



**Board Summary: Community Linkage Meeting
Connecting with Senior Citizens
March 27, 2014**

The Bellingham School Board and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed audience members, invited guests, and district staff to a linkage meeting focused on strengthening connections with

The purpose of the meeting was for the School Board to engage in a discussion about how [The Bellingham Promise](#) resonates with senior citizens and how Bellingham Public Schools can strengthen its relationship with this segment of the community. The Board asked attendees to explore the following questions:

What in The Bellingham Promise resonates?

What in The Bellingham Promise could be improved?

How can Bellingham Public Schools strengthen its relationship with our senior citizens/retirement community?

What is one thing you want our School Board to take away from this meeting?

During discussion, attendees said they appreciated that The Bellingham Promise focuses on development of the whole child. Many agreed that stronger connections between senior citizens and students would be mutually beneficial, particularly since senior citizens and retirees represent a tremendous pool of talent, skills, and knowledge. One example cited was recruitment of senior citizens to help students become more election-savvy. Ideas for ways in which students could reach out to senior citizens were also discussed; for example, students could help with household chores, provide technical/computer assistance, or fulfill classroom assignments involving interviews with seniors to get their perspectives on history.

Accessibility of schools was also a concern. Many agreed that schools are a community asset and a dinner program for low-income families was cited as one example of an effective use of the building after hours.

Several attendees suggested that the district maintain face-to-face connections with senior citizens on a continuous, year-round basis, not just during election season.

It was noted that to reach out to diverse populations. The appointment of a i



**School Board Community Linkage with
Senior Citizens
Central Services Board Room
March 27, 2014**

Linkage Attendees:
Representatives

- I think The Bellingham Promise is fantastic. I wonder where you get your funding to do all these fine things. I know how our legislative body has impacted schools, and what a struggle it is to provide equity. Recently, Janae Hodge [Shuksan Middle School Assistant Principal] gave a presentation on steps Shuksan is taking to keep students in school. One way is by reducing the amount of suspensions and expulsions. Kudos for all you are doing.
- The focus on the whole child is very important. The testing mania has taken over in many parts of the country, and teaching is not joyful anymore. Your focus and vision are profound. to reduce school-related expenses for all families. I applaud the focus for all kids.
- I would love to see development of a resource group that could help students in need. You need to inventory all of the resources of the senior community here, to recruit volunteers. Also, you could publicize in local newspapers what the schools need [in terms of supplies or volunteers.] Many seniors in this community would volunteer if they knew what is needed and what the approval process is. For example, people could help coach math teams in such a way that [Bellingham students]

- Young people need to have a better grasp of civics and the workings of the government. A recent poll showed only 25 percent of the population could identify the three branches of government.

How can Bellingham Public Schools strengthen its relationship with our senior citizens/retirement community?

- Unless they have grandchildren in the schools, senior citizens only hear from the district when a levy or bond is on the ballot.
- In my former community, lack of communication from school administrators except during elections was a huge issue. As a [retired] district administrator, I made it a point to meet with senior groups and retiree associations on a regular basis, rather than waiting until bonds or levies were on the ballot. I think your newsletter [*Inside Schools*] is outstanding. Your communications in general are good, but personal

