

- Innovation and Flexibility
We support the diverse needs and learning styles of our students by being innovative and flexible. We embrace change and creative thinking and know that this requires a high level of trust and engagement with our community.

- Great Teaching with Strong Support
High quality instruction occurs every day in every classroom, where we establish a safe and engaging learning environment. We support culturally-responsive instruction through effective leadership, ongoing staff learning, and a diverse staff reflective of our students.

- A One Schoolhouse Approach
Our schools are part of a larger One Schoolhouse, and we focus on taking care of each other. We provide an equitable distribution of resources and services to ensure excellence for all students.

- Early Childhood Education
We support students and families from prenatal through graduation. We invest in a strong early childhood program because of its powerful long-term return for our students and community.

- Student, Family, and Community Engagement
We develop partnerships and engage with a wide variety of stakeholders, including families and community partners, to support the success of all students.

bellinghamschools.org
Alderwood, Parkview and Sunnyland elementary school rebuilds

Both Parkview and Alderwood elementary rebuild projects are on schedule and in the final stages of design. Parkview has been submitted for permit with the city and Alderwood is still in the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process. Once the CUP is approved, we will then submit for permit with the county. We hope to break ground on each project in spring 2020, with completion of these schools scheduled for fall 2021.

The Parkview Educational Specifications/Design Advisory Committee has recently made two adjustments to its recommendations to enhance the new school’s design and functionality. The first adjustment is that the district purchased property adjacent to the new school, allowing us to move the stormwater system above ground, expanding and improving the future drop-off/pick-up area.

The second adjustment is that, working with our consultant, we have re-worked the plans to retain the current (old) gym for use as a multi-purpose/flexible space in the new school. This will be used for additional cafeteria space, large group projects, buddy activities, storage, after-school activities, performance space when the new gym is in use, and community rentals.

Both of these adjustments fit within the current budget.

The Sunnyland Educational Specifications/Design Advisory Committee held its first meeting in the fall, and will begin the design process in 2020. We anticipate this new school will break ground in spring 2021 and tentatively be completed by fall 2022.

District Office

After gathering feedback from the community, the decision has been made to build a new District Office in Barkley Village. Because of both the cost savings and the opportunity for future growth, the input was overwhelmingly positive, with most preferring the move to Barkley as opposed to renovating our current 111-year-old building.

The new District Office will continue to serve as administrative offices and as a space for districtwide professional development. In addition, the current plan is to incorporate a childcare center and space for nonprofit partners, further serving our community and families.

The school district purchased the land on Barkley Boulevard and has contracted with Bellingham-based RMC Architects as partner on this project. A design advisory committee will launch in early 2020, with construction beginning in 2021.

Winter 2020

Facilities projects are made possible thanks to the support of our local voters who approved school district bonds in both 2013 and 2018. We have made significant progress on the following improvements and rebuilds.

High school fields

Rainy weather slowed progress on the new softball and baseball fields at Squalicum High School. Weather permitting, we look to complete these fields in time for spring sports. Planning is in progress for the next phase of Bellingham High School turf fields for baseball and softball and the multi-purpose field for football and soccer. Those fields should be complete by late fall 2020.

Read committee updates, view current photos and watch videos at bellinghamschools.org/facilities-projects for all of our bond projects.

#RoederHistory

As Bellingham Public Schools moves our administrative offices in coming years, we want to be sure to honor the long history of the Roeder building.

The building at 1306 Dupont Street was built in 1908 and previously served as an elementary school until the early 1970s. It has served as the District Office for more than five decades, housing most of the district’s administrative offices from curriculum to human resources, accounting to technology. It has also been the location for school board meetings and 50 years of professional development for staff.

If you have Roeder history to share (stories, ephemera or photos), please contact the Department of Communications and Community Relations at 360-676-6511 or email margaret.gude@bellinghamschools.org. We hope to compile stories and artifacts and share them in a meaningful way before we close the building.
In Bellingham Public Schools, we have an operations and technology capital levy on the upcoming special election ballot on **Feb. 11, 2020**. These would replace two voter-approved levies from 2016 that will expire soon.

Levies are for learning. These levies **pay for nearly 25 percent of the cost of educational services** not adequately funded by the state.

**Operations Levy**
Our upcoming replacement operations levy supports teaching and learning:

- Pays for teachers, counselors, nurses and other staff
- Lowers class size
- Funds other basic operations and programs such as safety, Special Education, English Language Learners and Highly Capable
- Provides arts, music, athletics and other programs for the whole child
- Supports food services/wellness
- Supports field trips and Project Free Education

**Technology Capital Levy**
The replacement technology capital levy pays for:

- School wired/wireless networks
- Adaptive technologies and devices for children with special needs
- Computers, software, and digital curriculum licensing
- 1:1 (one-to-one) technology initiative to support learning and prepare students for the future
- School safety measures
- Staff who maintain equipment and provide training
- Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) support
- Replacement maintenance equipment and vehicles
- Portables and replacement windows in some schools
- Education of online safety, empathy, responsibility and digital citizenship
What is the impact?

The replacement operations levy and replacement technology capital levy total between $47–51 million per year for each of the four years.

For example, for a home at Bellingham’s median property value ($375,000), the change in total bond and levy rates will result in an increase of approximately $10.94* per month in 2021, then the combined rate decreases over the duration of the levies.

How much we collect per year for replacement operations levy:

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How much we collect per year for replacement technology capital levy:

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How can I vote?

Voters within Bellingham Public Schools’ attendance area will receive a ballot in the mail in January 2020 to vote on two school levies that are scheduled to expire. Ballots must be mailed and postmarked or returned to the drop-box at the Whatcom County Courthouse South Parking Lot, 201 Grand Ave. by Feb. 11, 2020.

Senior Citizens Exemption Information

Qualifying senior citizens and persons with disabilities may be exempt from paying school levies. For more information, please call the County Assessor’s office at 676-6790 or visit: co.whatcom.wa.us/assessor

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REMEMBER TO VOTE!

Ballots due Tuesday, Feb. 11!
Kulshan Middle School is celebrating its 25th anniversary this school year. Since the school name came from a Coast Salish word, the community wanted to choose a logo that held special meaning for the original inhabitants of the land in and around the school.

In 1995, competing against the orca whale and the king salmon, the thunderbird won out as the school logo via student vote.

After choosing the thunderbird for a mascot, local artist Frank Lawrence of the Lummi Nation, was commissioned to design the school’s thunderbird logo. Mr. Lawrence coordinated all of the elements of the thunderbird into a balanced, easily recognizable logo for all uses at the school. The thunderbird’s large wingspan and strong talons reflect the bird’s mighty speed and strength. Lawrence incorporated the Kulshan school colors of dark blue (representing the ocean), a deep red (representing the color of the sky when Mt. Baker erupted) and silver (representing the salmon).

Lummi Nation guests visited the school in fall 2019 and shared stories of the late Frank Lawrence with staff, including Kulshan principal Meagan Dawson. The gathering began with a traditional Lummi welcome which included blanketng and gifts. Several members of the late Mr. Lawrence’s family were in attendance, including his wife Tina (Olsen) Lawrence, his sister Helen Lawrence, his children and grandchildren, as well as his friends Steve Solomon and Cynthia Wilson.

Go to promise.bellinghamschools.org to read more about both of the stories on this page and view more photos.

Squalicum English class explores the power of words and images

In Squalicum High School’s Protest Art and Literature class, students have a chance to explore how artists, musicians, poets and writers from different historical periods have paved the way for change in our country.

As part of a class field trip this fall, students visited both the Whatcom Museum and the Lummi Nation where they saw current examples of art and words being used effectively to make a statement. They also were able to interact with the artists themselves.

At the museum, the students had a direct conversation with the artist Ed Bereal who was on hand to discuss his art in Wanted: Ed Bereal for Disturbing the Peace. As part of the museum’s Drawing Connections program, the students also spent time in a workshop creating some of their own art by personifying a social problem. At the Lummi Nation, students visited several story poles and spoke with Lummi hosts.

Words and images have power. That is the main message that teacher Michelle Campbell wants her students to take away from the class.

“Ultimately, what I hope to teach is that our country is really in the peoples’ hands,” Campbell says, “and that we have a lot of power to affect change.”

“It’s about art and words being used to tell a story, connect with people and inspire change.”
What inspired you to run for school board?

KATIE ROSE: It’s something that I’ve thought about for a while. When I was a kid, Hillary Clinton was my hero. I used to read the voters’ pamphlet for fun, even before I could vote. I think I’ve always had that mindset that I’d run for public office, but it was one of those things where it didn’t ever seem to be the optimal time in my life to be running. I’m a single mom with two kids in elementary school and I have two jobs. But at the same time it felt like, even though that’s a challenge, I can make it work, and I think having that kind of voice and perspective can be valuable.

Can you share some reflections about Bellingham Public Schools?

KATIE ROSE: I want us to think more about how we’re interacting with families at every level. I think Bellingham Public Schools has made incredible progress in such a short amount of time to do what’s right for all kids and families. But I also think about how so many of our parents experienced school and how it was likely very different than their children’s current experience. I don’t want any students’ school experience to be dependent upon their parents’ social skills or past experience in our schools. We’ve done so much to help families, and at the same time, there are so many barriers to parents getting involved.

What are you most looking forward to?

KATIE ROSE: Mostly I’m just excited to learn. I like to get nerdy, and I am really excited about the way that systems work together. Coming from the non-profit world, there is a lot of focus on working with clients one-to-one, but you don’t always see how all of these pieces intersect with each other. Our school district is a big institution that interacts with a lot of local groups offering different services. I’m looking forward to better understanding how we all work together and how it helps our students and families.

Which part of The Bellingham Promise is most important to you?

I really love the idea of The Bellingham Promise, and there’s clearly so much support from the board and our community. To me, the spirit of The Promise is that your child is a person and we care about who they are and who they become. It’s really that simple.
Book club at lunch inspires readers

We love our community partners

Monthly book clubs at all four middle schools are proving popular during lunch time thanks to a partnership with the Bellingham Public Library.

The lunch time book club launched in 2013 at Kulshan Middle School and was so popular expanded to all four middle schools by 2015. Jennifer Lovchik, the teen services librarian at the public library, visits one school each week, making the rounds to all four middle schools during the month.

“Lunch time book groups are one of my favorite parts of my job,” Lovchik said. “I love hearing the enthusiasm and joy the students have for books and characters. Their energy is infectious!”

Lovchik said she learns about what resonates with students, both developmentally and interest-wise.

During the club meetings, students bring their lunch to the library and talk books. Every meeting has a theme which guides discussion, then students share their favorite books. Each club ends with Lovchik raffling off free advance reader copies of new books which she receives from Village Books. The book club is open to everyone.

“I think reading is important as part of a person’s intellectual and emotional development no matter the reader’s age,” said Lovchik. “A reader learns so much when engaged in a book: language, history, sociology, interpersonal communication, to name a few.”

Lovchik said more than anything, she hopes the lunch time book club encourages students to stay engaged in reading through middle school and beyond.

PROPELLING TEACHER AND CLASSROOM INNOVATION

The Bellingham Public School Foundation’s grant program connects staff and students to resources and opportunities that enhance learning in classrooms and schools and help students reach their full potential.

In this donor-supported, competitive program, more than $50,000 in Foundation grants were given out districtwide in December: a total of 30 Enrichment & Innovation grants (up to $1,000 each) and seven BIG IDEA grants (up to $6,000 each).

Some “big ideas” funded for this coming year include:

FAMILY MAKERSPACE MONDAYS

A new makerspace that creates community invites all Parkview Elementary families to re-imagine family game night. Families come together to make, code, create, problem-solve and share alongside one another. This grant will cover two years.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLOCK PARTY

A Back-to-School Block Party kicks off the 2020 school year by connecting all students in Bellingham Public Schools to community partners. On-site services will include free student immunizations, athletic physicals, haircuts, backpacks, dental screenings and before and after-school care options. Live music and food trucks will add to the festive atmosphere.

WINDOW AND MIRRORS

A One Schoolhouse elementary library seeks to provide current, diverse literature to all kindergarten through grade five students. The titles will reflect our diverse community of learners and feature protagonists and experiences from under-represented communities. In December, more than $50,000 in grants were given out throughout the district. Collaborating with local librarians and consultants, elementary librarians will develop a shared collection of the highest quality, most engaging titles in diverse children’s literature. This grant will reach all 14 elementary schools.