Board Summary: Community Linkage Meeting
Connecting with Families of Highly Capable Learners
September 27, 2012

The Bellingham School Board and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed parents and district staff to a linkage meeting on Sept. 27, 2012 to discuss the Highly Capable Learners (HCL) Program.
The purpose of the meeting was for the School Board to engage in a discussion about how The Bellingham Promise connects with the Highly Capable Learners' Program and the services provided for students and families. Attendees were divided into small groups with at least one Board member and one Executive Team member with each group. The Board asked parents and staff members to explore the following questions:

- What in The Bellingham Promise resonates with regard to HCL students?
- What in The Bellingham Promise could be improved as it relates to HCL students?
- What evidence or data would indicate the success of failure of an HCL program?
- What are the attributes of a high-functioning HCL program?
- What is one thought or item you want the Board to take away from this meeting?

Parents and staff members shared their support for The Bellingham Promise and suggested ways it could relate better to HCL students. Parents also suggested many ways that the HCL program could be enhanced to better serve students, including an emphasis on professional development/training for staff working with HCL students and that students be given more challenging work so they can reach their full potential. Parents suggested the word "challenge" be added to The Bellingham Promise. Parents expressed a need for the HCL program to be more than one day per week. They urged the Board to recognize students as future leaders and citizens and to realize the importance of the needs of the HCL learner through the allocation of resources, training and family engagement opportunities.

Meeting minutes are attached.

Community Linkage Meeting: Connecting with Families of Highly Capable Learners
September 27, 2012, 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Linkage attendees included:

Elizabeth Boyle, Roosevelt Parent
Cara Buckingham, Whatcom Parent
Hui-Ling Chan, Fairhaven Parent
Mark Conover, Whatcom Parent
David Flanagan, Lowell Parent
Alison Henshaw, Columbia Parent
Kim Levin, Roosevelt Parent
Holly Miller, Geneva Parent
Gayle Pauley, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Administrator
Quenby Peterson, Lowell/Fairhaven Parent
Vicky Reardon, Roosevelt Parent
Carrie Schwarz, Happy Valley Parent
Astrid Sloan, Whatcom Parent
Dana Smith, Cordata Parent
Anita White, Fairhaven Parent
Anne Wright, Silver Beach Parent
Sari Mehus, Shuksan Parent
Kelly Bashaw, Board President
Steve Smith, Board Member
Scott Stockburger, Board Member
Camille Hackler, Board Member
Greg Baker, Superintendent
Tom Venable, Deputy Superintendent
Steve Clarke, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning
Ron Cowan, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations
Tanya Rowe, Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations
Nora Klewiada, Executive Director of Human Resources
Hank Harris, Executive Director of Human Resources
Jim Facciano, Curriculum Director
Nancy Smith, HCL Coordinator
Kris Carpenter, HCL Teacher on Special Assignment

President Kelly Bashaw called the meeting to order and, on behalf of the School Board, welcomed parents and district staff.

Superintendent Greg Baker also welcomed the group and thanked them for taking their time to engage in discussion about the Highly Capable Learners Program. Dr. Baker referred to an article shared by parent, Vicky Reardon. The district has increased support for the HCL Program

in spite of budget cuts and has identified 300 HCL students participating districtwide. Dr. Baker started introductions around the room.

Dr. Steve Smith presented information explaining the role of the Board and the Leadership Team. He talked about the value of community linkages and reviewed *The Bellingham Promise.*

Attendees were divided into groups. Each group had one Board member and one Executive Team member. The Board asked each facilitator to explore the following questions about the HCL Program.

- **What in *The Bellingham Promise* resonates with regard to HCL students?**
- **What in *The Bellingham Promise* could be improved as it relates to HCL students?**
- **What evidence or data would indicate the success or failure of an HCL program?**
- **What are the attributes of a high-functioning HCL program?**
- **What is one thought or item you want the Board to take away from this meeting?**

Following the small group discussions, facilitators shared key points and comments:

What in *The Bellingham Promise* resonates with regard to HCL students?

- *The Bellingham Promise* strategies of Innovation and Flexibility (different strategies being used, opportunities that engage all) and the One Schoolhouse Approach (inclusive for all) resonate for HCL students, as well as Family and Community Engagement (need teachers, students and families working together, district level engagement).
- Need early childhood education for HCL students, the formation of the brain, brain development, language acquisition.
- They liked the One Schoolhouse concept – but don't think it's equitable between differing groups of students. As an example, one of the parents compared the per pupil spending for English Language Learners (ELL) and HCL students noting that less was spent on HCL.
- HCL students have a passion for learning.
- Sees every child being prepared by providing world language, but not happening yet.
- Paper from Council for Exceptional Children.
- Three phrases – tie in nicely.
- Needs of individual child.
- Individuality and differentiation imbedded in Promise.
- Innovation and flexibility in Promise.
- Kids have different outcomes, different needs.
- General enough that it does apply to HCL students.
- Problem solving.

What in *The Bellingham Promise* could be improved as it relates to HCL students?

- Great teaching with strong support – At some schools, the teacher is faced with half the class who is below standard in reading.
- Cluster grouping of students, training and development of staff in support of increasing engagement.

- Having teacher who know how to challenge and support the development of a self-motivated learner and curiosity.
- Attending the social-emotional development through clustering, training and development.
- Communication with my elementary teacher through letter to the teacher, schedule a conference, ask my child to advocate for their needs to be met.
- Defining the partnership through clarification of roles and responsibilities.
- Principal placement process…only.
- HCL kids are not often challenged or pushed. They suggested that HCL students be in differentiated learning groups like reading groups.
- Teachers are not trained to work with HCL students.
- Shared individual stories to explain concerns that the only strategy some teachers use is to give the HCL student more of the same work when the student finishes the assignment ahead of time. As a result, the parents stated that the students feel they are "punished" by being given more of the same work they are already good at. This strategy is a disincentive for the students to work to their potential.
- Suggested that teachers learn how to upgrade the work rather than just give them more of the same thing.
- Some staff don't like to work with students that they have to pull along.
- Some students don't like the pullout at FMS cause it makes them feel different.
- The use of parent transportation to get to HCL programs is a problem for families that do not have a parent available during the school day.
- Shared that students are subject to the peer pressure that promotes the concept of, "it's not cool to be HCL or smart."
- One parent noted that state law requires an educational plan for each student. From her perspective, she believes it is not being done.
- Concerns shared that the change in the Happy Valley HCL pullout program represents a cutback in time for elementary students in HCL; not pleased with the change.
- As long as NCLB is the "driver," HCL will be ignored because the teacher's job depends on working with the lower students.
- Concerns shared that teachers do not know which kids are identified as HCL. One parent suggested that HCL recruitment should start with the students who are always "sent to the office." He noted that often, those that are "in trouble" are HCL and end up fooling around because they are bored and then they end up in trouble.
- Students need more than math and science to get into college; they also need other things and wondered about art, leadership skills, etc. They need to learn how to be a well-rounded person (including athletics).
- One day a week is not enough.
- It's challenging for teachers to meet all those needs of the spectrum for students.
- HCL students often feel like the odd man out.
- HCL students often bored with assignments.
- Additional resources and training would help. Get training for teachers.
- Include the word "challenge" in the Bellingham Promise. Need to allow the struggle to be part of the process including failure and true challenge.

- Where is communication in the Promise? Maybe in student community and family engagement, communication to staff about who their students are and how to support them.
- Know that there is a plan for the HCL child.
- More explicit that our students be clustered, tracked.
- No reference to teaching and learning.
- World class schools – it is not ambitious, it doesn't say we will be the best.
- Forgetting about our mission of teaching – it is a bit weak on that, phrase about whole child detracts from this.
- Nothing about evidenced-based practices being used.
- These commitments aren't being met today for HCL students.
- Attendance every other Friday is only 6% - this is not enough.

What evidence or data would indicate the success or failure of an HCL program?
Great teaching with strong support – A successful HCL program has the following:

- Cluster grouping of students, training and development of staff in support of increasing engagement.
- Teachers who know how to challenge and support the development of a self-motivated learner and curiosity.
- Staff who attend to the social-emotional development through clustering, training and development.
- There was a lot of discussion on how to assess HCL students' growth.
- The concept of "one year of growth" is a great goal for all students but expressed concern that the state standardized tests did not provide the proper tool to measure HCL student growth…specifically how do you measure beyond "proficient" and "exceeds standards?"
- "What test do you use to measure HCL student growth?"
- Do teachers have access to these tests?
- HCL students need to be well-rounded individuals. Can we measure the attitude of the students – to find out if they are happy and working to their capacity?
- Metrics will be important to determine whether what we are doing is working.
- Growth of one year for every child! And more than one year! All exceed.
- Should be over and above for them to fulfill their promise – not just scores – not average out but as a cohort be able to challenge each other.
- Want to fully develop.
- What about chemistry?
- Energy will go somewhere so let's put it into really letting them run. We want them to be excited in school.
- Number of kids in the program.
- Amount of time involved in HCL with HCL teachers.
- How much service is being offered?
- Measure HCL time by subject area.
- MAP scores.
- Achievement growth.
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What are the attributes of a high-functioning HCL program?

- HCL students like to work with each other because they think alike.
- Full time.
- School within a school.
- Magnet school.
- Communicate back out on what is happening.
- Better accessibility, transportation to the program makes it difficult for some families.
- Diversity.
- Depth of instruction, learning; don't just give the kids more work.

What is one thought or item you want the Board to take away from this meeting?

- Realize the importance of the needs of the HCL learner through the allocation of resources, training and develop (academic/social-emotional), family engagement opportunities.
- HCL students are future leaders/citizens who will take us out of the recession and be the problem solvers.
- Have data that can be used to measure the success of the program as well as of individual students.
- More ambitious.
- More attention.
- Accessibility.

Tanya Rowe indicated that notes from the discussion will be compiled and included on the district website and that they will be emailed to participants.

President Kelly Bashaw thanked the group for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Kelly M. Bashaw

Kelly Bashaw, School Board President

ATTEST:

Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board