



Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS) Key Communications

Kate Wearn & Lorrie Melton (co-chairs)
Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026
District Offices – 1985 Barkley Boulevard

Welcome and Introductions Co-chairs – Lorrie Melton & Kate Wearn

Superintendent's Update

- Dr. Baker shared [an update on budget planning for the 2026-27 school year](#). He reminded the committee that if the state fully funded PreK-12 public education, we wouldn't be facing budget challenges. We have more confidence that federal funds will be coming through as planned, but federal dollars make up a small slice of the budget. We get most of our funding from the state and the legislature is still in session; unfortunately, we don't have indications that lawmakers will be dramatically increasing funding.
- One budget-savings step we are taking as a district is to shift our high school schedule from the current eight-period schedule to a seven-period schedule. This will save the district between \$1-2 million while still allowing the most choice and instructional time for students.
- Dr. Baker answered questions from PACS members and offered clarification:
 - Is the district trying to dissuade students from doing Running Start? No, we take Running Start into consideration as we build out the new schedule to accommodate students' needs.
 - Didn't the levy this fall help solve some of our budget issues? Yes, it helped significantly but unfortunately, it didn't solve all of our challenges. Had the levies not passed, we would need to cut significantly more.
 - Have we ever tried to ask lawmakers to change their timing of budget planning? It seems like the state does education a disservice by voting on the budget in the spring when districts are trying to make plans for the fall. Yes, we have acknowledged the timing issue with legislators and OSPI. We haven't been successful in changing the cadence.
- Dr. Baker also talked about declining birth rates and enrollment across the state and in our district and answered questions. We have a new [facilities planning task force](#) that will look at enrollment, demographic projections and the conditions of our schools to make a recommendation. There are times we need to expand and contract as a district. It's important that we prioritize flexibility as we always strive to be good stewards of taxpayer funding.

Allocation/Distribution of Resources of All Schools and Supporting Vulnerable Students and Families

- A panel of experts answered questions from PACS members around funding, equity, budget and supporting disadvantaged families and students.
- The panel consisted of Sam Gearhart, executive director of Bellingham Public Schools Foundation; Kathryn Weilage, chief financial officer of BPS; Isabel Meaker, executive director of family engagement and Dr. Greg Baker, superintendent.
- A [recent message by Dr. Baker](#) was referenced, and PACS members expressed appreciation for the message.

Future meetings: April 23; May 14