

Reopening Schools Advisory Committee

10 a.m. to noon July 8, 2020

Draft notes

Members Present

- Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Kristi Dominguez, co-chair
- Executive Director of Operations Jessica Sankey, co-chair
- Department of Teaching and Learning representatives: Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland, Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke, Director of Special Education Mike Haberman, Director Amy Carder, Director Trina Hall, Director Charisse Berner
- School administrators Sonia Bell, Matt Whitten, Ari Feeney
- Certificated teachers Ronni Weston, James Walsh, Shirley Prichard, Nic Castona,
- Teacher on special assignment (TOSA) for early childhood Nina Ballew
- Paraeducator Karanbir Deol
- School nurse Alyssa Johnson
- Safety and wellness program specialist Nyla Thursday
- Front office staff: registrar Robin Montague, elementary principal administrative assistant Gladys Serrano
- Bellingham Education Association (BEA) president Lisa Peterson
- Bellingham Association of School Employees (BASE) president Rebecca Sauter
- Parent Advisory Committee representatives Jami Pitman and Samantha Dang
- Student Advisory Committee representatives Nigel Naylor and Serene Salam
- Whatcom County Health Department representative Laurette Rasmussen
- Bellingham medical community representative Dr. Sara Mostad
- Opportunity Council representative David Webster
- YMCA representative Shannon Millican
- Director of Transportation Rae Anne Thon
- Director of Food Services Patrick Durgan
- Director of Building and Grounds Mike Anderson
- Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Bob Kuehl
- Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Jackie Brawley
- Executive Director of Educational Technology Kurt Gazow
- Executive Director of Family Engagement Isabel Meaker
- Mental health coordinator Chris Cochran

Welcome

Family and staff survey

Committee co-chair Executive Director of Operations Jessica Sankey introduced a few results from the family/community survey and staff survey administered in June. More data and the survey summaries are available on the committee website. She shared a few key take-aways, including that a large number of responses indicate high interest in return-to-school planning; most families are interested in returning to school and having in-person classroom experiences for their children; staff indicated slightly less comfort than families in returning to school.

COVID-19 physical health information and considerations for reopening schools

Committee member and local infectious disease physician Dr. Sara Mostad shared a summary of information from medical professionals across the county who are considering how to support schools in reopening with less risk to students. Two resources shared:

- Harvard School of Public Health report, [*Schools for Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools*](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics report, [*COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-Entry*](#)

Key considerations for reopening schools in light of the medical community's most current understanding of COVID-19:

- Focus on risk reduction
- Wearing masks, maintaining physical distancing, washing hands and maintaining class cohorts are all impactful strategies to plan to implement
- Prioritize staying home when sick for staff and students
- Consider an on-line app for a health attestation, similar to many hospitals and workplaces
- The community health experts are charged with (and working on) making COVID-19 testing very accessible
- There is a role that schools can play in contact-tracing, with clear protocols when a positive COVID-19 case arises

COVID-19 mental and emotional health information and reopening schools considerations

Director of Teaching and Learning Trina Hall said that this conversation begun in our last meeting when the group gained a shared understanding of the increased mental and emotional health concerns that the Department of Health anticipates as the pandemic continues and children have less opportunity to build connections and practice relationship skills. Trina shared the social-emotional learning framework and curricula adopted by our district three years ago and the growth of that work throughout our district. Trina acknowledged that more support for students will be necessary, and introduced our district's first mental health coordinator, Chris Cochran, who will begin in this new role this summer.

Reopening school planning structure

Committee co-chair Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Kristi Dominguez shared the planning structure with advisory members. A large series of work teams, comprising of nearly 400 staff members, with student, parent and community member representation, will begin work the week of July 13. Step one is a facilitator meeting scheduled for July 14, where work group facilitators will have a chance to share much of the information from the first two advisory group meetings. Work teams are charged with developing a plan for their area of expertise by the end of July; future advisory meetings will include work team reports.

Stay connected

Meeting notes and supporting resources will be available on the BPS Reopening Schools Advisory Committee webpage. Our next meeting is July 22.