



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY LINKAGE SPECIAL MEETING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**May 21, 2026 - 5:30-6:30 p.m.
District Office – Room 102/103**

Topic: Community Transitions Program

Linkage Attendees:

- Students, families and community members and organizations who have connections to the Community Transitions program.
- Directors present: **Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler, Jenn Mason, Scott Ritchey, Katie Rose.**
- Superintendent of Bellingham Public Schools **Greg Baker.**
- District Leadership and Staff: Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations **Jackie Brawley**; Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning **Ari Feeney**; Executive Directors of Teaching and Learning **Katie Jones** and **Marty Atkins**; Executive Director of Family Engagement **Isabel Meaker**; Chief Technology Officer **Kurt Gazow**; Options High School Principal **Bethany Barrett**; Director of Special Education **Analisa Ficklin**; district staff members **Dominique Lantagne, Liz Madden, Zac Melgaard**; notetaker **Sheri O'Day.**

Call to Order: School Board President Scott Ritchey welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Community linkage meetings give the school board an opportunity to strengthen our connection with our community members, and the school board looks forward to hearing what attendees today have to say about their experiences. He introduced Superintendent Greg Baker.

Meeting Purpose – Explanation of Community Linkages: Dr. Baker thanked everyone for taking the time to be here this evening and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

What is Community Transitions: Executive Director of Teaching and Learning Katie Jones shared information about the Community Transitions (CT) program and, with the help of Capital Projects Supervisor Austin Scheffer, gave an update on the construction of the new CT facility currently being built on the Whatcom Community College campus.

Small Group Conversations: Five table groups each held conversations, using the following guiding questions:

- What has your experience been over the years in Bellingham Public Schools?
- How has Community Transitions served you?
- What are some experiences that you can talk about at CT?
- What are some things you can suggest for making CT work even better for students and families?
- What are you excited about with the new facility?
- In looking at The Bellingham Promise, what stands out for you as important?
- What future goals is CT helping you work toward?
- Is there anything else we should know about CT what you would like to share?

Each table group shared highlights from their conversations:

Table 1:

- A mentorship program for students and parents would be helpful.
- The transition from high school to CT is a huge transition.
- There is excitement for the new facility.

Table 2:

- Our experiences at Bellingham Public Schools have been successful.
- There is power in place, and we're looking forward to a space that is designed for the program.
- Appreciate the connection to community organizations and internship opportunities.
- We like the fact that the new building will be central to public transportation and linked to the Whatcom Community College campus.
- The building is well-placed and designed.

Table 3:

- We look forward to the new building's proximity to DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) and the bus line; a professional space to have conversations.
- A parent has noticed a growth in maturity in his son, and he attributes that to the work he's doing in the program.
- We want to ensure that the relationship with high schools is solid so the transition to CT goes well.

Table 4:

- The CT program partners with many organizations, which extends our community.
- There has been some uncertainty for parents about what happens during the day because of challenges with communication.
- IEP meetings are an important part of the transition to CT.

- Work-based learning is important.

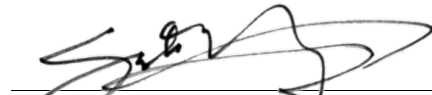
Table 5:

- We talked about the comparison of CT to the high school environment, and CT is a more neutral space.
- CT feels like a partnership instead of an authority.
- We appreciate the smaller spaces; being able to connect with others to use learned social skills; peer support; and the ability to have shorter days.
- Students who are enrolled in CT can't complete the FAFSA, which can have an impact for students who are trying to make that transition.

Dr. Baker thanked the attendees for participating in this evening's community linkage. Notes will be posted on the board's website in the coming weeks.

Mr. Ritchey thanked everyone for their valuable input and adjourned the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Approved:



Scott Ritchey, Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: June 11, 2026