



## Summary Notes for Safety and Security Planning Committee

**Meeting 2: 4 – 5 p.m., Thursday, March 6, 2025**

**Location:** District Office, 1985 Barkley Boulevard, Bellingham

**Present:** Russ Robinson, Director, Safety and Security, co-chair; Jessica Sankey, Chief Operations Officer, co-chair; Jay Jordan, Assistant Superintendent; James Hayes, Director, Athletics and Activities; Dana Smith, Assistant Director, Communications; Sonia Cole, Principal, Sehome High; Allison Chryst, Principal, Shuksan Middle; Micah Smith, Birchwood Elementary; Laura Britt, Principal Geneva Elementary; Curtis Lawyer, Director, Capital Projects; Heather Jones-Jennings, Custodial Supervisor; Mark Peterson, Director, Facilities and Sustainability; Cindy Dennis, Director, Transportation; Josh McKissick, Bellingham Police Department; Derik Scott, Bellingham Fire Department; Dionte Thomas, Campus Monitor, Squalicum High; Kelly Balzer, Paraeducator, Northern Heights Elementary; Roxanne Borders, Preschool Teacher, Silver Beach Elementary; Lauri McBeath, Systems Analyst; Analisa Ficklin, Director, Special Education; Lindsey Keane, Parent/Guardian, Happy Valley Elementary; Joshua Bates, Parent/Guardian, Squalicum High, Shuksan Middle; Dawnette Chadwick, Parent/Guardian, Bellingham High, Birchwood Elementary; Fernando Olvera, Parent/Guardian, Kulshan Middle; Eric Hamerski, Parent/Guardian, Fairhaven Middle; Shay Colson, Parent/Guardian, Alderwood Elementary; Cooper Stafford, Student; Angie Ritchey, Operations Specialist; Katie King, Administrative Assistant, Facilities.

Chief Operations Officer Jessica Sankey welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda.

### Data walk activity and discussion

Jessica reviewed the three data walk stations. Committee members were asked to break out to share their observations, questions and conversations with each group leader as well as write thoughts on sticky notes. Once the data walk was completed, the group came back together to review what was discussed with the group leaders.

Russ Robinson, director of safety and security, reviewed the questions and conversations that he had with committee members about behavior/business practices and systems.

- One door in and out was put into place to ensure that staff, students and community members use the same supervised and monitored door. When multiple

exterior doors were used there were challenges with ensuring doors locked properly and/or with making sure all visitors check in at the main office.

- We have also gone away from staff having external keys and have moved to programmable fobs to allow for staff access to specific doors.
- We advise against propping doors, and if/when a door is propped for a legitimate reason, it must be supervised for all in and out traffic.

Curtis Lawyer, director of capital projects, reviewed the questions and conversations that he had with committee members about physical/technical elements.

- Management of the access control and doorbell system is annoying but important. Although it can be challenging with the bell ringing constantly, our staff take it seriously and are the gate keepers of the school. Most schools are on generators and allow for a power backup of our doors that are on the fob system.
- Vestibules are great "person traps," and it is standard for our new builds to have a secure vestibule, with two sets of doors before entering the school. Door locking systems are being standardized, and we continue to retrofit doors and buildings. This has been largely addressed across the district.
- Regarding a question about windows and cameras: Windows and glass allow natural light and transparency for passive security, so when staff, students, or community members see someone walking down the hall with no badge or have never seen them, they can alert the office. We have about 98% coverage of cameras along the sides of the buildings but are working on additional coverage.
- We are also working with our Communications department to revamp our website to make it easier to find phone numbers of the correct contact(s) for each school.

Squalicum campus monitor Dionte Thomas reviewed the questions and conversations that he had with committee members about practices to increase sense of security.

- Shared examples of what belonging looks like and the benefits that come from building connections and relationships with students and staff.
- Safety drills happen monthly, which gives us time to talk with staff and students about how they went.
- Shared examples of multiple ways that staff work to make sure students have a trusted adult to turn to with questions or concerns or for support.
- Staff are trained to make sure everyone knows who our office people and staff around the building are. This is another reason staff badging is important.

- We have a tip line to report safety/security concerns and have multiple methods (website, poster, student ID cards), and tips can be made anonymously for those who don't want to be identified.
- We also are always working on relationships with students, but if students don't feel comfortable we provide them with other ways to reach out and report problems or concerns.

### Current practices in safety & security – in our schools

Jessica thanked Russ, Curtis and Dionte for their time reviewing the data walk questions. She directed the group to its next activity: breaking out into four groups to discuss our current practices in safety and security in our schools. Committee members were asked to find their name tent at one of the four tables and were paired with a principal. Micah Smith from Birchwood, Laura Britt from Geneva, Allison Chryst from Shuksan, and Sonia Cole from Sehome were then asked to share with each group a little about their safety protocols, review campus maps and discuss any questions that group members might have had.

### Mission statement planning and closure

Dana Smith, assistant director of communications, introduced the mission statement planning and each committee member was given a handout with three mission statement samples to review in the last few minutes of the meeting. From those draft samples, Dana asked group members: if they had to shorten the mission statement down to 3-5 phrases what would they choose? Dana, Russ and Jessica plan to synthesize these into a consensus mission statement which we plan to share at the next meeting.

Jessica and Russ went over a preview of what we would be discussing at our next meeting, including revisiting the mission statement, student climate survey, what our goals are and how we can address the concerns principals and students have shared.

The next meeting is scheduled for: 4 – 5 p.m., Thursday, April 17 at the District Office.