Dear community,

Happy 2022! As we finish the first semester of the 2021-22 school year this month, there is much to reflect on and much to be grateful for. I would like to ring in the New Year with a big shoutout to our staff who continue to do a stellar job teaching and supporting our students. Their mission has remained clear and laser-focused on great teaching, safe schools, and supporting our kids.

Inside, we share a story about the staff efforts to help high school students design their future, supporting them in choosing career paths. We also highlight two teachers who have achieved statewide and national acclaim. They are representative of the passion, collaboration and good heart of all of our educators.

We had some challenges in the fall that were unnerving for our community. We are happy to work alongside law enforcement to resolve safety issues when they arise. It is comforting to be able to go through our days teaching, helping, comforting, feeding...all the things we do in the district daily to support families and students.

And finally, the recommendation of our Facilities Planning Task Force was sent to the School Board in December. The proposal to put forward a 2022 bond was accepted.

I am proud to live and work in a community that envisions a bright future for our students!

GREG BAKER
Superintendent of Schools

Vaccine clinics for children ages 5 to 11 have been taking place since November. See story on page 7 about what happened when this little one got his vaccine!
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,
• 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.

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.

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.

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.

Living The Bellingham Promise

Students across the district collected food, clothing and supplies for our county neighbors affected by the November floods, highlighting The Promise outcomes and core beliefs about compassion and service.

PHOTO TOP OF PAGE 1 AND RIGHT: Silver Beach Elementary fifth graders load a van with canned goods collected as part of a school food drive. PHOTO TOP OF PAGE ABOVE: Fill the Van events, sponsored by our district high schools, were held on Dec. 9.
High schools unite for post-high school planning lessons

We spend a lot of our time focused on the 13+ years our students spend within our schools and programs, and we also work to help our students envision the life waiting for them after high school as well.

Washington state requires all graduates to complete a “High School and Beyond Plan” (HSBP). The HSBP is one tool to help students achieve the “fulfilling and productive life” envisioned in The Bellingham Promise.

Collective commitment

This year our high schools have kicked it up a level, teaching a set of common lessons weekly during advisory classes, and increasing focus on an online portfolio and portal students can add to as they progress through high school.

Heather Steele, career and technical education (CTE) teacher and Bellingham High School administrative intern, has led a team designing and coordinating the HSBP lessons in partnership with the High School and Beyond coordinators at all four of our high schools. Each weekly lesson is carefully designed so students across all our high schools engage in the same learning and activities.

“Engaging with high school and beyond planning benefits students and families,” Steele said.

Advisory teachers are a resource for students and help build community and connection in a non-academic setting. Sharing lessons across the school also provides weekly structure during advisory time, which is also a space for homework, announcements and other important activities.

Counselors, families, advisory teachers, high school and beyond coordinators and students partner together to help build a cohesive, customized plan for each student. The plan is revisited regularly, and then spring of senior year, counselors check off this graduation requirement.

Discover and develop

“I’m more open about what I want to do with my future,” one ninth grade student in Kati Berreth’s advisory class said during a recent lesson, where students explored careers and “hearted,” or bookmarked, them for future reference. “The lessons are helping me understand what I want to do.”

That particular lesson, taught in November 2021, focused on exploring the career planner module within the HSBP, where students can explore career strands, for example “Health” or “Law.” Each career page shows information on training, skills needed, and potential income.

“I’ve had this career bookmarked since the sixth grade,” another student said. “I knew I wanted to do something in the medical field.”

Other careers being explored around the room included working with animals, real estate, registered nurse and contractor/builder.

Students had already taken an interest inventory in a previous lesson, which helped them identify where their skills and work interests might lie.

“My jobs are all completely different and I want to do all of them equally!” one student said.

Berreth reminded her class that lots of people change jobs, and the important thing is to have a direction and employability skills. Students are encouraged to look at different industries and jobs in case they change their minds or one industry does not work out.

The widest range of educational and vocational options

The new advisory lessons include what the state calls “future ready skills.” The lessons in the fall of 2021 focused on the future ready skills “self-directed learner,” “community contributor,” and “collaborative teammate.” These lessons correlate respectively with The Bellingham Promise outcomes “confident individuals who continually challenge themselves,” “respectful and compassionate humans” and “leaders, collaborators and team players.”

Advisory teachers can track students’ progress and provide a personal connection with their advisory students. The lessons and HSBP provide a communication tool and a conversation starter for families as well. The goal is to provide tools that make career and college planning clearer, purposeful, equitable and tailored to each student.

We encourage families to login with their high school students and open conversations about next steps and help them plan for post-secondary learning, careers and life.
Thanks to past community support, Bellingham Public Schools has many outstanding school facilities, including our newest rebuilds of Alderwood and Parkview elementary schools that opened in September 2021 and of Sehome High School that opened in February 2019.

The $122 million 2022 bond is the next step in our long-range plans to improve and rebuild schools and facilities for our students, staff and community. We believe our community deserves safe, functional and efficient learning environments. We balance that belief by being good stewards of our public assets and developing strategic plans to improve our schools today and into the future based on the highest needs.

In fall 2021, Bellingham Public Schools convened a Facilities Planning Task Force representing staff, students, parents and community members from across our school district. The task force met regularly throughout the fall to continue the important work of identifying buildings with the highest need for replacement, as well as reviewing projected growth in our district boundaries. Task force meeting minutes, presentations and data, as well as full details of the recommendation are posted at bellinghamschools.org/facilities-taskforce.

The task force recommended Bellingham Public Schools place a bond on the ballot for the upcoming special election on Feb. 8, 2022 to address five areas of investment.

1. **COMMUNITY TRANSITIONS (CT)**
   Buy property, design and build a new facility for Community Transitions (CT) and maximize flexibility/opportunity for possible use by other district programs. CT is a program for students receiving Special Education services through the age of 21.

2. **NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**
   Build a 15th elementary school on the district-owned King Mountain property on the northside of town where growth is occurring. Building this school would be a significant step in developing a higher sustainability standard for our schools and initially used as a temporary swing space for students as other schools are rebuilt. (See next area of investment.)

3. **CARL COZIER, COLUMBIA, ROOSEVELT DESIGNS**
   Begin the design for the replacement of these three current elementary schools and set the stage for a future bond to fund their construction.

4. **CURRENT PROJECTS**
   Support completion of previously-approved bond projects in response to refinements and increased construction costs including:
   - Sunnyland Elementary School
   - Gordon Carter environmental education site
   - District Office
   - Bellingham and Squalicum High fields

5. **SAFETY, SUSTAINABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY**
   Invest in improvements at numerous schools that include:
   - Adding inclusive playgrounds and play fields
   - Expanding Kulshan Middle School by four additional classrooms and replacing existing grass field with turf
   - Improving Cordata Elementary School traffic and parking
   - Increasing efficiency and minimizing the effects of energy and water consumption
   - Creating more visible sustainability practices in schools to increase education and stewardship.
What is the impact?

If voters approve this bond, the rate per $1,000 assessed value will go from $3.47 in 2022 to $3.72 in 2023 and 2024. This means the combined tax rate for schools (levies and bonds) will increase by an estimated $16.90 per month in 2023 (compared with 2022) for a median homeowner* in Bellingham.

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<th>PAST/CURRENT BOND AND LEVY RATE</th>
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* We are using an estimated median assessed home value of $550,000 for 2022 and $566,500 for 2023. Your home’s assessed value is determined by the county.

** Estimated total school district combined bond and levy rate per $1000 assessed value. The rates are estimates based upon preliminary data from the Whatcom County Assessor’s Office, official data will be available in January 2022.

How can I vote?

Voters within Bellingham Public Schools’ attendance area will receive a ballot in the mail in January 2022 to vote on this school bond. Ballots must be mailed and postmarked or returned to the drop-box at the Whatcom County Courthouse South Parking lot, 201 Grand Avenue by 8 p.m. Feb. 8, 2022.

Senior Citizens Exemption Information

Qualifying senior citizens and persons with disabilities may be exempt from paying school taxes. For more information, please call the County Assessor’s office at (360) 676-6790 or visit whatcomcounty.us/265/Property-Tax-Exemption

Questions?

bellinghamschools.org/bond2022
(360) 676-6520

A new Sunnyland Elementary School is currently under construction behind the current school on James Street. Increased construction costs have affected many facilities projects that are underway.

Included in the 2022 bond, two schools will be planned, designed and permitted to shovel ready; the third school will start initial programming and planning. Construction for all three schools will be proposed and funded on a future bond.
Styer is one of 15 computer science (CS) teachers from across the nation chosen for this one-year fellowship to help build a more inclusive vision of computer science as a subject accessible to all students. During the year-long fellowship, the 15 fellows will meet regularly on Zoom and in person. Styer will write blog posts, collaborate on workshops and lessons, and present through videos and at conferences.

Styer became interested in applying for the CSTA fellowship after noticing what many other computer science instructors see: that students don’t always perceive computer science as “for someone like me.” Whether that’s due to their race, gender, neurodiversity or some other factor, Styer wants to combat the stereotype of CS and improve access for all students.

“As a physical education specialist,” Flink shared, “I hope to instill the foundational skills, knowledge, and values of physical literacy in my elementary students so they can grow up with the confidence to lead physically active and healthy lifestyles.”

This recognition is a reflection of the dedication and collaboration of our elementary physical education team. I am forever learning and growing.”

Sehome computer science teacher awarded national inclusion fellowship

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“I noticed I didn’t have diversity in my classes,” Styer said. “I had thought—I’m a woman, that’ll do it.” Finding this not to be entirely true, she pursued continued professional development, earned a master’s degree in diversity in technology from Antioch University and achieved her National Board Certification, learning throughout that diversifying CS means making big changes to programs.

“You have to work for inclusion,” Styer said.

Styer shared that making CS more inclusive means reconsidering everything: from making classrooms more welcoming, to adjusting teaching and grading practices, to actively recruiting students who don’t fit the CS stereotype, to writing and revising instructional materials.

Jenny has spent her career as a technology educator and has been teaching computer science since she began teaching in 2000 at Granite Falls High School.
What are you most excited about regarding the 2022 bond?

**CAMILLE:** All of the projects are important to different groups. It’s like trying to pick a favorite school. My son was in the CT program and I am super excited for them to get their own space. Then there is the work planned to build a new elementary school and finish current projects. I couldn’t be more thrilled that we are adding inclusive playgrounds and play fields. I think that these projects really show how much we love all of our kids.

Is there a specific project in the bond that you are appreciative of or think the community should know more about?

**CAMILLE:** I think that might be the work planned for Kulshan Middle School, especially the plan to replace existing grass with turf.

As we get closer to the halfway point in the school year, what are you noticing in our district and schools? Any reflections or thoughts to share?

**CAMILLE:** It doesn’t seem possible that we are nearing the halfway point of the school year. I am glad that our schools are once again open for in person learning. It seems so vital for many that we gather together as a community. Having opportunities for sports, concerts and classes is something many people took for granted, until it was taken away. I am truly grateful for everything everyone has done to make it all possible. From bus drivers, to para educators, teachers, janitors, nurses and administrators... I appreciate you.

January is School Board Recognition Month

Thank you, board members, for always being there for us!
Through a partnership with the Washington State Department of Health, Bellingham Public Schools hosted seven vaccine clinics since August.

We've provided nearly 500 doses of COVID-19 vaccine for kids 5-11 years old since November, plus booster and second doses for 12+, for a total of 859 doses provided this school year.

Each clinic serves about 100 people, and the largest clinic was held on Saturday, Dec. 11 at Shuksan Middle School serving 263 students, family and staff.

Alderwood parent Heidy Ortega expressed gratitude for these clinics and shared a sweet story about her son Cristian who received his first shot at school. (Inset photo page one.)

“I want to say thank you for how easy the school district is making it for us families to get our kiddos vaccinated,” Heidy shared.

“After the clinic, it broke my heart to see him crying after he got his shot. When he was done I hugged him and asked him if it had hurt...because he was crying. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I was nervous about getting the shot, but mostly happy for finally getting the long-awaited COVID vaccine. Now we are all protected in our family. These are happy tears, mom.’ ”

Music specialists react to receiving $12,000 in funding!

Announcing Big Idea Grant Winners

Our competitive educator grants are back, and the Foundation is thrilled to fund grants to more than 20 amazing educators across our schools. Thank you to all those who donated to help make these grants possible.

A group of district music specialists requested $5,000, which was 1/3 the cost to buy full sets of Tubano drums for all 14 elementary schools. Seeing students come together to celebrate world music and get excited about the arts at the elementary level was such an amazing idea that the Foundation agreed to fund the proposal at $7,000 and shared the proposal with our community partner, the Bellingham Symphony Orchestra. They loved the idea and made a generous gift of $5,000! Working together, the elementary school music programs are a giant step closer to having complete sets of drums for all kids!

The future is here: a focus on sustainability

As we begin the year 2022, a renewed focus on sustainability in Bellingham Public Schools begins. The 2022 bond includes many sustainability projects and a plan to build a 15th elementary school as a sustainable model for future buildings.

Stay tuned for the formation of an advisory task force that will convene early in 2022 to devise a sustainable action plan for students, staff, schools and the district as a whole.

Foundation Launches Endowment

In Bellingham, we love our kids and we love our community. We know that investing in public education is the best gift we can give to ensure a bright future for both. A community where every child has access to an excellent education is one that believes in its future. To realize this vision, we are seeking a small group of bold donors to commit $10,000 over 10 years to establish a $1 million endowment that will benefit us all for generations to come. Find out more at www.bellinghamschoolsfoundation.org/endowment