



**Official Board Summary: Community Linkage Meeting
Connecting with the Faith-Based Community
January 22, 2015**

The Bellingham School Board and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed audience members, invited guests, and district staff to a linkage meeting with representatives of faith-based groups.

The purpose of the meeting was for the School Board to engage in a discussion about how [The Bellingham Promise](#) resonates with members of faith-based groups and how Bellingham Public Schools can strengthen its relationship with this segment of the community. The discussion focused on the following excerpt from The Promise:

Each child will be exceptional in his or her 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.

Guiding questions were:

Where do our organizations' interests and work in te

this plan, what they think about the desired outcomes for students and graduates, and how they think the plan might be improved.

Large-Group Discussion with School Board

Ms. Rowe, the meeting facilitator, read this excerpt from The Bellingham Promise and said it

Each child will be exceptional in his or her 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.

A summary of guiding questions and responses follows:

Where do our organizations' interests and work in these areas intersect?

- {*Our Savior's Lutheran*} Our church outreach activities such as monthly community meals bring people in the neighborhood together and represent a part of our mission to serve the community. These gatherings give young people an opportunity to observe first-hand positive interactions between neighbors. (*well-rounded community members engaged with the broader world*)
- {*Our Savior's Lutheran*} Various church activities provide opportunities for kids to see their parents modeling positive behavior; for example, speaking to others in a formal setting. (*effective communicators*)
- {*Interfaith Coalition*} Our primary work is to provide emergency and transitional housing and severe weather shelters for homeless individuals and families. We hear of many challenges from families whose kids are going to school in the district; for example, they often have no way to access extracurricular activities that are so important in developing self-esteem. Some of this is due to lack of

have a need to get their children outside, to give them access to a different world. Are there individuals in the community who can facilitate these types of connections? (*equitable distribution of resources and services to ensure excellence for all*)
- {*First Baptist Church*} Our dream is to create a space where volunteers can offer enrichment classes to youth who might not otherwise be able to afford that. For example, we have a plethora of retired folks who might connect with these kids.

- {*St. Paul's Episcopal*} My major question is finding ways to encourage the to help in our neighborhood schools. What do the students need right now that some of our people could provide? We have some space available in our church and we started a community enrichment center; but it is not yet reaching school-age people. Is members can do within the schools, and can we employ the space we have in a way that would be helpful? {*equitable distribution of resources and services to ensure excellence for all*}

What are your greatest challenges?

- {*Our Saviour's Lutheran*} A challenge is getting the word out to students and community members about activities we offer; for example, how do we let people know about a program that is in place for parents and young children? How can the district and various organizations come together to figure out a way to get the word out?
- {*Church of the Assumption*} We have a growing ELL (English Language Learners) population. Often, due to language barriers or other reasons, our parents feel challenged in helping their children with homework or in handling basic day-to-day life skills. Is there a way to share some insight on how to help them?
- {*Centro de Adoración Vida*} Students get to a certain point when they speak English regularly, and they lose their original language. This is a challenge how do we teach those kids the importance of not losing that language? How can we help those kids to be proud of the other language(s) they speak? They want to blend in, so they they kind of forget about their roots. I would love to see what insight the district can provide on this question: what language do we use when teaching our kids at church?
- {*Redeemer Church*} We have a growing congregation that includes skilled workers, and the elementary school is just two blocks away. Is there a time outside of normal school hours when people can go to the school to help? If there are hands-on projects that need to be done, the normal school day timeframe does not work. We want to donate volunteer hours. Who do we contact and what are the hours in which we can work?
- {*First Baptist Church*} We are central to downtown and have a connection to the homeless community whose children face many challenges. We work to build a volunteer base that can care for those children on Sundays. [Rebound of Whatcom County](#) has helped connect us with individuals who have the expertise to train these volunteers. We also sponsor a summer academy in July. What kind of continuing training can we access and encourage our volunteers to access?
- {*Centro de Adoración Vida*}

lives at

how they can help or who to contact. Can we send the message that they are more than welcome to be at the school, and find tasks they can help with?

- {*Latter Day Sai*}

to have great coaches and mentors that encourage kids to participate in sports and encourage them to participate are doing a great service.

- {*Christ the King Church*} The level of crisis in families seems to be escalating,

ion (WSSDA) Discussion

Board members and Dr. Baker discussed steps to be taken to research the possibility of expanding the curriculum to be more inclusive of Native American studies. Dr. Baker noted that this would be an opportune time to consider this, as several new curriculum advisory groups are about to be formed. Next steps: Dr. Gass and Ms. Hackler will forward relevant materials to Dr. Baker.

Executive Session

At 7:39 p.m., Ms. Bashaw said the board would enter Executive Session for approximately one hour to consider the performance of a public employee per RCW 42.30.110.

At 8:50 p.m., the Executive Session ended and the meeting was adjourned.

