Bellingham Public Schools
a collective commitment

Board Summary: Community Linkage Meeting
Connecting with Behavioral Health Practitioners
District Office Board Room
June 14, 2016

The Bellingham School Board of Directors and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed audience members, invited guests and district staff to a linkage meeting with behavioral health practitioners. 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:

- *What is working well for our students related to behavioral health and wellness?*
- *What is missing or needs improvement?*
- *How can we better work together?*
- *How do you see The Bellingham Promise connected to behavioral health?*

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

- The district's practice of having providers come into the schools is effective and working well.
- Our family engagement program is extremely effective; this needs to continue to be a focal point and expanded if possible, as parent engagement is critical.
- The district should consider incorporating relationship skills and DVAS (Domestic Violence Advocacy Service) into its curriculum.
- Focus more on emotional intelligence.
- How can the district encourage staff members to make self-care a priority?
- The district deserves applause for its support of LGBTQ students.
- Several outcomes of The Bellingham Promise resonate, including the development of students and graduates who are *respectful and compassionate*; *healthy and active*; *effective communicators*; *artists and performers*; *confident individuals who continue to challenge themselves*; *and collaborators and team players*.

Meeting minutes are attached.

Official Meeting Minutes: Community Linkage Meeting
Connecting with Behavioral Health Practitioners
Bellingham School District Board Room – 5:30 p.m.
June 14, 2016

Linkage Attendees:

- Behavioral Health Practitioners: Gregory Merrill, Sea Mar Community Health Centers; Dr. Susan Kane-Ronning; Joe Fuller, Anne Deacon, and Perry Mowery, Whatcom County Health Dept.; Michaela Petz, MSW; Krystal Garmon, Whatcom/Skagit Crisis Prevention and Intervention; Riannon Bardsley, Northwest Youth Services; David Webster, Opportunity Council; Kristi Slette, ED, Whatcom Family & Community Network; Emily Wilson, Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center; Kate Foster, Parents Matter; Randy Polidan, Unity Care Northwest; Meghan Lever and Kelsey Ottum, Catholic Community Services; James Harle, MD
- Directors Kelly Bashaw, Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Quenby Peterson, Steven Smith
- Superintendent of Schools Greg Baker
- District Leadership/Staff: Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke; Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland; Executive Director Ron Cowan; Executive Director Kurt Gazow; Executive Director Nora Klewiada; Assistant Superintendent Bob Kuehl; Executive Director Isabel Meaker; Director of Teaching and Learning Steve Morse; Executive Director Tanya Rowe; Recorder Ruth Rasmussen

1. **Opening Items**

   Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions:
   Camille Diaz Hackler, School Board President, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. She 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. **Meeting Purpose – Explanation of Community/Board Linkage:**

   Meeting facilitator Douglas Benjamin thanked attendees for participating in this meeting. He explained that linkages provide the school board with opportunities to listen and strengthen connections with district partners. More specifically, the board seeks input on the goals set for students through board policies expressed in The Bellingham Promise. This is a dynamic, living document that serves as the centerpiece for decisions and actions of all school personnel, and the intent is that it will evolve and change over time.

Linkage meetings are an ideal way for the board to hear from stakeholders on their thoughts and experiences with The Promise.

2.1 Large-Group Discussion with School Board

Mr. Benjamin invited attendees to take a few minutes to review The Bellingham Promise. He said the following guiding questions would serve as a framework for this evening's discussion:

- *What is working well for our students related to behavioral health and wellness?*
- *What is missing or needs improvement?*
- *How can we better work together?*
- *How do you see The Bellingham Promise connected to behavioral health?*

Summary of comments:

- *What is working well?*
  - The district's practice of providing space for providers to come into the schools to meet with kids is an innovative idea, and it works. This approach helps break down barriers for families.
  - From my standpoint [as a private practitioner], the counselors are doing a good job of recognizing which kids will benefit from this short-term intervention at school, and they know when to refer out.
  - The district has chosen to take a compassionate and thoughtful stance with kids who don't make the best decisions; this approach allows identification of those kids who are truly at risk.
  - In response to an inquiry, Director of Teaching and Learning Steve Morse said both Sea Mar and Compass Health provide mental health services at 16 of the district's 22 schools.
  - The family engagement team under the leadership of Isabel Meaker is doing important work in promoting activities such as the Shuksan Middle School community family nights. Isabel's ability to connect families to so many different resources is commendable. The question is: how far can we stretch that work? Some of the families who would benefit the most are hardest to access. Family involvement is one of our ongoing challenges.
  - I applaud the district for its queer/straight alliance work. Our LGBTQ kids are creating a community; thank you for supporting them.
  - In response to the question of what resonates within The Bellingham Promise, attendees referenced the following outcomes:
    - *We develop students and graduates who are respectful and compassionate humans.* We don't see this modeled much in our society but it is critical, not only in terms of preventing the horrors we see in the news, but also in simply raising responsible citizens.
    - *Healthy, active individuals; effective communicators*
    - *Artists, performers:* This is a therapeutic break in the day for some students. I'm glad to see the district bringing [the arts] back.
    - *Confident individuals who continuously challenge themselves:* Grit and perseverance are equally or sometimes more important than intelligence.

        - *Collaborators and team players:* The social connection piece is critical.
- *What is missing or needs improvement?*
    - District staff have a very hard job. How do we honor that hard work? How do we acknowledge that and teach them to care for themselves? What are the self-care opportunities for educators and staff? [In response, Dr. Baker said staff members have access to an Employee Assistance Program that is coordinated through Human Resources. Additionally, the district has partnered with Whatcom Community Foundation to co-fund a wellness director position. Her responsibilities are large in scope, but employee wellness is one area of focus.]
    - I've seen certain discipline techniques that are not effective; for example, taking away recess. How do we provide training and support for staff in better classroom management?
    - [I would like to see] increased prevention efforts in the areas of substance abuse as well as suicide prevention. Peer-to-peer programs should be expanded.
    - Consider more education around dating skills. What characterizes a healthy or unhealthy relationship? Parents are asking for training on how to talk with their kids about abuse prevention in relationships.
    - A lot of connection to resources outside of school continues to feel like punishment for kids. The way it is framed can make a huge difference. The way students are connected to community resources can continue to be improved.
    - In response to a question relating to emotional intelligence being a component of the curriculum, Mr. Morse said work in this area is being done by teams of counselors; and all of our elementary schools use *Zones of Regulation*. A question to consider, he said, is whether it is better to have a specific curriculum based on emotional intelligence or to simply practice it every day in terms of the culture we build in schools.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m.



Camille Diaz Hackler
School Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: July 21, 2016