

**Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)**  
Key Communications

Elizabeth Walther & Jon Junell (co-chairs)  
Thursday, Oct. 6, 2022

District Office Board Room

Each school has two representatives on this committee.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Co-chairs – Elizabeth Walther & Jon Junell led the group in introductions and a brief icebreaker.

**Greg Baker**

**What is PACS?** Dr. Baker welcomed new and returning members and told the group that the [Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent \(PACS\)](#) is just one strategy we use to communicate and ask for feedback from parent/guardian representatives. Dr. Baker and the district appreciate your time and commitment to this committee. We will share key communications with all PACS representatives after the meeting. The format of most meetings will include an icebreaker, superintendent update and one/two main topics that parents have identified as areas they would like to learn more about.

**Back-to-school updates:** The school year has started strong compared with the past two years of managing COVID concerns, remote learning, etc. Overall, things are feeling more “normal.” Dr. Baker and staff shared some highlights from the Community Block Party at Bellingham High that happened in August, and parents offered some suggestions for improvement. He shared photos from the staff kick-off event at Civic Stadium and the first days of school. The group had a discussion about Promise Kindergarten, which is also called transitional kindergarten or early entrance K (typically for four-year-olds who don’t have access to preschool). Promise K is now in its tenth year and has grown significantly since its inception. Parents asked questions about inclusion and accessibility of our schools and classes. Dr. Baker shared that when he thinks of inclusion, he thinks of three different areas: 1) the general accessibility of a space, classroom or building (e.g. could a person with mobility issues get through the front door without difficulty?), 2) sense of belonging within a school community/classroom, and 3) access to activities/classes (e.g. athletics, homecoming, etc.). He also acknowledged that our district and schools are on a journey to engage in and improve upon our inclusive practices and that it is a long-term process. Staff shared that all our schools are engaged in professional learning about inclusion. Some parents shared that they are seeing and hearing amazing things from their kids about acceptance and understanding, and that while it may be imperfect, it’s great, important work.

**Other updates:** Dr. Baker shared that the district is continuing to explore ways to provide free meals for all students at all schools. We had universal meals during COVID because the federal government funded all meals for all children, but that funding went away.

Currently, we have 13 schools that qualify for free universal meals under a state eligibility program. Our goal is to offer free meals at all schools by accessing different funding sources, one of which could be the state. Dr. Baker also shared photos of the new Sunnyland Elementary, its new accessible playground and renderings and construction photos of the new District Office being built on Barkley Boulevard. [You can see Dr. Baker's PPT.](#)

### **Small Group Discussions**

**What topics might we want to learn about and discuss this year?** Elizabeth and Jon divided parents into groups to give feedback on four different questions.

- What's a question you've always wanted to ask about Bellingham schools?
- What do you hope to get from PACS?
- What is a speaker or topic you would like PACS to cover this year?
- What would you like to bring back to your school?

The co-chairs recorded the comments from the focus groups. The co-chairs recorded the comments from the focus groups.