



Reopening Schools Advisory Committee

10 a.m. to noon June 24, 2020

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, Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) Rey Ramos
- School administrators Sonia Bell, Matt Whitten, Ari Feeney, Tom Gresham
- Certificated teachers Sarah Rose, Ronni Weston, James Walsh, Shirley Prichard, Nic Castona, Jeff Nyman
- 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

Welcome

Dr. Baker welcomed the Bellingham Public Schools Reopening Schools Advisory Committee members to the first meeting via Zoom. The group is tasked with reviewing resources about reopening schools: best practices nationally and internationally; national and state health and education guidelines; and local input. Reopening schools is a challenge facing every school district in the United States; in Bellingham, we are fortunate to have a strong and supportive community dedicated to education for all children. The advisory group members represent diverse perspectives across our schools and among our families and bring broad expertise to the planning process.



Introductions

Committee co-chair Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Kristi Dominguez and co-chair Executive Director of Operations Jessica Sankey introduced themselves and had the group broken into smaller breakout groups. Each committee member shared perspectives and feelings about the reopening of schools and the committee's purpose.

Advisory Committee Charter

Kristi and Jessica shared the purpose of the Reopening School Advisory Committee is to guide the development of a district plan for the re-opening of schools in the fall of 2020. This includes both the instructional and operational aspects. The reopening schools advisory committee is an advisory body to the superintendent and executive team. Bellingham Public Schools is preparing for a variety of options next school year, including a remote reopen and a partial in-person reopen schedule subject to intermittent closures.

Setting the Stage

Jessica shared that our district is guided by its strong strategic plan, The Bellingham Promise. A core belief of the Bellingham Promise is that all children should be loved. In these unprecedented times, we continue to articulate and refine the values that drive our work and planning. During the emergency closure, our education system's priorities shifted to center health and wellbeing, and we know that as students were home from school, they missed the opportunity to build strong relationships with peers and adults at school. As we plan to reopen school, we are going to focus on health, equity, relationships, family engagement and rigorous learning opportunities for all students.

Schedules

Kristi told the group that while the daily school schedule for fall 2020 is still being planned, there are a few givens that drive our planning. Our school buildings are unlikely to be big enough to accommodate all the students who typically attend daily, given emerging recommendation about physical distancing and other health and safety measures. Our district will plan for three scenarios for students:

- Some students will likely attend schools in our buildings part-time and engage in at-home learning part time;
- Some students may be prioritized to spend more days/hours in schools;
- Some students will engage in at-home learning full time.

Committee members were assigned partners and engaged via chat to share reflections and surprises based on what they've learned thus far in the meeting and from discussions.

Health Implications

Jessica shared that the planning process to reopen schools will take into account five elements of health risk mitigation strategies: hygiene, distancing, screening, face covering and culture. Culture is especially important as we shift from a system that honors work over recovering from illnesses. In the current environment, it will be important to acknowledge and stay home when ill.



Our community at large has been involved in health planning and a focus on health equity for many years. The Healthy Whatcom Committee, led by the Whatcom County Health Department, uses an understanding of the social determinants of health to identify health priorities in our community. Similarly, our school district focuses on education equity and ensuring that all children have access to a high-quality, appropriate education. During this epidemic, it is important to recognize the intersection of health and education and the impact on health the education system has and vice versa.

We also acknowledge the social-emotional health impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Reports from the Washington State Department of Health predict an increase in depression and suicide in our state in the fall of 2020. As we plan to reopen schools, it is important to address the social-emotional needs of students and staff as well as the virus-related health needs.

Planning Process

Kristi reviewed the group's schedule and process. She said the Reopening Schools Advisory Committee will offer feedback on plans prepared by a large network of district work teams. Operational work teams (buildings and grounds, food services, transportation) begin meeting the week of June 29. Instructional work teams will convene beginning July 13. The advisory committee will share suggestions with the work teams and ultimately offer feedback to the superintendent and the district executive team.

District representatives also convened a Whatcom County reopening schools group so that all seven Whatcom school districts share information about back-to-school planning.

Stay Connected

Meeting notes and supporting resources will be available on the BPS Reopening Schools Advisory Committee webpage.