



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
WITH PUBLIC HEARING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
March 14, 2024**

1.0 OPENING ITEMS

1.1 Meeting Date and Location:

March 14, 2024 – Options High School, 2015 Franklin St., Bellingham, WA.

1.2 Call to Order/Land Acknowledgment:

Mr. Benjamin (President) called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He acknowledged that this meeting is being held on ancestral homelands of the Lummi people and Nooksack tribe.

1.3 Roll Call:

Present: Directors Douglas Benjamin (President), Camille Diaz Hackler, Jennifer Mason, Scott Ritchey, Greg Baker and Sheri O'Day (recorder). Director Katie Rose was unable to attend.

1.4 Public Hearing

Mr. Benjamin explained the purpose of the public hearing, which is to provide an opportunity for anyone who would like to speak for or against the adoption of Resolution #08-24, which authorizes the sale of surplus district owned property located on West Maplewood Avenue in Bellingham, Washington. No audience presented, and no public testimony was offered or shared in written form relating to the proposed adoption of the resolution.

1.4 Audience:

- Vanessa Katz, Sehome High School choir teacher, spoke about the importance of music education and shared that March is “Music in Our Schools” month.

1.5 Superintendent’s Announcements and Report: Summary of Dr. Baker’s comments:

- A message was sent to staff, families and the community today regarding budget development for the 2024-25 school year. The short legislative session recently ended. The state is not investing heavily in PreK-12 public education, but there were small increases in Special Education, supplies, transportation and paraeducator staff. Dr. Baker anticipates that next year will be a “hold steady” year as it relates to budget.
- The first Winter Blast at the Sportsplex was a success. The facility was overflowing with families having fun together.
- Fifth grade students have begun their outdoor education experiences. Due to challenges that North Cascades Institute (NCI) experienced last summer and fall, this year’s fifth grade students will attend one of two opportunities for the annual outdoor education trip. Students from seven elementary schools will attend Mountain School

at NCI, and students from the other seven elementaries will have a similar experience at Camp Kirby located in Skagit County.

- The BIPOC job fair was well attended. The Squalicum High School culinary students prepared food for the event.
- Dr. Baker shared photos and gave an update on some construction and capital projects, including clean-up at Bellingham High School after flooding in January. Staff have begun moving into the new District Office, which will be open to the public on March 25. The next board meeting will be held at the new District Office. Meetings at Roosevelt and Carl Cozier elementaries are scheduled for next week when the community will be given the opportunity to give input about plans to rebuild those schools. A similar meeting will be held for the future Community Transitions space at Whatcom Community College.
- Other upcoming events include a Since Time Immemorial community night and the annual college fair.

2.0 CONSENT ITEMS:

Ms. Mason made a **motion**, seconded by Mr. Ritchey, to approve the following consent agenda items:

- 2.1 Approval of Minutes of Feb. 22, 2024 Regular Meeting; Feb. 27, 2024 Special/Student Roundtable Meeting; March 5, 2024 School Visit; March 6, 2024 Special Meetings (2)**
- 2.2 Approval of Expenditures and Payroll – February 2024**
- 2.3 Resolution 07-24, Transfer of Funds from Capital Projects Fund to General Fund**
- 2.4 Resolution 08-24, Sale of Surplus District Owned Property (West Maplewood Avenue Property)**
- 2.5 2023-24 Highly Capable Program Plan**
- 2.6 Sendan Center Addendum to Agreement for Services (#2324-040A)**
- 2.7 Washington State Department of Commerce Interagency Agreement (#2324-049A)**
- 2.8 Whatcom County Amendment to Interlocal Cooperative Agreement (#2324-061A)**
- 2.9 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Grant Agreement (#2324-139A)**
- 2.10 Lynden School District Interdistrict Agreement – Orientation and Mobility (#2324-179)**
- 2.11 Personnel Recommendations**

Unanimous affirmative vote.

3.0 BOARD RESPONSE TO MONITORING

3.1 Board Response to Monitoring – EL-3, Treatment and Communication with Public, Parents and Students

The board discussed the feedback contained in the combined monitoring responses for EL-3 ([Attachment A](#)). Mr. Benjamin will provide a final summary version of this document which will be submitted for approval at the April 18, 2024 regular meeting.

3.2 Board Response to Monitoring – EL-4, Staff Treatment, Compensation and Evaluation

The board discussed the feedback contained in the combined monitoring responses for EL-4 ([Attachment B](#)). Mr. Benjamin will provide a final summary version of this document which will be submitted for approval at the April 18, 2024 regular meeting.

3.3 Board Response to Monitoring – Ends 2.1 (Part 1), Student Competence

The board discussed the feedback contained in the combined monitoring responses for Ends 2.1, Part 1 ([Attachment C](#)). Mr. Benjamin will provide a final summary version of this document which will be submitted for approval at the April 18, 2024 regular meeting.

4.0 POLICY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

4.1 Monitoring Report Ends 2.1 (part 2) – Student Competence

Dr. Mike Copland, Deputy Superintendent, and Brian Rick, Director of Research and Assessment, discussed the report and answered questions from the board.

5.0 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

5.1 GP-7.2 – 2023-24 Annual Board Agenda, Revised – general review.

5.2 School Board Directors’ Reports. Highlights of comments:

- Ms. Mason was impressed by the board’s visit to Lowell, an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. She liked the diversity of the topics that the students presented on. The roundtable meeting with the QSA club at Whatcom Middle School was fantastic. She is grateful for the staff who helped students feel supported and comfortable while speaking and sharing about a sensitive subject. Her daughter recently attended Mountain School, and Ms. Mason appreciates the work that made it possible for her to attend. Recognizing that this is the last regular meeting that will be held at Options High School, she thanked Executive Director of Technology Kurt Gazow for the extra effort it has taken for these meetings to run smoothly.
- Mr. Ritchey enjoyed the Lowell visit, where students and staff presented. He was thrilled to tour the new District Office last week and reflected the new office will enable the district to support the district’s students and staff for many years. He congratulated the team who worked to make it such a success. He attended the Northside and Central band concert last night at Bellingham High School. More than 250 fifth to twelfth grade students with instruments demonstrated a great linkage between the school levels. He has been blown away by the information contained in the policy governance monitoring reports.
- Ms. Diaz Hackler shared that she was very impressed by one of the students at the Lowell visit whose presentation included a fundraiser for an animal shelter. The QSA roundtable was great. She enjoyed the tour of the new District Office and the board’s dinner last week. She has heard from many people who are excited about the new District Office opening. She attended the Scholastic Book Fair at her grandchildren’s school on Tuesday.
- Mr. Benjamin very much enjoyed the Lowell visit. He commented that when he was an elementary student, the focus was about learning knowledge. Students learning how to think is apparent at the IB schools and is very impressive. During the roundtable meeting with the GSA club, he was impressed by the emotional maturity

of the students, and the central theme was the importance of them feeling safe. The WSSDA director is leaving to work for WASA, which has resulted in the WSSDA board launching the search for a new director. He reminded the other board members that F-1 reports are due to Public Disclosure Commission by April 15.

6.0 NEW BUSINESS

6.1 n/a

7.0 CLOSING ITEMS

7.1 Board Assessment of Meeting: Mr. Ritchey assessed the meeting, with an overall rating of 4 (*commendable*).

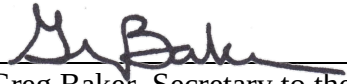
7.2 Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Approved:



Douglas Benjamin, Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: April 17, 2024

Monitoring Response Document – INITIAL COMPILATION

Policy Monitored: EL-3, Treatment and Communication with Public, Parents and Students

Date Report Submitted: 2/22/2024

Date of Board's Monitoring Response: 3/14/2024

Below are my responses in connection with the report:

<u>Ends Reports:</u>	<u>Executive Limitations Reports</u>
1. The Board finds that the Superintendent: a. has achieved the goals established in the policy. b. is making reasonable progress towards achieving the goals. c. is making reasonable progress towards achieving the goals, but a greater degree of progress is expected in some areas.* d. is not making reasonable progress in achieving the goals established. * e. cannot be determined*	1. The Board finds that the Superintendent: a. is in compliance. DB CDH JM SR b. is in compliance, except for items(s) noted.* c. is making reasonable progress toward compliance.* d. is not in compliance or is not making reasonable progress toward compliance.* e. cannot be determined*
<i>*see comments below (No. 3)</i>	

2. Please note commendable progress over the last year.

DB:

- This is an area where year after year the superintendent excels and frankly, shows “how it should be done.” This 51-page report shows example after example of effective communication and outreach to our owners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The board not only has the evidence of this report, but almost daily communications to us containing examples.

CDH:

- Communications with the public is something that the board thinks that Greg really excels at. Of course, there will be people who feel that if every single detail is not spelled out precisely that something is wrong. The board is happy with the level of information shared by the superintendent.
- The board is very impressed with the strategic partnerships that benefit students and families. Over \$70,000.00 in store cards donated, the donations to the GRADS program and many other partnerships are beyond amazing. The guidance of a caring and inclusive leader is evident in this work.

JM:

- Excellent work to communicate about major new stories, even while legally limited on how much info could be shared.
- Work to standardize and improve language around school safety issues.
- Elevated focus on reporting back to the community about sustainability work as efforts continue to increase in that arena.

- Compliance in responding to increase public records requests.
- As always, Family Engagement continues to be a place of particular success, with outstanding work to connect with families in ways that are impactful and meaningful.
- Award for Outstanding Photography at graduation.
- Increased use of ParentSquare.
- Extensive work with Community Partners to meet our families' needs.
- Relationship building and partnerships with local media partners.
- This report really demonstrates the need for many communication channels and loops for our families. Appreciate the District continuing to focus on-and excel at-this area.

SR:

- Based on the information in this report and my personal observations, district communication to the community is varied, effective, and thoughtfully addresses key issues that support the needs of the community. The collaborative communications with Whatcom County districts is a new and commendable practice as it may build more pervasive awareness of offerings that cross district boundaries.
- The district use of Qualtrics to collect insights and information from a broad base of individuals in the community is also commendable and part of a broader pattern that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand needs and collect input from the community.
- The district commitment and approach to address concerns from the community are commendable due to the degree and nature of the volume, channels and quality of interactions. This report, combined with my personal observation of the great care paid to individual community member concerns, suggest comparative excellence in the practice.

3. Please note areas for additional improvement.

DB:

- None- unless the superintendent wants to start presenting at professional workshops of how this work should be done, or maybe write a book?

CDH:

- None.

JM:

- None.

SR:

- None.

4. Comments on the report itself.

DB:

- Very comprehensive.

CDH:

- This was an amazing report. Very detailed and thorough.

JM:

N/A

SR:

- The report provided an excellent combination of metrics and illustrations that was very useful in evaluation of this particular policy.

5. Possible changes to the policy.

DB:

- None.

CDH:

- None.

JM:

- N/A

SR:

- None suggested.

Monitoring Response Document – INITIAL COMPILATION

Policy Monitored: EL-4, Staff Treatment, Compensation and Evaluation

Date Report Submitted: 2/22/2024

Date of Board's Monitoring Response: 3/14/2024

Below are my responses in connection with the report:

<u>Ends Reports:</u>	<u>Executive Limitations Reports</u>
1. The Board finds that the Superintendent: a. has achieved the goals established in the policy. b. is making reasonable progress towards achieving the goals. c. is making reasonable progress towards achieving the goals, but a greater degree of progress is expected in some areas.* d. is not making reasonable progress in achieving the goals established. * e. cannot be determined*	1. The Board finds that the Superintendent: a. is in compliance. DB CDH JM SR b. is in compliance, except for items(s) noted.* c. is making reasonable progress toward compliance.* d. is not in compliance or is not making reasonable progress toward compliance.* e. cannot be determined*
<i>*see comments below (No. 3)</i>	

2. Please note commendable progress over the last year.

DB:

- Not new, but requiring a written response to the Promise as part of the job application process is something the Board appreciates.
- Impressive/creative job retaining employees though reassignment and other means during a period of budget challenges.
- Good effort to rebuild substitute availability and fill rates post pandemic.
- Research shows that staff recognition is a key contributor to staff performance and retention. The sheer number of robust efforts is almost overwhelming.
- There is clear evidence of keeping staff up to date on strategies of inclusion and aligning instructional practices to The Bellingham Promise.
- There are successful efforts to train and build skills of para-educators and beginning educators.
- There is evidence of maintaining and improving the numbers of ethnically diverse staff.

CDH:

- The board is impressed with the amount of work done to recruit and hire district employees. We understand that these are challenging times due to state funding formula shortfalls.
- The board believes that professional development is very important. This is another area that the superintendent excels at.

JM:

- Work to retain and rehire staff as much as possible during budget cuts.

- Creativity in how to attract new staff.
- Efficiencies in hiring and onboarding process.
- Employee recognition is always a high point for this District!
- Volunteers back to pre-pandemic levels.
- Excellent work around professional learning, particularly around inclusion model.

SR:

- Continuity in teaching roles supports improved student outcomes. [Ronfeldt-et-al.pdf \(caldercenter.org\)](#) Our district's work to maintain continuity in student facing roles during a period of significant budget challenge was commendable and supportive to our students' development and the goals of The Bellingham Promise.
- The district's recognition programs appropriately amplify the work of exceptional teachers and administrators and reinforce that excellence in the culture of the district. The Promise Awards, Good Apple recognition, kickoff event and Promise Stories really celebrate the great work of individuals and groups within the district. This work is commendable in its creative reinforcement of The Bellingham Promise goals and outcomes.
- The positive impact new teacher mentoring has on retention is significant. ([Hayes 2021](#)) Bellingham's TOSA assignment, with funding support from the BEST grant, for mentoring new teachers is a commendable approach to improving support for new teachers at an especially important time in their careers.

3. Please note areas for additional improvement.

DB:

- None.

CDH:

- None.

JM:

- Substitute shortage continues to be a (statewide) challenge but work has been done to lessen their need.

SR:

- Continued emphasis on addressing the shortfall in available substitutes, a problem that is not unique to BPS, is necessary and recognized in the report.

4. Comments on the report itself.

DB:

- Comprehensive, plenty of data, examples and links provided.

CDH:

- Great job, very well done.

JM:

- N/A

SR:

- This is an excellent report with helpful information and detail that positions the board well for evaluation of the outcomes relative to our stated directions and limitations.
- I wonder if it might be a useful addition to include notable trends in aggregated employee evaluation information in future cycles.

5. Possible changes to the policy.

DB:

- None.

CDH:

- None.

JM:

- N/A

SR:

- None suggested.

Monitoring Response Document – INITIAL COMPILATION

Policy Monitored: Ends 2.1, Part 1 – Student Competence

Date Report Submitted: 2/22/2024

Date of Board's Monitoring Response: 3/14/2024

Below are my responses in connection with the report:

<u>Ends Reports:</u>	<u>Executive Limitations Reports</u>
1. The Board finds that the Superintendent: - has achieved the goals established in the policy. SR - is making reasonable progress towards achieving the goals. CDH JM - is making reasonable progress towards achieving the goals, but a greater degree of progress is expected in some areas.* DB - is not making reasonable progress in achieving the goals established. * - cannot be determined*	1. The Board finds that the Superintendent: - is in compliance. - is in compliance, except for items(s) noted.* - is making reasonable progress toward compliance.* - is not in compliance or is not making reasonable progress toward compliance.* - cannot be determined*
<i>*see comments below (No. 3)</i>	

2. Please note commendable progress over the last year.

DB:

- Overall, the report is comprehensive with multiple efforts to understand student test performance, find more and creative ways to measure it, and compare district performance to identified high-performing districts and wider state performances. These efforts give us a good glimpse into how we have been impacted by pandemic learning loss and how rebound is reflected in standardized testing.

CDH:

- This is one of the most important reports we receive. The board is happy to see that more students are meeting math standards in grades 3-8 and 10, and we hope to continue to see it improve this year.
- The board appreciates the work done towards closing the achievement gaps.

JM:

- ELA scores dropped in a similar fashion to other districts and still remain above state average.
- While math scores are a challenge, they do indicate a rebound.
- Science scores looking strong compared to state average.
- Proficiency gaps decreased in a variety of areas.
- Math growth looking strong.

SR:

- With recognition of the challenging context due to COVID effects, the significant improvement in meeting math standards relative to other districts (figs 6,8) is commendable. I was very pleased to learn about the great efforts on new curricula adoption and professional

learning that may well have fueled this commendable outcome.

Our strong relative performance in meeting standards for science in grades 5 and 8 (figs 10,12) is also commendable and an encouraging sign of recovery from COVID impacts. My understanding is that we may be seeing positive impacts from the curricula changes made in years past and the potential impact of our outdoor education work. Commendable progress and outcomes.

3. Please note areas for additional improvement.

DB:

- The numbers showing progress are comparatively closely related to previous years, and it is not clear if the small differences are statistically significant. Other districts have shown more progress with learning loss rebound and our hope is to do better going forward. It is understood that the learning loss is multifaceted and that this is just how it is measured through standardized testing, which we recognize does not tell the whole story.

CDH:

- None.

JM:

- While the impacts of the pandemic are improving in many areas, the effects are unsurprisingly still evident across certain stubborn proficiency and growth gaps.

SR:

- My interpretation of the testing impacts to grade 10 students is that these anomalous scores may be the result of COVID era effects due to reduced student familiarity with the standardized tests and a lack of understanding for the use of these standardized test scores specific to this cycle of measurement. I was glad to learn that we will likely see improvement in this area in future cycles.
- Our district stands out for our strong focus on proficiency gaps and the district team's efforts to close these gaps. I would anticipate continued progress in this area as we see reduced COVID era effects and with the efforts already underway and would like to voice support for the importance of these continued efforts.

4. Comments on the report itself.

DB:

- As usual, these reports get better every year with finding new and creative ways to measure performance and understand the data.

CDH:

- As usual, this report is really well done.

JM:

- N/A

SR:

- This is an exceptionally rich and transparent report on key outcomes related to The Bellingham Promise. Thank you for such a well developed and documented report.

5. Possible changes to the policy.

DB:

- None.

CDH:

- None.

JM:

- N/A

SR:

- None.