

The Bellingham Promise
Emerging Themes and Suggestions
(With data received through March 21, 2012)
Updated: March 23, 2012

Note: This documents represents an overview of the feedback received about the first draft of The Bellingham Promise. You will see that many of these suggestions have been incorporated into Version 2.0.

OVERALL DOCUMENT

- **High level of appreciation for the document**
 - Inclusive in numerous ways
 - Represents whole child, not solely focused on standardized test scores
 - A document that is accessible by multiple audiences
 - Captures the hopes of our community in what they want in a world-class school district

- **Strong appreciation for the process and the high level of involvement from all staff.**
 - Board linkages have provided board input that has helped shape initial draft
 - Feedback sought from 22 building staff, maintenance dept, head custodians, transportation, classified staff, food services, labor leaders, parent and student advisory committees; beginning to share with PTAs; will share at future linkages
 - Multiple opportunities for feedback—written documents; personal dialogue; website; emails
 - More than 625 submissions were received

TITLE AND VISION

- **More clarity needed in the meaning behind the Bellingham Promise and some confusion regarding the relationship between the title, vision and mission.**
 - Within the vision statement, lots of positive energy regarding the whole child approach, developing “passion” and community action/services, making contributions.
 - Without this broader context, and for some even with it, some are concerned that the promise might be a promise that we can’t fulfill (some things outside of our control, i.e. funding, families, students). For example, can we promise a ‘strong character?’ Others state that while it may never be fully achieved, setting high expectations with no excuses provides a much higher chance of success. Some suggestions for the title include “The Bellingham Commitment”, “The Bellingham Community Promise” and “Together We Promise.”
 - **Consideration:** Provide written context that explains this is a community promise; not just the school district.
 - **Consideration:** Combine the title with

are very comfortable with it, as it implies the whole child—physical, emotional and social. Some see soul in a different context, such as in music.

Question: Do we provide experiences for kids that demonstrate 'soul?'

- **Consideration:** Change the wording without losing the intent of the whole child. Possible changes include “character”, “whole child”
- **Consideration:** Drop “to the whole” in the bullet about mind body and soul; seems redundant
- **Consideration:** ‘Spirit’ instead of soul?

- Full time kindergarten is essential
- Lower class size needed for kindergarten
- Need early interventions for students-reading specialists
- Belief isn't a strong enough word-strive to develop
- Research supports early childhood education
- **Consideration:** Change descriptor to read, "We invest in a strong early childhood program because of its powerful long-term return for our students and community."

- Remember to take a 'proactive approach with the language that is used in the document, e.g. "family instead of parents." Families look very different these days.
- Engage wider community in this process if they are part of the Promise.
- To make document stronger, refer to all staff and students reflecting a desire to improve. Self-reflection and improvement is modeled as well as taught.