



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE STUDENT ROUNDTABLE SPECIAL MEETING
BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS
February 1, 2023 1-2 p.m.**

Linkage Attendees:

- Current and former GRADS (Graduation, Realty and Dual-role Skills) student

Mike Copland; Assistant Superintendent **Jay Jordan;** Executive Director **Kurt Gazow;** Executive Director **Isabel Meaker;** Executive Director **Ari Feeney;** Assistant Superintendent **Matt Whitten;** Chief Financial Officer **Kathryn Weilage;** Options STEM teacher **Michelle Wilhelm;** Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning **Debbie Haney;** Options Principal **Katie Jones;** Executive Administrative Assistant **Sheri O'Day** (notetaker).

Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions: School Board President Camille Diaz Hackler called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Superintendent Greg Baker welcomed attendees and invited all to introduce themselves.

Meeting Purpose – Explanation of Student Roundtable: Dr. Baker thanked everyone for taking the time to be here this afternoon. He shared that when he became superintendent in 2010, the GRADS program was in a building behind Alderwood Elementary School. The program later moved to Squalicum High School, and eventually additional GRADS program locations were added to Sehome and Options high schools. Having locations at or near each high school allows students to continue attending classes at their neighborhood school.

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 and former students have to say about their experiences.

Questions for Current and Former GRADS Students: Ms. Wilhelm outlined services that students in the GRADS program receive while they also attend their high school classes. There are many community partners who help to support teen parents and their families, and GRADS staff can help to bridge the gap by helping connect students to

community partners. This is the only program of its kind north of Everett, and any pregnant or parenting student in Whatcom County up to the age of 21 is eligible to receive GRADS support.

Ms. Wilhelm facilitated a discussion and student comments are below each question asked.

How has GRADS supported you? Or not?

- The most important impact has been the connection and friendships with other students experiencing similar circumstances, as well as having additional trusted adults to go to for guidance.
- I was worried about being judged by others. Being a part of GRADS has eased those worries and increased my self-confidence. It is a safe environment.
- It feels like another home.
- The support from other teen parents has been very helpful.
- I have received help with housing as well as parenting support.

In looking at The Bellingham Promise, what stands out for you as important?

- I like that student engagement involves the whole family.
- Diversity and inclusion are important, so students are not excluded due to their differences.
- Every kid is important no matter what they are going through.

How did or is GRADS supporting your parenting goals?

- Having trusted adults provide childcare makes it possible for teen parents to graduate.
- The childcare program helps prepare our children for Promise K.
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