



# Inside Schools

YOUR BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER FALL 2013



## Where to Vote

Voters within Bellingham Public Schools' attendance areas will receive a ballot in the mail in October to vote on the bond. **Ballots must be postmarked and mailed or received at this city drop-box location by Nov. 5, 2013:**

**Whatcom County Courthouse**  
(South Parking Lot)  
201 Grand Avenue  
Bellingham, WA 98225



## Facilities Bond Goes to Voters

Voters will decide on a bond on Nov. 5 regarding facilities for Bellingham Public Schools.

This \$160 million bond includes the highest priority needs as identified by a Facilities Planning Task Force. If approved by voters, the facility projects would likely be completed by 2019.

Our schools cannot rely on the federal and state government to adequately fund school construction and protect the community's investment in our existing facilities through maintenance, such as roof replacement. Therefore, school districts in our state ask local voters to approve bonds to cover these costs.



**PHOTO:** A new Happy Valley Elementary School could be built on its current property while the school remains open during construction.

## Why is the Bond Needed

In 2012, Bellingham Public Schools convened a Facilities Planning Task Force representing numerous staff, students, community members, parents and alumni.

After extensive research and meetings, the Task Force identified many facility needs. This bond addresses many, but not all, of the greatest needs. It includes several projects, with a top priority to rebuild Sehome High School. Sehome was built in 1966. The building does not comply with current energy codes. It is not fully handicapped accessible and its layout creates potential safety issues.

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# the Bellingham Promise...in Action

The Bellingham Promise is our strategic plan, developed in partnership with our community. The following two letters to Superintendent Greg Baker exemplify The Promise.

## Every Child Can Learn at High Levels... From Our Core Beliefs

**Dear Dr. Baker,**

My son Cooper was born with Down syndrome, a shock, to say the least. When Chris and I brought him home, we made a commitment to do everything we could to build a community for him. We brought him to story time at the library, participated in playgroups, and early intervention therapies.

He signed, almost exclusively, until he was three, and learned to walk just

short of his third birthday. At the end of his preschool years, we were faced with the decision about where he should attend kindergarten: his home school Happy Valley Elementary or the Life Skills class at Wade King Elementary. While he'd made growth in preschool, his academics weren't strong, nor was his communication. After much deliberation, we sent him to Happy Valley. By November, his time in kindergarten had been reduced to mornings, and I spent most days worrying that we would be asked to move him to another school, or a different program.

With the help of an incredibly supportive school team, he remained at Happy Valley as a full-day kindergartener his second year, making friends, developing his reading skills, and learning to write. His teacher assembled her "Cooper Team" moving him to first grade with the students who helped him be most successful.

First grade was stunning. His reading jumped 5 levels. His writing and math skills grew. He came home talking about the salmon project, the weather and emotions. For me, the highlight was that he had clearly made friends.

He was invited to birthday parties and play dates: those basic things that many parents take for granted, but that keep me awake at night.

In May 2013, Happy Valley's first grade hosted a Poetry Night, and Cooper was right there to share his poems. As he read, parents in the audience passed tissues. They've been watching him grow since kindergarten, and have cheered every bit of progress he's made, right along with us. His second grade year promises to be just as successful.

Cooper, truly, is living *The Bellingham Promise*. His school has made an unwavering commitment to see him for who he is, with all the gifts and challenges he brings, and to ensure that he is part of Happy Valley's community. Having the right support has made all the difference. I hope that as parents, teachers and administrators, we can work to make sure all children receive the support they need to live *The Bellingham Promise* as well.

Sincerely,  
**Gretchen Howard**  
*Wade King Elementary teacher  
and proud parent*



**VIDEO:** Cooper reads his poetry alongside his first grade teacher Jill DeJong. View video at: [video.bellinghamschools.org/medias/8pmlkj6xhg](http://video.bellinghamschools.org/medias/8pmlkj6xhg)

## We Develop Artists and Performers... From Our Outcomes for Students and Graduates

**Dear Dr. Baker,**

I left school absolutely bursting today and I thought I'd let you know why...

While assessing my intermediate students, I notice a distinct difference between my students now and when I was new to teaching this grade level in the district. In 2007, I taught intermediate students twice a week for 30 minutes and primary music was left to the classroom teachers. My third graders came to me almost music-less (my own term), most of them unable to match pitch with their voices, having little sense of steady beat or written notation. I was new to teaching, so I didn't really know how devastating that was.

Skip forward to 2013, our fourth year with districtwide primary music. My third graders have had music with me since kindergarten. I held "auditions" for choir today and heard from 25 third graders who want to join the choir, and every single one of them matched pitch perfectly! Not only can they match pitch, they all have an excellent sense of steady beat and are reading rhythms (quarter notes, eighth notes, dotted rhythms) in 2/4 and 6/8 time. By the end of the year, they will be sight-singing melodies and translating that to instruments.

In short, my students will go to middle school able to read, write and perform music. Not one of my students will be that adult who says "I can't

sing" or "I don't read music." I pinch myself thinking about the possibility of someday getting my intermediate students back twice a week and what we could accomplish.

Sincerely,  
**Katie Tully**  
*Elementary music teacher*



For the full version of The Bellingham Promise, go to [bellinghamschools.org](http://bellinghamschools.org).

# Bond Overview

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The bond also includes rebuilding Happy Valley Elementary School. This building has inadequate electrical, old plumbing and poor heating/ventilation. Options High school has been functioning out of seven portables since 1999. The bond would fund the construction

of a new Options High School on the current property. The bond includes safety enhancements for all neighborhood schools; crucial maintenance work; energy efficiency projects; a central kitchen for healthier food at all schools; planning for environmental learning upgrades at

the Lake Whatcom Gordon Carter Conservation site; improvements for Lowell and Parkview elementary schools; improving safety by renovating the existing transportation and district office buildings; and upgrades to high school fields for student and community use.

## Planned Projects Funded by the 2013 Bond *...in more detail*



### Sehome High School Rebuild

Rebuilding Sehome is a top priority and a big part of this bond. It was built in 1966 and has not had any major improvements. It does not comply with current energy codes. It is not fully handicapped accessible, and its layout creates potential safety issues. Plans include building the new school elsewhere on the site while students remain at the current school during construction.



### Happy Valley Elementary School Rebuild

Happy Valley has inadequate electrical, old plumbing, and poor heating/ventilation. The school also has energy efficiency issues. Like the Shuksan Middle School rebuild, we're planning to build the new school elsewhere on the site while students remain at the current school.



### Construct New Options High School

The 2013 bond includes construction of a new Options High School. Options has been functioning out of portables since it opened in 1999. The portables are over 20 years old and have structural issues, inadequate classroom and restroom space, and poor heating/cooling systems. Students and staff are in need of a safe and appropriate learning environment that provides more flexibility than a traditional high school and helps improve graduation rates. The plan is to build at the Franklin Street location and adjacent district warehouse property.



### Improvements to Safety, Energy and Long-Term Maintenance Projects at All Schools

Beyond the big rebuilds, this bond also includes improvements that impact all Bellingham Public Schools. These improvements and renovations include **energy efficiency projects**, **various safety enhancements** such as new interior and exterior locks, **replacing roofing** and other **maintenance upgrades**.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# Planned Projects

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3



## Parkview Elementary School

Parkview's improvements include building a separate cafeteria or gym, as well as other enhancements including improving bathrooms, meeting spaces and outdoor traffic flow. This work will not cause the school to temporarily close.



## Lowell Elementary School

Thanks to voters in 2006, seismic work was completed at Lowell for safety in the event of an earthquake. A new gym and cafeteria will be built, as well as adding an elevator. This work will not cause the school to temporarily close.



**ABOVE:** The current Lowell gym is extremely small, creating challenges for physical education classes.



## Upgrades at the Lake Whatcom Gordon Carter Conservation Site

Plan and begin construction for environmental learning and teaching.



## The Transportation Facility

Built in the 1950s, the transportation facility is in poor physical condition and energy inefficient. Current work space has inadequate flooring and only one lift. Issues include exhaust ventilation concerns, poorly insulated walls, roofing and inefficient heating.



## Healthier Food

Build a Central Kitchen on Sehome's campus that would provide healthier food and some made-from-scratch meals to students at all schools. Currently, our schools mainly heat and serve highly processed frozen food.



## Replace Soggy Fields

Athletic fields are currently unusable for physical education classes, athletics, community recreation and marching band practice much of the year in our wet weather. Bellingham, Sehome and Squalicum football fields will be replaced with synthetic turf, allowing for year-round usage by students and the community. This represents 3% of the bond budget.



## District Office Improvements

Built in 1908 as Roeder Elementary, the building was converted to a district office in the 1960s. A seismic upgrade was planned for 2010, but the money was reapportioned to rebuild Birchwood Elementary. Problems at this facility include major structural safety issues, electrical problems, no handicap accessibility, inadequate meeting space and basement flooding.

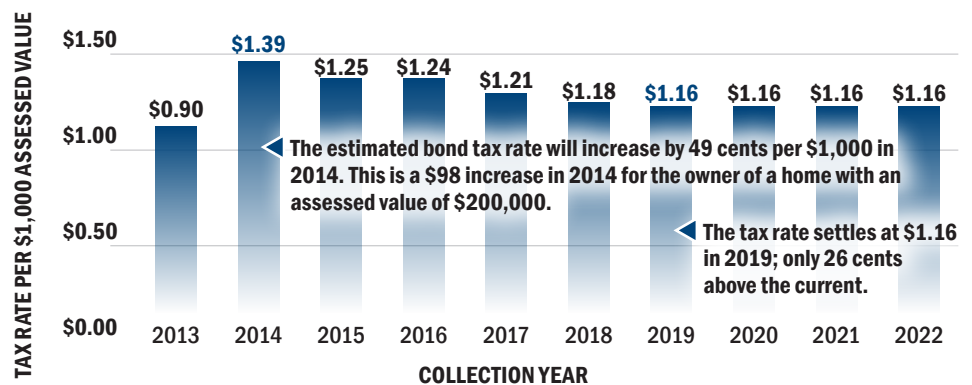


**VIDEO** For more in-depth information on the bond and to view facility videos, please go to [bellingshamschools.org/bond](http://bellingshamschools.org/bond).

# What is the Bond's Financial Impact?

To support these projects, voters will be asked to consider a \$160 million bond. The estimated total bond tax rate would increase in 2014 by 49 cents per \$1,000 assessed value (see chart at right). This is approximately a \$98 increase in 2014 for the owner of a home with an assessed value of \$200,000. The bond tax rate would continue to decrease each year after that, settling to only 26 cents above the current bond tax rate by 2019. Even if voters approve this bond, Bellingham Public Schools' total tax rate would remain among the lowest in the county, region and state (see chart lower right).

## Estimated Tax Rates INCLUDING \$160 MILLION BOND ISSUE



## Senior Citizens Exemption Information

Qualifying senior citizens and persons with disabilities may be exempt from paying school taxes. For more information, please call the County Assessor's office at 676-6790 or visit: <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/assessor/taxguides/homeowners/exemption.jsp>

## Washington School Districts

WITH SIMILAR ASSESSED VALUE, INCLUDING \$160 MILLION BOND ISSUE

DISTRICT	ASSESSED VALUE	BONDS	M&O	CAPITAL PROJECTS	TRANS.	*TOTAL
Federal Way SD No. 210	\$9,879,724,105	\$1.61	\$ 4.48	\$ 1.46	\$ -	\$ 7.55
Everett SD No. 2	11,920,032,751	2.27	3.61	0.67	-	6.55
Puyallup SD No. 3	10,472,271,906	2.06	4.25	-	-	6.31
Evergreen SD No. 114	10,241,766,158	2.01	4.24	-	-	6.26
Highline SD No. 401	11,779,188,350	1.90	3.81	-	-	5.71
Vancouver SD No. 37	11,441,167,815	1.85	3.77	-	-	5.63
Renton SD No. 403	14,344,690,414	2.31	2.49	0.56	-	5.36
North Thurston SD No. 3	8,325,531,647	1.44	3.71	-	-	5.15
<b>Bellingham SD No. 501</b>	<b>10,971,249,543</b>	<b>1.39</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>0.62</b>	-	<b>4.61</b>
Mukilteo SD No. 6	11,415,917,653	0.49	3.13	0.63	0.26	4.51
Peninsula SD No. 401	8,781,652,931	0.45	2.31	-	-	2.76

The rate remains toward the bottom, even with the passage of the proposed bond.

\*Totals rounded

## Support for Neighborhood Schools

By GREG BAKER, Superintendent of Schools

Thank you for supporting Bellingham Public Schools. My family and I are entering our fourth year living in this remarkable community. We are continuously amazed and grateful that we are surrounded by others who believe so strongly in the power and importance of ensuring an outstanding education for all students. Whether it is the support of our local levies that provide full-time kindergarten for all students, or bonds that support the construction of our facilities, this community continuously stands together in support of public education.

The Bellingham Promise calls us all to play a role in the success of our

students, and I would like to thank each of you for all that you do, whether you are a parent, staff member, student or community member.

I want to especially thank our volunteer School Board who work hard every day on behalf of students. Their unanimous support of this November's bond exemplifies their understanding that place matters for student learning now and in the future.

  
GREG BAKER

PHOTO: The district places a high priority on maintaining our neighborhood schools.



# State Recognition

2014 Teacher of the Year

2014 Assistant Principal of the Year



**KATIE BROWN**, English Language Learner (ELL) Specialist at Shuksan Middle School, was named the 2014 Washington State Teacher of the Year. She will serve as an ambassador for the teaching profession in 2013-14 while maintaining her duties at Shuksan and will be considered for National Teacher of the Year. President Obama will announce the winner in a special ceremony at the White House in spring 2014. Ms. Brown is pictured (*above*) surrounded by her students.



**ANN BUSWELL**, Whatcom Middle School Assistant Principal (*above*), was named the 2014 Assistant Principal of the Year in Washington State. She will be recognized officially by the Governor at the Washington Educators' Conference in October and in Washington D.C. in spring 2014 where she will be part of the pool of candidates for the National Assistant Principal of the Year Award. She is shown (*above*) with Whatcom principal Jeff Coulter.



## Taking Academics by Storm

The following Squalicum High seniors have excelled in national testing in 2013.



**KRISTIN SMITH** has been named a semi-finalist in the 2014 National Merit Scholarship Program and received a perfect composite score on the ACT test.



**KURT REINSCHMIDT** received a perfect composite score on the ACT test.



**BRANDON VELASQUEZ** (*left*) and **ALEXANDER ROSS** are 2013-14 National Hispanic Scholars as designated by the College Board's National Hispanic Recognition Program



Squalicum High junior **PARKER DEWILDE** took fourth place nationally for Technology Concepts at the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) National Leadership Conference this summer in Anaheim, Calif.

This event tests knowledge of technology concepts such as computer applications and integration, networks, telecommunications, and operating systems.



NORTH CASCADES INSTITUTE

## Mountain School

All fifth graders in Bellingham Public Schools attend the North Cascades Institute (NCI) for a nationally recognized environmental education program called Mountain School. In past years, PTA fundraising and family contributions were the revenue sources associated with the program, creating hardships for many students, families and staff. As an integral part of the science curriculum, our school system will fund it for all fifth graders starting this school year. To find out more about Mountain School, go to [nccascades.org](http://nccascades.org)

Due to the government shutdown in October, several fall trips to NCI were canceled.

# Expanding Preschool Opportunities and Investing in Early Childhood

Bellingham Public Schools and the Opportunity Council are partnering again to expand preschool opportunities in elementary schools. According to the Opportunity Council, this expansion means 18 additional preschoolers will receive comprehensive services in our community.

Bellingham is a leader in the state and in much of the country on early childhood education. In 2011, Bellingham took the bold step to fully fund full-time kindergarten for all families, thanks in part to a local levy.

A key strategy of *The Bellingham Promise* is to invest in a strong early childhood program because of its powerful long-term return. Expanding early childhood education opportunities for students at all elementary schools is a high work priority.

“Research shows that getting our kids in early education programs is instrumental for their development in so many ways. It also supports a healthy community, contributing to a reduction in crime, teenage

pregnancy, and welfare dependency.” said Greg Baker, superintendent of Bellingham Public Schools.

“We all know that the first few years of life profoundly influence how a young person will develop as a teen and an adult. Early education can make a huge difference in the readiness to learn in the K-12 system. This expansion of preschool with Bellingham Public School illustrates the strength of our partnerships,” said Dave Finet, Executive Director, Opportunity Council.

Within Bellingham schools, programs are located at Carl Cozier, Roosevelt (both morning and afternoon sessions), Alderwood and Silver Beach elementary schools. Bellingham Public Schools also has partnered with the Whatcom Community Co-Op to provide an integrated preschool at Sunnyland Elementary School and a community preschool at Silver Beach Elementary. In addition, preschool programs operate for students in special education at Alderwood, Happy Valley, Silver Beach and Northern

Heights elementary schools.

Funding and support for the Opportunity Council’s early childhood programs comes from the federal Head Start program, the state’s Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and the school district.



**VIDEO** The class of 2024 is the first full-time kindergarten cohort. View *Class of 2024 Heads to Second Grade* at [video.bellinghamschools.org/medias/ntv687m4gu](https://video.bellinghamschools.org/medias/ntv687m4gu)

## School Board Community Linkages

More than three years ago, Bellingham’s school board became a national leader by transitioning to a policy governance model of leadership. This means the board focuses on policy, data and accountability to achieve desired outcomes for our students and graduates. More school boards and nonprofit organizations are now moving toward this effective leadership style.

This way of governing also allows the school board to connect more deeply with the community to ensure our school system’s vision, mission, beliefs and outcomes for children align with community values. In addition to regular board meetings, the school board holds “linkages” or focus groups

with various stakeholders to listen to their thoughts, ideas and concerns.

In recent years, the school board has met with groups including local nonprofits, business leaders, Latino families, highly capable learners program parents, and most recently, parents of students in special education.

Squalicum High School parent Solander Cruz says, “It was great to receive an invitation to the school board meeting and to speak with them about our students. It was also a good chance for me to say thank you for all the support my children have received, making graduation possible.”



**PHOTO:** On Sept. 26, the School Board held a community linkage on special education. School Board directors Steve Smith (photo left) and Kelly Bashaw (photo above on left) listen to district parents.



**SUPERINTENDENT**  
Greg Baker

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
President **Kenneth B. Gass**  
Vice President **Steven H. Smith**  
Director **Kelly M. Bashaw**  
Director **Camille Diaz Hackler**  
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**Communications and  
Community Relations**  
1306 Dupont Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
[www.bellinghamschools.org](http://www.bellinghamschools.org)  
(360) 676-6520

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## Birchwood Recycling

Sustainable jobsite operations were in full swing at Birchwood Elementary School this summer. Demolition material was sorted daily by machine and hand, then organized for recycling or waste. The school bricks were offered up nightly on pallettes to the neighborhood, and whatever was left behind was recycled along with the concrete for road base. The steel and copper from the mechanical, electrical and structural elements were separated and recycled.

In addition, a sizable amount of dimensional lumber (beams, posts and joists) was also salvaged.

The general contractor on the Birchwood Elementary School re-build project, Colacurcio Brothers Construction Company, worked with subcontractor JT Muenscher General Contractor, Inc. on the recycling and re-use initiative. See more photos at [bellinghamschools.org/birchwood](http://bellinghamschools.org/birchwood).

Birchwood Elementary is slated to re-open in Sept. 2014.



**Bellingham  
Public School Foundation**  
*imagine the possibilities...*

Bellingham Public School Foundation  
1306 Dupont Street  
Bellingham, WA 98225

[foundation.bellinghamschools.org](http://foundation.bellinghamschools.org)  
(360) 676-6479

*Build, Partner,  
Support and  
Fund*

### An Exceptional Education: Child- Centered, Effective, Equitable –

These values are the heart of the Bellingham Public School Foundation's purpose and mission. BPSF is The district's partner in supporting *The Bellingham Promise*, the district's strategic plan, that addresses our community values around an excellent public education all our children.

Gifts to the Foundation last year helped fund programs that benefit kids across all schools – Playworks, Kindergarten Jumpstart, and the Summer Reading Program plus school grants that funded new curriculum material, technology, experiential learning, character development and more.

### The Possibilities Campaign

This year, BPSF is reaching out to our school community and beyond to ask for your support. Gifts of all sizes, when added together, can make a real difference. Please consider making a gift by year end. Go to our website **foundation.bellinghamschools.org** for more details and to DONATE NOW!



**TUESDAY, APRIL 29**

### Jumpstart!



**PHOTO:** In late August, incoming kindergarten students at select schools spent a few hours in classrooms, easing their transition to school. The Jumpstart program is supported, in part, by gifts to the Foundation.