Board Summary: Community Linkage Special Meeting
Connecting with Law Enforcement
District Office Conference Room 205 – 1:30 p.m.
October 26, 2016

The Bellingham School Board of Directors and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed audience members, invited guests and district staff to a linkage meeting with law enforcement professionals. The purpose of the meeting was for the directors to engage in a discussion about how The Bellingham Promise resonates with this group and how the school district can strengthen its relationship with this segment of the community. The discussion focused on the following questions:

- *How do you see The Bellingham Promise connected to your work in law enforcement with youth in our schools and community?*
- *What is working well for our students?*
- *What is missing or needs improvement?*
- *How can we better work together?*

During the meeting, attendees shared insights and thoughts on the guiding questions. Highlights of discussion:

- The relationship between the police department and the district is positive, and more collaboration is welcome.
- We all have the same agenda – the health and safety of our kids.
- We should consider ways to jointly create more opportunities for students to see law enforcement in a more positive light.
- Two statements within The Bellingham Promise -- *All children should be loved and the whole child is important* -- resonated with attendees. It was noted that if one of these principles is missing, the whole child will not be present in the classroom.
- Role of school staff is critical.
    - For some students, the classroom may be the only safe place available. Staff have a key role in early interventions by observing and reporting signs of abuse and neglect.
    - New staff training in connection with mandatory reporting is important.
    - Consider including law enforcement personnel for presentations as part of teacher in-service days at the start of the school year.
- Good resources include: *Darkness to Light*/*Stewards of Children* training through Brigid Collins Family Support Center; the White Hatter's presentations on Internet safety, and District Resource Officers.

Meeting minutes are attached.

Official Meeting Minutes: Community Linkage Special Meeting
Connecting with Law Enforcement
Bellingham School District Conference Room 205 – 1:30 p.m.
October 26, 2016

Linkage Attendees:

- Law Enforcement Community Representatives: Bellingham Police Department (BPD) Lt. Danette Beckley; BPD Police Chief Cliff Cook; District Resource Officer (DRO) Chris Brown; Whatcom County Juvenile Probation Officer Greg Fosty; Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Lt. Kevin Hester; BPD Officer Bo Mcginty; BPD Sergeant Claudia Murphy; Western Washington University (WWU) Police Chief Darin Rasmussen; BPD Detective Pauline Renick; Whatcom County Superior Court Clerk Dave Reynolds; BPD Lt. Bill Slodysko; WWU Assistant Police Chief Donnell Tanksley; BPD Lt. Bob Vanderyacht.
- Directors Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Quenby Peterson, Steven Smith
- Superintendent of Schools Greg Baker
- District Leadership/Staff: Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke; Executive Director Kurt Gazow; Executive Director Nora Klewiada; Assistant Superintendent Bob Kuehl; Assistant Superintendent Simone Sangster; Executive Director Tanya Rowe; Director of School Safety and Emergency Management Jonah Stinson; Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Family Engagement Isabel Meaker; Safety and Wellness Secretary Karri Neuhauser; and Recorder Ruth Rasmussen

1. **<u>Opening Items</u>**

   Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions: The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. School Board Director Quenby Peterson welcomed the group and introduced Dr. Baker. Following Dr. Baker's welcome and opening comments, the invited guests, board members and district staff introduced themselves and described their connections to the school district.

2. **<u>Meeting Purpose – Explanation of Community/Board Linkage</u>:**

   Ms. Peterson thanked attendees for their participation. She explained that the school board views community linkages as an opportunity to listen and connect with the community and to strengthen connections with stakeholders. More specifically, the board

is seeking input on the goals set for students through board policies expressed in The Bellingham Promise, the district's strategic plan.

3. Large Group Discussion with School Board:

The following were guiding questions for the discussion:

- *How do you see The Bellingham Promise connected to your work in law enforcement with youth in our schools and community?*
- *What is working well for our students?*
- *What is missing or needs improvement?*
- *How can we better work together?*

Chief Cook said he is pleased with the positive relationship that exists between the police department and the district. It is evident, he said, that the district sees the importance and value of the police department, and he said BPD is willing to help in any way possible to further the district's efforts in connection with The Bellingham Promise.

Summary of comments:

- The statements in The Promise that *all children should be loved* and *the whole child is important* are impressive. If one or both of these principles is missing, a child cannot develop. A lot of times, school district staff are the only people who are loving these kids. Additionally, you want the whole child present in the classroom. If a child is being abused at home, he/she will not get to realize their full potential; you will not have the whole child there.
- The school itself can have a huge impact on kids through early interventions, or by staff observing and reporting signs of abuse and neglect. All school district staff are mandatory reporters – so we have a tremendous resource. It is critical that new staff know what mandatory reporting is all about, and that they understand this is not a violation of confidentiality but rather could be a life saver.
- We all have the same agenda – the safety and health of our kids. The classroom for many kids may be the only safe place they have within a 24-hour period.
- Within the community, Brigid Collins Family Support Center is a tremendous resource. The agency partners with Darkness to Light to provide Stewards of Children training. We encourage the district to get all staff members enrolled in this training. (In response, Ms. Bashaw stated she has taken the training and can vouch for its value.)
- {In response to Ms. Peterson's inquiry regarding the challenges relating to increased use of technology}: In the last three years, there has been an increase in cyberbullying. Kids are now able to connect with each other 24/7; and we are seeing an increase in the use of technology for the purpose of harassment. This could be kids versus kids, or kids versus teachers. Staff training in this area is more critical than ever, particularly now that 1:1 technology is on the horizon for students in Bellingham.
- The White Hatter (Personal Protection Systems) is recognized as an expert on on-line safety and has presented in this community in the past. He is, however, preaching to the

- choir in most cases. We need to get more parents to attend his next presentation – parents who are not as aware of this problem or are perhaps not as concerned as they should be.
- We would welcome more collaboration between the district and police department. We understand teachers have limited time; perhaps prior to the start of the school year a BPD
- presentation could be part of the teacher in-service days. Any number of topics could be addressed; for example, cyberbullying, mandatory reporting requirements, or responding to active shooters. Law enforcement personnel need more face time with educators so we are all on the same page.
- {In response to Dr. Smith's inquiry as to what kinds of activities requiring police response seem most prevalent in the community}
    - Vandalism, bike theft, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, low-level and high-level drug offenses.
    - Property crime, vandalism, mischief, drinking in public.
    - The kids are a microcosm of what we see in the county. A lot of times, it is drugs and drinking and vandalism and theft. Definitely an increase in cyberbullying – crimes we never had to worry about a few years ago. Our schools need to teach kids how to navigate this electronic world; our teaching needs to catch up with that.
    - Mental health issues and drug use. Meth, heroin, and other types of deadly drugs. This is a substantial problem.
    - The decriminalization of marijuana allows access to edibles, and that is a concern.
- We need to work together and let kids know there are more people watching them. They need a lot of support and a big safety net.
- Collaborate on how to create more opportunities for students to see law enforcement personnel in a more positive light. Building positive relationships with kids can then extend way beyond the time that they leave school.
- {Steve Clarke} Thank you for giving us your best folks – top notch people who love our kids like we do. We want our kids to have a good relationship with the police department. They see you differently when they see you working in the schools. When we had a resource officer in every high school, it was very beneficial.
- {Isabel Meaker} Thank you for the positive comments on the Darkness to Light program, and thank you for what you put on the line every day. Anything we can do to create positive interactions between law enforcement personnel and students is huge.
- Regarding the benefits of DROs in schools: Organizations that give grants want empirical data – but we also need to tell them the stories about the every-day relationships that can develop when police officers are working with students in the schools. We can't save everyone, but the stories we can tell about being DROs – not the statistics – need to be heard.

4. <u>Closing and Wrap-Up</u>
   Dr. Baker thanked attendees for their participation and summarized key points of the discussion.

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Oct. 26, 2016

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Approved:

Camille Hackler, School Board President

Attest:

Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: 12/15/16