



Board of Directors

Kevin Lewis, President
Bill Gaines, Vice President
Erin Markquart, Member
Johanneke Smith, Member
Tom Watson, Member

Our Promise

We will **know**, **value**, and **support** every student, helping them **graduate ready** to pursue a **promising future**.

January 13, 2026 - Study Session Minutes

Central Office Board Room
1202 Wood Avenue
Sumner, WA 98390

Call to Order

School board President Kevin Lewis called the January 13, 2026 board study session for the Board of Directors at Sumner-Bonney Lake School District No. 320 to order at 6:00pm.

Director Tom Watson joined virtually.

Counseling Services

Cheri Simpson, Director of Behavioral Support and Mental Health Services, along with a panel of elementary and high school counselors, shared highlights demonstrating how Counseling Services contribute to closing student achievement and opportunity gaps and aligning with the school improvement plan. David Brower, Assistant Superintendent introduced the panel to the board of directors and in recognition of School Board Appreciation month shared that the plants were provided by Student Support Services in appreciation for their work in helping students grow.

David began the conversation by reminding everyone that all the work done in Student Support Services stems from providing social and emotional safety to students, which impacts all five goals of the Strategic Plan. Cheri Simpson began by defining the role of school counselors as one that uses data driven solutions to close student achievement gaps and create opportunities to thrive. School counseling uses an approach that is aligned with school improvement plans, especially with sub-groups populations in an effort to remove barriers. Sara Odonnell reiterated that counselors' approach is a nested approach within the school improvement plan that integrates comprehensive school counseling plans, Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) action plans that are completed each year by the schools to understand the NTSS systems and student growth goals. She also highlighted that counseling work for students relies on a tiered system of support that includes behavioral, academic as well as social and emotional interventions. The work of counselors can greatly vary as they address different parts of the student population; their work can include classroom lessons and small group exercises to provide the ideal learning environment for students.

The Sumner-Bonney Lake School District follows the American School Counselor Model that includes three domains (academic, career and social/emotional development) which intersect with the district's portrait of a graduate. The school counselors that presented at the study session



focused on one project/program from the past year that was used to serve their student population.

Tawny Rendhal of Emerald Hills Elementary shared about the Rafiki group, which is used to build community among African cultures represented in the school. Tawny shared that as a result of survey responses where many African students expressed concerns about safety and belonging, she created a learning opportunity for African students to teach her swahili which later extended to all students of African heritage. The program received such positive feedback from students and parents that she plans to continue to group. She also shared information about SWIS, which is the district's behavioral referral database where staff log concerning student behavior. Tawny shared that one student, who rated fairly high in the system, was referred to the Rafiki group for positive modeling that resulted in a drastic improvement in behavior.

Allie Hubble of Crestwood Elementary shared takeaways from the Emotional Regulation Peer Leaders Club whose goal is creating student confidence around managing emotions as they connect with peers to build positive relationships. Working with the school principal devised a plan to address a group of kindergarten students and second graders who were demonstrating problematic behaviors. In partnership with another teacher, she taught the six week Character Strong Tier 2 curriculum during student recess time which is about thirty minutes or the scheduled lunch period. After reviewing student responses to behavior related questions and scores in the SWIS system, it was determined that there was improvement in student behavior across the two groups. She noted that students who completed the curriculum were modeling and teaching appropriate behavior to their peers on the playground and in their classrooms.

Dasha Berry from Bonney Lake High School shared that the counselor's work at the high school level is also data driven and based on a needs assessment and school wide SIP data which allows them to sub-groups of the student population that are struggling (ie. not passing classes or in danger of not graduating). Last year's focus was on McKinney Vento students to determine barriers to graduation (i.e. access to after school resources). As part of PLC every week grade reports were

run to identify struggling students who were called into the office in an effort to understand what barriers they were facing and how the staff could support them in overcoming challenges. As a result of this work there was a 69% improvement in their pass rate at the end of semester 1. Josh Agpalza, the Director of Equity for Sumner-Bonney Lake School District, shared that the graduation rate among McKinney Vento students jumped 12% last year. Dasha shared that in addition to continuing work with McKinney Vento students, work is now shifting to the 504 group to ensure they have appropriate accommodations and they know how to request what they need to be successful.

Finally Cheri asked the counselors how their work supports the district's promise to know, value and support each student. Responses included Tawny's intentional effort to know every student before they enter the student leader program in 5th grade; she specifically shared how she connects with students during her lunch periods where she establishes a rapport. Dasha shared that there is a deliberate effort to connect with all freshman students prior to Winter break to see how they're integrating in the school as well as seniors in the Fall to see if they need help with their common application. During registration season 9-11 grade students to confirm proper course registration and high school graduation. Allie shared that her goal to know students is to know their names,



which happens during bus duty, hallway transition and small groups.

The group also shared that counseling services partners with outside agencies like Daybreak to provide mental health support, Pathways Change and Heidi's Promise to create consistent support for students.

Board Discussion

Director Bill Gaines polled the board to determine if Tuesdays still work for board study sessions and board meetings. While most have been able to accommodate Tuesdays, there was some preference to return meetings to Wednesdays next year. Dr. Laurie Dent shared how Tuesdays present a shorter window for staff in terms of satisfying logistical work. Dr. Dent will update policy 1400 Meeting Conduct Order of Business Quorum to reflect a return to Wednesday.

Dr. Dent shared required WSSDA training that needed to be completed by the board in the next two years. Tom will receive a copy through email and JB will share a copy of the DISC assessment book during her scheduled visit with Tom on Thursday.

Dr. Dent also provided follow-up discussion to Bill's interest in doing the DISC assessment as part of their training to gain clarity on how they want to lay out the time. Dr. Dent shared one approach could be to take the assessment now and contract a facilitator for a deep dive. She also shared they could do a book study which would include dinner and discussion. The final decision was that the training would be built into the board calendar for next year. Erin asked about the purpose for training and what the expected outcome would be for training and learning as a board. Dr. Laurie Dent recommends that once the assessment is completed, we review the results and how they connect to a gap in the board self assessment and strategic plan.

Discussion ended at 7:05pm

Attest

Laurie Dent, Secretary
Board of Directors

Kevin Lewis, President
Board of Directors