

**Board Summary: Community Linkage Meeting  
Connecting with Families of Highly Capable Learners  
September 27, 2012**

The Bellingham School Board and Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed parents and district staff to a linkage meeting on Sept. 27, 2012 to discuss the Highly Capable Learners (HCL) Program.

The purpose of the meeting was for the School Board to engage in a discussion about how [The Bellingham Promise](#) connects with the Highly Capable Learners' Program and the services provided for students and families. Attendees were divided into small groups with at least one Board member and one Executive Team member with each group. The Board asked parents and staff members to explore the following questions:

- What in The Bellingham Promise resonates with regard to HCL students?
- What in The Bellingham Promise could be improved as it relates to HCL students?
- What evidence or data would indicate the success or failure of an HCL program?
- What are the attributes of a high-functioning HCL program?
- What is one thought or item you want the Board to take away from this meeting?

Parents and staff members shared their support for The Bellingham Promise and suggested ways it could relate better to HCL students. Parents also suggested many ways that the HCL program could be enhanced to better serve students, including an emphasis on professional development/training for staff working with HCL students and that students be given more challenging work so they can reach their full potential. Parents suggested the word "challenge" be added to The Bellingham Promise. Parents expressed a need for the HCL program to be more than one day per week. They urged the Board to recognize students as future leaders and citizens and to realize the importance of the needs of the HCL learner through the allocation of resources, training and family engagement opportunities.



in spite of budget cuts and has identified 300 HCL students participating districtwide. Dr. Baker started introductions around the room.

Dr. Steve Smith presented information explaining the role of the Board and the Leadership Team. He talked about the value of community linkages and reviewed *The Bellingham Promise*.

Attendees were divided into groups. Each group had one Board member and one Executive Team member. The Board asked each facilitator to explore the following questions about the HCL Program.

- What in *The Bellingham Promise* resonates with regard to HCL students?**
- What in *The Bellingham Promise* could be improved as it relates to HCL students?**
- What evidence or data would indicate the success or failure of an HCL program?**
- What are the attributes of a high-functioning HCL program?**
- What is one thought or item you want the Board to take away from this meeting?**

Following the small group discussions, facilitators shared key points and comments:

**What in *The Bellingham Promise* resonates with regard to HCL students?**

*The Bellingham Promise* strategies of Innovation and Flexibility (different strategies being used, opportunities that engage all) and the One Schoolhouse Approach (inclusive for all) resonate for HCL students, as well as Family and Community Engagement (need teachers, students and families working together, district level engagement).

Need early childhood education for HCL students, the formation of the brain, brain development, language acquisition.

They liked the One Schoolhouse concept – but don't think it's equitable between differing groups of students. As an example, one of the parents compared the per pupil spending for English Language Learners (ELL) and HCL students noting that less was spent on HCL.

HCL students have a passion for learning.

Sees every child being prepared by providing world language, but not happening yet.

Paper from Council for Exceptional Children.

Three phrases – tie in nicely.

Needs of individual child.

Individuality and differentiation imbedded in Promise.

Innovation and flexibility in Promise.

Kids have different outcomes, different needs.

General enough that it does apply to HCL students.

Problem solving.

**What in *The Bellingham Promise* could be improved as it relates to HCL students?**

Great teaching with strong support – At some schools, the teacher is faced with half the class who is below standard in reading.

Cluster grouping of students, training and development of staff in support of increasing engagement.



Where is communication in the Promise? Maybe in student community and family engagement, communication to staff about who their students are and how to support them.

Know that there is a plan for the HCL child.

More explicit that our students be clustered, tracked.

No reference to teaching and learning.

World class schools – it is not

**What are the attributes of a high-functioning HCL program?**

- HCL students like to work with each other because they think alike.
- Full time.
- School within a school.
- Magnet school.
- Communicate back out on what is happening.
- Better accessibility, transportation to the program makes it difficult for some families.
- Diversity.
- Depth of instruction, learning; don't just give the kids more work.

**What is one thought or item you want the Board to take away from this meeting?**

- Realize the importance of the needs of the HCL learner through the allocation of resources, training and develop (academic/social-emotional), family engagement opportunities.
- HCL students are future leaders/citizens who will take us out of the recession and be the problem solvers.
- Have data that can be used to measure the success of the program as well as of individual students.
- More ambitious.
- More attention.
- Accessibility.

Tanya Rowe indicated that notes from the discussion will be compiled and included on the district website and that they will be emailed to participants.

President Kelly Bashaw thanked the group for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Kelly Bashaw, School Board President

ATTEST:



Greg Baker, Secretary to the Board