



Reopening Schools Advisory Committee

10 a.m. to noon, August 5, 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, Director Charisse Berner
- School administrators Sonia Bell (excused), Matt Whitten, Ari Feeney, Tom Gresham
- Certificated teachers Ronni Weston, James Walsh, Shirley Prichard, Nic Castona, Sara Rose, Jeff Nyman
- Teacher on special assignment (TOSA) for early childhood Nina Ballew
- Paraeducator Karanbir Deol (excused)
- 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 (excused) and Serene Salam
- Whatcom County Health Department representative Laurette Rasmussen (excused)
- 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, JoAn Steiner
- 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
- Executive Assistant Kris Newberry

Guests: Volunteer Coordinator Jennifer Gaer, B-3 Specialist Debbie Haney, Administrative Assistant Angie Ritchey, Deans of Students Tommy Lingbloom & Brian Pahl, School administrator Nicole Talley

Opening and update from Dr. Baker

Commented [SD1]: suggest add titles for these people for transparency)



Superintendent Greg Baker opened the meeting. He reported the Whatcom County Health Department is recommending that schools in our county not open for in-person instruction. In our district, we have been preparing for in-person, all online, and a hybrid model of instruction; our plan is to begin the 2020-21 school year in 100% online mode.

We have developed “stages” to coordinate our reopening plan; at this point our district is in our stage 1 and we anticipate starting school in stage 1. To prepare for all-online learning, we have made some calendar adjustments by removing three professional development days during the school year and moving them to the first week of September. This will allow for professional development of all staff as they prepare for 100% remote learning. Dr. Baker will announce the stage 1/all online reopening and the new first day of school today to the community.

In the communication to the public, Dr. Baker will also address some common concerns from students and parents. For example, we know that online learning needs to look different this fall than it did in the spring—we appreciate the grace our community extended to us in the spring as we closed down our buildings and shifted to online education very quickly according to the Governor’s order; this fall we will have more robust online learning opportunities with regular check-in times for live interaction between students and teachers. We also know that students and their families have requested consistency in the learning platforms that will be used, and we plan to standardize the use of Teams in the Microsoft Suite. Some students require an all-online model—as opposed to a hybrid model, where some students may return to buildings when the health environment allows—and we are building a Bellingham Virtual Learning option for students who want that choice.

Executive Director of Operations Jessica Sankey, co-chair reiterated so many of the parts and pieces that went into today’s announcement were refined and adjusted as a result of the Advisory group’s feedback. We have been able to share that feedback with the work teams, who helped further refine plans. This work is a culmination of hours that members have put in and district leadership is very grateful.

Dr. Baker and others answered questions about the following topics:

- A committee member asked if parents will be able to have greater roles this fall than they did in the spring? Dr. Baker replied that we are working hard to figure out some creative solutions.
- There was a question about physical education (PE). The elementary PE work team reported they are keeping our eye on what’s going on nationally with Open and Shape America. PE teachers are meeting with the outdoor education group to branch out into other frameworks. They are coming up with a lot of creative ideas that we can run with when the format allows for it.
- Question on extracurricular sports: No clear answer yet. The Washington State Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) guides competitive school athletics and is adjusting their regulations based on the evolving health landscape. There’s a strong desire for us to get our kids engaged in athletics and activities and learning. The challenge will be if we can’t have any kids come on site to take a math class, are we OK that they’re coming on site to participate in football practice?
- One of the limitations to live learning in the spring via videoconferencing tools was not having equal access to technology and internet. Dr. Baker indicated the district feels confident that we have a good range of tools to get them basic internet access. Our tech team has a list of tools to be able to help families get connected the next level of



- connectivity though whether the internet access works well is a different question. The drain on bandwidth will be a constant challenge for everybody.
- As the district starts to roll out information to families, what is the plan in sharing information about bell schedules, meals, technology assistance, family engagement opportunities? In the message out today, you'll start to see examples of what the school day could look like based upon the work of our staff and our work group. It is going to keep changing as our work groups keep refining what those schedules look like.
 - Child care is a national issue. We can't solve it all alone as a district; we will continue to do our best. We continue to work with our community partners who are experts in providing child care. We will work hard to use our facilities for them the best we can. We've been wrestling with the concept of learning pods and the huge inequity issue; solving this issue will take the community. We have two of our community members on this committee, David Webster and Shannon Millican, who are helping us navigate this. Co-chair Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Kristi Dominguez is also working right now at the state level and conversations as well legislative session.
 - The Family Resource Center has been a great support. Executive Director of Family Engagement Isabel Meaker reminded everyone to keep referring families to them. Some don't understand the even though the buildings are closed, the resource center is open.
 - A question was raised about GRADS. We don't have any students coming to school until we figured out how to bring them in safely, and we have safety procedures in place

The committee then transitioned into work team updates.

Elementary Schedule Work Team Update: The purpose of the Elementary Schedule Work Team was to examine various schedule models and determine feasibility, think about how they align with the Promise and the work that we do and to anticipate adjustments. The team looked at the idea of what does great teaching with strong support look like whether that's in a remote learning setting, an intervention model, a hybrid or a fully 100% face-to-face model. We have heard loud and clear especially through this advisory that we need to be clear and have communication that's readable and digestible for families. The work team tried to prioritize, knowing that our goal is to have kids back in the building in some capacity at some point this year, when it's safe. They provided a 'sample' schedule of what remote learning could look like.

The committee broke up into breakout rooms via Zoom for reflection.

Breakout room reflections:

- The structure and a clear schedule could be helpful for families with multiple kids.
- How do you create these very individualized schedules and what part of that is teacher-directed school/district-directed and family-directed? How do you help families navigate what these schedules will look like? We're suggesting there's a lot of time given to helping families process the schedules.
- We may not have families that can fully support their student. We need to be aware that while we have a structure in place and good instruction breaks, we may unintentionally cause stress and families lives. Having a common structure reduces anxiety. A lot of discussion of how to support the families.
- They were glad to have at least one platform to work with but understand that students and families need a lot of support in navigating these platforms and learning routines.
- How are we going to support teachers to manage all these pieces that are moving and shifting in a very live environment? Managing the asynchronous and synchronous time we all recognize that in the next three months, it will play an impact in terms of the



public perception of remote learning. What does that mean for a family that has have children in multiple levels and especially in terms of working families. Does the high schooler put everything on hold to help manage elementary and middle school siblings? What happens if kids are in different spaces like daycare? Will daycare also be connected to our programs? What's the thoughts and strategies around connecting to daycare centers around that again special services? How are kids going to receive special services throughout this program knowing that we have a limited supply of awesome paras.

- We liked the flexibility within that structure for families. It was predictable for families to be able to meet their needs. A big theme of ours was how do we use all the adults in our building to help support our students.

Family Engagement Work Team: This work team would like to use the term “equitable collaborations” in place of “family engagement” to shift the narrative and the thinking around work with families: the goal is equitable collaboration with all families.

Five objectives:

1. Establish relationships and build trust
2. Listen to individual families’ hopes and needs
3. Honor families as a child's first teacher
4. Support families with a variety of resources
5. Co-create a plan for communication with each family

The work team is making recommendations re: time, tools and training.

- Time:
Dedicated time to collaborate with each family
Dedicated and flexible hours for weekly family engagement
Monthly/quarterly collaboration with family and student
- Tools:
Family Survey
Documentation of communication and outcomes
“One pager” guide for teachers
- Training and support - Teachers
Training and support – Families

The work team recognized that there were many voices that were not able to include. We would like a more representative group of people to move forward, especially including parents and family members and students. If we just create a plan in isolation, then we are continuing the same way.

The committee broke up into breakout rooms via Zoom for reflection.

Breakout room reflections:

- There is a strong desire to get more communication between families and teachers in a safe manner using their personal devices without teacher using their personal phone number. Could “Remind” help?



- Stressing the importance of this family engagement: it really needs to be primary and there are a lot of challenges with it. Where is that time built in for teachers and families and putting it on everyone's level. How do we build capacity in our teachers and also increase comfort for both families and teachers? We liked it the family can define the communication that they prefer we think it's powerful our big thing is that we're going to need to time to communicate appropriately with our families on a regular basis. Our school day is going to be full as it looks like there's a lot that teachers will be asked to do during the day plus answering emails and leading team meetings with families. Wednesday should be used to access our families. Using creative spaces and times was really important.

Special Education Work Team started sharing its work and will continue its presentation at the next advisory meeting:

1. Families First
 - a. Create time to listen and plan early
2. In Person Pioneers
 - a. Create safe spaces for in-person learning now
3. Streamline collaboration, communication
4. Expand the Toolbox
5. Do No Harm
 - a. Avoid COVID segregation or COVID disabilities

The next committee meeting is Aug. 12.