



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY LINKAGE SPECIAL MEETING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

May 12, 2022 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Shuksan Middle School

Linkage Attendees:

- **Shuksan parents/guardians**
- **Dr. Verónica Vélez**, Associate Professor, Woodring College of Education, Western Washington University
- Directors present: **Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin, Jenn Mason, Katie Rose**. Director Camille Diaz Hackler was absent.
- Superintendent of Bellingham Public Schools **Greg Baker**
- District Leadership and Staff: Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations **Jackie Brawley**; Deputy Superintendent **Mike Copland**; Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning **Kristi Dominguez**; Executive Director of Teaching and Learning **Trina Hall**; Assistant Director of Early Childhood and Family Engagement **Debora Haney**; Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning **Jay Jordan**; Assistant Superintendent of Finance **Simone Sangster**; Shuksan Middle School Principal **Matt Whitten** and members of the family engagement team.

Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions: School Board President Kelly Bashaw called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone. She introduced Superintendent Greg Baker who welcomed attendees and invited individual table groups to share introductions at their tables. He then introduced Executive Director of Family Engagement Isabel Meaker.

Ms. Meaker shared that she began working in the district 12 years ago and is happy to see families at the meeting who she has formed friendships with. One of those friendships is with Dr. Verónica Vélez, who was recently recognized for her work in the district with a Bellingham Promise Award. She has helped the district develop Ethnic Studies courses that are reaching our students. This evening Dr. Vélez is going to present results from a recent survey of families. She then introduced Dr. Vélez.

Dr. Vélez shared that as a child she saw her parents struggle, and she believes it important for the school district and families to work together to bring about authentic collaboration within the community. She reviewed the results of a survey of parents/families that received a high level of participation (232 responses). Results showed that families believe:

- School leaders make adjustments when things aren't working well
- School leaders listen well and create a welcoming environment
- Teachers and staff love my child
- The school communicates well with families and the format is easy to understand
- My child is receiving a high-quality education
- The school is a safe place

Parents' biggest concern is around their children's safety.

Ms. Meaker introduced Maggie Orozco, Maria Collado and Delia Robles, who spoke about their experiences as parents in the district. This is some of what they shared:

- There has been a big change in the Bellingham Public Schools between the time my now 27-year-old sons attended school and my now 11-year-old is attending.
- With my older sons, it was very difficult to communicate with the school.
- The Family Resource Center reached out to ask how they could help, and I realized it was authentic.
- It is a different world for my younger son, and I know I can ask for help when needed.
- The word "inclusion" in The Bellingham Promise is important to me. I understand the concept more and thank the district for that.
- My daughter, who is now 27 years old, entered the Bellingham Public Schools with no English and no support. She has now almost completed her medical degree.
- I was nervous about my children being in the portables in the old Shuksan Middle School. I am now confident that my children are safe in school, with teachers who will help them succeed.

Ms. Meaker then introduced Crystal Morales, a student who graduated from Bellingham Public Schools. She and her five brothers began school in Skagit Valley and moved to Alderwood Elementary School when she was in fourth grade. She met Ms. Meaker in 2009, graduated from Squalicum High School in 2016 and decided to attend university. Her parents were agricultural workers who were not able to attend school beyond the primary grades. Ms. Morales graduated from college in 2020 and decided to work in Whatcom County to help other families and students. She was recently hired by Bellingham Public Schools as a Family Resource Center Coordinator.

Ms. Meaker encouraged parents to take the next five minutes to talk with the people at the table who can effect change. She then introduced Ricardo Sanchez, a parent with students at Alderwood Elementary School and Shuksan Middle School. Mr. Sanchez shared a graph that shows the graduation rate for Latinx students increasing from 57.5% in 2010 to 85.1% in 2019. He thanked the school board for hiring Dr. Baker, as his values of service, as well as those around him, are reflected every day. He noted that Ms. Meaker goes above and beyond for those who she interacts with. He also recognized Alderwood principal Micah Smith. Last Friday Mr. Smith provided a barbeque for his staff and students, and while he was cooking, he was interacting with everyone, and

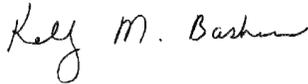
students were very excited to see him cook. While cooking, he bent down to tie a student's shoelaces.

Ms. Meaker presented school board members with gift bags containing written messages from families who were not able to attend this evening. Parents then cheered for Dr. Baker, as he has given families the opportunity for progress and has given all children opportunities to be future leaders.

Dr. Baker shared that in 2010, his first year as superintendent, he saw the Latinx graduation rate and knew something needed to change. He made the decision to promote Ms. Meaker to the executive level in the district. He is very proud of the staff and of the students who have gone through our system. It is an honor to serve the parents and it was great to hear their stories. On behalf of himself and the school board, he thanked everyone for attending this evening, for their kind words and the good food.

Ms. Bashaw also thanked everyone for attending adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.

Approved:



Kelly Bashaw, School Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: June 8, 2022