Bellingham Public Schools
a collective commitment

Board Summary: Community Linkage Special Meeting
Bellingham High School
April 19, 2017

The Bellingham School Board of Directors and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed audience members, invited guests and district staff to a linkage meeting on the topic of visual and performing arts and The Bellingham Promise. The discussion focused on the following questions:

- *How does The Bellingham Promise foster visual and performing arts in our schools?*
- *How are we doing and how could we do better?*
- *How do we ensure that The Bellingham Promise policy to develop artists and performers includes all kids regardless of socio-economic or other barriers?*

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

- The references in The Promise *to artists, performers, innovators and creators* resonated with many in the group.
- The new high school 4x8 schedule is generating much excitement; students will have greatly expanded opportunities in course selection, including visual and performing arts. A goal is to work on changing the middle school schedule in a similar way.
- The Bellingham Promise is used not only within the school district, but on a broader level within the community – for example, it has proven to be a useful tool for grant writers.
- The importance of dance was discussed; in an ideal world, it would be systematically integrated throughout K-12.
- A goal is to strive for more uniformity and consistency at all grade levels and within every school in terms of visual and performing arts offerings.
- As a district, how can we be more creative with resources so we can continue to address inequities in students' access to visual and performing arts?
- We are blessed in this district to have passionate and involved community partners.

Meeting minutes are attached.

Official Meeting Minutes: Community Linkage Special Meeting
Bellingham High School
April 19, 2017
12 noon

Linkage Attendees:

- Community Partners/Representatives: Bellingham Festival of Music Board Chair Karen Berry; BAAY Executive Director Ian Bivins; Mt. Baker Theatre Executive Director Brad Burdick; Bellingham High School Band Boosters Rep. Connie Clement; Dancing for Joy staff member Shelby Friesen; Allied Arts Executive Director Kelly Hart; Educator and Bellingham Youth Jazz Band Director Mark Kelly; Musician/Educator Paul Klein; Bellingham Public Schools Foundation Executive Director Kim Lund; Whatcom Symphony Orchestra Executive Director Gail Ridenour; Kuntz & Co. President Richard Scholtz; Mt. Baker Theatre Program Manager Alison Terry Storms; Dancing for Joy staff member Maluhia Vandergriend; Mt. Baker Theatre President & Bellingham Community Band President Skip Williams
- Directors Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Quenby Peterson, Steven Smith
- Superintendent of Schools Greg Baker
- District Leadership: Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland; Assistant Superintendent Bob Kuehl; Executive Director Tanya Rowe; Assistant Superintendent Simone Sangster
- District Staff: Bellingham High School Theatre Program Technician Keefe Healy; Shuksan Middle School Art Teacher Carolyn Heywood; Executive Secretary/Recorder Ruth Rasmussen; Sehome High School Art Teacher Lonnie Schang; Fairhaven Middle School Band/Orchestra Teacher Morgan Schwab; Music Specialist Katherine Tully; Special Education Teacher Ronni Weston

1. **Opening Items**

   Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions: School Board President Doug Benjamin called the meeting to order at 12 noon. Ms. Diaz Hackler 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. Diaz Hackler described the purpose of community linkage meetings, noting the school board views these meetings 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. The focus of this meeting, she said, is to examine the district's performance as it relates to visual and supporting arts and The Bellingham Promise.

3. **<u>Large Group Discussion with School Board</u>:**

Guiding Questions:

- *How does The Bellingham Promise foster visual and performing arts in our schools*?
- *How are we doing and how could we do better*?
- *How do we ensure that The Bellingham Promise policy to develop artists and performers includes all kids regardless of socio-economic or other barriers?*

Summary of Comments:

- <u>The Bellingham Promise</u>
  - It is a great tool that emphasizes why the arts are important. It is written in broad enough terms that it can resonate in a variety of arenas. It has been useful at times as a supporting document in the grant application process, for example.
  - {General discussion regarding how The Promise originated, its connection to the arts, and the verbiage relating to "artists, performers and trades people"}:
    - Part of the value of the arts is its multi-lingual nature. You are crossing many boundaries; trying to find things that are true with the language you have. How does the district support the arts as a *language*? How does music, for example, get incorporated into other curriculums? These are big goals.
    - {Steve Smith}: Part of the thinking (in creating The Promise) was everyone has a skill set that involves creativity and innovation – whether building a robot or playing a musical instrument. Perhaps we should consider having a separate line for tradespeople?
    - {Camille Diaz Hackler}: We are always open to hearing suggestions on changes to the wording.
- <u>Next Year's 4x8 High School Schedule</u>
  - Questions: Will high school students have more opportunities to participate in arts-related classes next year, once the new 4x8 schedule is implemented? Will similar schedule changes eventually take place at the middle school level, to allow students more opportunities in course selection?
  - Responses from district administrators/staff:
    - High school students will definitely have more opportunities to explore the arts, and the demand for classes is there. Students are signing up for more electives. We have added woodworking, guitar, painting, drawing, and dance to next year's schedule.

        - To meet demand, our staffing costs will increase significantly. And yes, we are looking at ways to find enough resources to make similar changes at the middle school level.
        - The new high school schedule will also allow us to eliminate the zero-hour schedule so students will no longer have to get up extra early to participate in a field of study they are passionate about.
        - To the extent our staffing allows, we are moving to a model with as much uniformity as possible at each high school in terms of course offerings. But the new schedule will also give students more of an opportunity to migrate to another school to pick up a couple of classes, if needed. There are simply more opportunities.
- Challenges/Wish Lists:
    - {Alison Terry Storms}: I am consistently impressed by the support of BPS for our programs at Mt. Baker Theatre. The passion and interest of staff is there; teachers seem clear on the importance of exposing young people to the performing and visual arts early. But there is just not enough funding. We (MBT) offer scholarships, and I am hoping we can partner with Bellingham Public Schools Foundation. It is important for every student to have these opportunities, not just those with financial resources.
    - Uniformity in offerings needs to be a priority. The district should define what a music program is, what is expected, and how it will be supported in terms of funding, so if a student leaves one school and goes to another within the district, there is a base level of support for each program.
    - More transparency is needed in terms of the connection between the district's support of the arts and its goals and how the program actually looks in the various schools.
    - When leadership changes in schools, sometimes the outlook towards the arts will change. It means rebuilding a relationship all over again, because suddenly there is no longer the administrative support that we've had in the past.
    - Funding streams vary. Some schools rely heavily on their PTA and others do not. We need to find a way to alleviate some of those inconsistencies.
    - (As a community partner), I have a relationship with many schools. If I lose that contact (the person who helped facilitate our after-school programs, for example) we have to start from ground zero. And that goes for funding as well.
    - As a staff member (music teacher) at the elementary level, I am delighted with where our district is going. I feel appreciated as a music teacher. It is exciting to hear about the high school schedule and more program offerings, and I would love for our middle school students to have those expanded opportunities as well.
    - {Regarding inconsistencies/inequities at elementary level}:
        - It is up to the individual teachers to offer art; some have a proclivity, others do not. Some kids have had art enrichment programs or went to art camp. They may or may not have art

supplies at home. There is no consistency from elementary to middle school; that's where I see I need.

- I would agree. At a former district (where I taught), there was a vision that translated to art and theatre; the goal was to build a comprehensive K-12 model in the arts. There was a level of support offered and a level of expectation that every school would have the resources needed. The key was this: we had a separate administrative staff member in charge of making sure this happened. This one individual covered fine arts, music…everything. BPS could do better by having someone designated for the arts, or for each segment of the arts. The mindset should be, "every school will have this." I see different schools having different levels of support. It is all individualized; it needs to be centralized, with a baseline at every building.

- {Kim Lund, Bellingham Public Schools Foundation}: To some degree we have been able to ameliorate some of the inconsistencies. Ultimately, it would be great to have an arts endowment to have a much more sustainable pool of funds.
- I've seen a lot of growth in BPS in all of the arts, but I have never heard of there being a dance program offered during the school day. Dance has grown so much in the past 17 years. I would like to have dance program in every school.
- Why couldn't dance be part of PE requirement? I think most kids would say 'yes' if you asked them if they'd like to learn a hip hop routine.
- {Mike Copland}: Dance is currently in the high school catalog as a choice for students.
- It would be great to have a dance artist-in-residence who would come in and teach; it would be a fun and interesting way to incorporate dance into the school day.

At the close of the meeting, Mr. Benjamin thanked participants and Dr. Baker summarized key discussion points.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.
Approved:



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Douglas Benjamin, School Board President

Attest:



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Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board *Minutes approved: May 11, 2017*