OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE STUDENT ROUNDTABLE SPECIAL MEETING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
11:00-11:55 a.m. October 28, 2026 - Sehome High School – room 258

Meeting Date and Location
11:00-11:55 a.m., October 28, 2026, Sehome High School, 2700 Bill McDonald Parkway, Bellingham, Washington.

Linkage Attendees:

- **Current Northwest Career and Technical Academy students** (From a variety of high schools in Whatcom County).
- Directors present: **Douglas Benjamin, Camille Diaz Hackler and Jenn Mason.** Directors Scott Ritchey and Katie Rose were unable to attend the meeting.
- District Leadership and Staff: Superintendent **Greg Baker;** Deputy Superintendent **Mike Copland;** Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations **Jackie Brawley;** Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning **Ari Feeney;** Executive Director of Teaching and Learning **Katie Jones**; Executive Director of Teaching **Marty Atkins**; Executive Director of Family Engagement **Isabel Meaker;** Director of Teaching and Learning **Heather Steele;** Sehome High School Principal **Sonia Cole.**

Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions: School Board member Jenn Mason called the meeting to order at 11:55 a.m. She shared that student roundtables give the school board an opportunity to strengthen the connection with our students, and the school board is excited to hear what students have to say about their experiences.

Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed attendees and invited all to introduce themselves.

Career and Technical Education Director Heather Steele gave an overview of the Northwest Career and Technical Academy (NCTA) program.

Three table groups each held conversations, using the following questions as a guide:

- Tell us about your experience thus far at NCTA
- What do you love about these classes? What would you change?
- What are the benefits and challenges to going off-site and traveling south?
- How does attending these classes work with the new seven-period schedule?
- What do you think you want to do after high school?
- How many years have you been in Bellingham Public Schools? What is the most meaningful part of being a part of our district?
- Are you familiar with the Bellingham Promise? What part resonates with you?
- Anything else you want the board to know that you didn't already discuss?

At the end of the small group time, Dr. Baker asked each group to share highlights from their discussions. The following are highlights from each group:

Table 1:

- Students at this table are in the fire science, culinary or welding programs.
- They described the culinary class as fast paced and taught by experts in the field.
- The students described having access to high tech machines.
- Students said that their teachers see that they really want to be there, and how motivated they are.
- They feel a lot of responsibility going to NCTA.
- The students said the program is so popular there is a waiting list to get in.
- They would like to see changes in transportation.
- Non-block days are easier than block days.
- Some students said they did feel like they missed out on some school activities.
- After high school students expressed interest in being a chef, an underwater welder, a firefighter in a bigger city or a wild land firefighter.

Table 2:

- The students said it is nice to be somewhere else for part of the day
- They like the hands-on experience they are getting.
- Students felt the program is underrepresented and that more people need to know about it because it is so cool.
- Students appreciate that NCTA offers a different pathway from a 4-year college track and gives more options for students who maybe don't want to do a 4-year college.

Table 3:

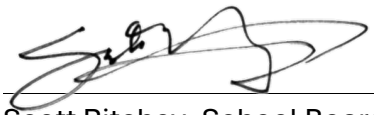
- Students liked having interesting classes outside of our classrooms, like fire science and like that one of their instructors is a retired fire fighter.
- A student said they found out about the program from a friend.
- Recommendations from the instructors matter a lot in terms of getting jobs.

- One student said they wanted to get an EMT license over the summer, outside of the fire science program.
- One student plans to go to college and major in fire science and work while doing that.
- They described having a classroom and doing drills on campus - learning in the classroom, and then when using gear, being outside the classroom.
- Students are from Meridian, Ferndale, Squalicum, Sehome.
- Some students described a typical day as 2.5 hours at NCTA in the morning, then a break and then coming to Sehome.
- This group said the new high school schedule hasn't made a big difference in their NCTA schedule.
- When asked about change, one suggestion was balancing out class size at NCTA as afternoons have far fewer students than morning.
- They said they didn't really have much homework as most of it gets done in class.
- Students described different ways of getting to NCTA: Having to be at Sehome at 6:30 a.m. to catch the bus to Meridian. Another said they drive themselves.
- Students described NCTA as very hands on, fun and motivating unlike a typical high school experience, which appeals to a different style of learning.
- Classmates at NCTA get close as they are all in it together, which the students said is different than high school.
- Students think there should be more advertising about this program and described being at the Lynden Fair trying to recruit additional students.
- One student wished for something like the NCTA classes in Bellingham Public Schools.

Dr. Baker thanked everyone for being here this afternoon.

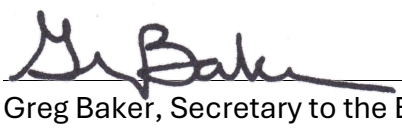
Ms. Mason expressed the board's appreciation for students sharing their experiences and perspectives and adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Approved:



Scott Ritchey, School Board President

Attest:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board

Minutes approved: November 12, 2026