



# PARKVIEW PTO

**General Membership Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 8, 2019**

**Welcome everyone!** Please sign in (forms on tables). A few short PTO announcements:

- Parkview Carnival is coming up on January 24. Volunteers needed! Sign up on the Signup Genius link (link emailed from PTO and also available on Facebook) or talk with Cindy.
- Parkview Auction is coming up on March 14. If you'd like to get involved, the auction planning committee is meeting tomorrow at Elizabeth Station at 7:30 or contact Cindy or [contact@parkviewpto.org](mailto:contact@parkviewpto.org).
- We are recruiting for new PTO Board members. We welcome everyone. It's a great way to be more connected to the school and get involved! If you're interested, please talk to a board member or write to the email address above.

## **Attendance Area Committee and Boundary Changes**

Tonight's extended meeting will focus on the work of the district's Attendance Area Committee. The group has been meeting regularly and is considering school boundary changes that would impact elementary and middle schools. Joining us tonight are:

- Steve Clarke, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning & co-chair of the Attendance Area Committee, and
- Jay Jordan, Executive Director Teaching and Learning & co-chair of the Attendance Area Committee

They will speak about what the committee is doing, why, what it means for Parkview, and reserve time for questions and answers.

There were several other committee representatives present, including two Parkview parents: Miguel Boriss and Tommy Lingbloom. They are teachers and represent the schools where they teach. They also bring their “Parkview parent” perspective to the committee.

Parkview Principal Mylo Allen, also on the committee, started off with some context and a Parkview perspective. The Attendance Area Committee is a standing group, but this most recent iteration of the committee was formed two years ago. Examples of what they have done include redrawing high school boundaries a few years ago when Squalicum High was too full and Bellingham High was under enrolled to the point of not being able to offer a full range of classes. The committee also redrew boundaries a couple years ago for Parkview’s attendance area. Cordata Elementary was over capacity. New boundaries were formed that wound up bringing 20 students from Cordata to Parkview.

There has been a lot of growth in the north end of our city. This has contributed to an increase of our student population. We now have about 350 kids at Parkview. But more growth is anticipated and the committee is looking at how best to accommodate it.

The Attendance Area Committee is now looking at middle schools. Shuksan Middle School is over capacity. Parkview, Sunnyland and Alderwood Elementary schools are all going to be rebuilt in the next few years and will be designed for about 400 students. There may be a future need to readjust elementary school boundaries.

Jay Jordan and Steve Clark introduced themselves. They both have long histories with the district. Jay is a former Principal of Shuksan and his wife teaches at Birchwood. Steve has worked with the district for 34 years, including teaching at Bellingham High, acting as Assistant Principal and Principal at Sehome, and 8 years in his current position.

The committee is striving to have a transparent process. And they are still early in the process. Now, and as the process moves forward, they are looking for input and feedback. They are happy to meet with people one-on-one, by phone or by email. They are working to meet with all the schools that will be impacted. So far they have been to Silver Beach and Columbia, and tonight Parkview.

There have been some maps posted on the District web site of possible boundary change scenarios, but they are still very preliminary. They didn’t bring visuals tonight because these aren’t even close to final.

School boundary changes have been made as we go along. When Wade King Elementary opened, that necessitated adjustments. Same with the opening of Cordata and the closure of Larabee.

When Squalicum High was over enrolled, the committee also looked at the free and reduced lunch statistics. There was significant inequity between Squalicum and Bellingham High (one

was close to 50%, the other around 22%). The free and reduced lunch rate is a measure that helps to assess equity between schools. The rebalancing of students between the schools impacted the free and reduced lunch numbers, and made them more even. The District feels that this was successful and a good measure to as we strive to move toward greater equity.

As the high school boundary changes took effect, there was some “grandfathering” where it made sense. For students already having already attended a high school for a couple of years, many didn’t want to transfer to a new school. Cases like these were handled on an individual basis.

District policy 3130 provides guidance on boundary changes. The goals aren’t ranked, but are all considered:

- Minimize disruption of student’s established learning programs.
- Keep siblings in the same elementary, middle or high school, whenever possible.
- Provide overall balance of student enrollment related to facility size, taking into account future growth patterns.
- Provide a reasonably balanced socio-economic relationship in all schools.
- Provide the most efficient and feasible means for student transportation to and from school, including whether safe routes to school might exist, minimizing travel time and transportation costs.
- Keep neighborhoods together, whenever possible.
- Maintain feeder schools patterns so that elementary/middle/high school attendance areas coincide and students stay with the same cohort as they progress through school levels, whenever possible.
- Follow natural boundaries and utilize existing physical boundaries such as major roadways to delineate boundaries, whenever possible.

There is lots of growth happening in the north end, and more is coming. The city provides information about planned construction that has received permits from the city, as well as what’s in discussion and likely to occur. The district uses this information to project how school populations will change. Both Shuksan and Whatcom will be impacted soon by additional growth.

When Cordata elementary opened, the boundary changes worked pretty well. When Squalicum was significantly overenrolled, boundary adjustments moved students in the Birchwood neighborhood to Bellingham High. That mirrored where Birchwood students went before Squalicum opened and was pretty well received. “Grandfathering” was helpful for many families while the policy was new. The committee would like to implement elementary school boundary changes when the 3 rebuilt elementary schools open, but it may not be possible, depending upon how long the construction takes.

The Attendance Area Committee has wide representation from teachers, principals, parents and community representatives and has about 40 people. It meets monthly and at the end of the

process will give the superintendent a recommendation. The group wrestles with how to gather feedback and share that back with the committee. There is a note-taker here tonight to keep a record of comments which will be shared back to the whole committee.

As of a few months ago, there were 4 scenarios being discussed by the committee. Last meeting the committee looked at 8 scenarios. A subcommittee meets between the regular monthly meetings and comes up with additional ideas. The next full committee meeting is at the end of January. They will wrestle with the 8 scenarios and new ideas raised by committee members. They try to identify scenarios that are solid to present to schools and neighborhoods and then get feedback. The 8 scenarios aren't necessarily the best yet, and there is another idea being drawn up that Steve hopes may be better than these. At the end of the process, probably fewer than 8 scenarios will be presented, along with a recommendation, to Dr. Baker.

## **Questions**

### **Q: Who makes the final decision about boundary changes?**

A: The Superintendent. But he expects due diligence and the process that leads to the recommendation he will consider is important.

### **Q: When will the decision be made? The fall of 2020?**

A: This is tough to answer. There are "hotspots" that push the process along. For example, 8% of Silver Beach elementary students get bussed to Kulshan. When a school must be split, we aim for 50%, not small fractions. We would like to fix the Silver Beach hotspot soon. But the committee is looking at many different considerations across many schools and the process has been more challenging than expected.

### **Note: Leslie on the committee is taking notes to share back with the full committee.**

She's capturing the takeaways from the conversations with Silver Beach, Columbia, and Parkview to share with the whole committee.

### **Q: What are the takeaways from Silver Beach and Columbia?**

A: Columbia likes being close to Whatcom. Many students walk and bike and appreciate attending the closest school with a safe route to get there. There are strong connections to Whatcom. It feels familiar. Also, the families want to keep the cohort together since Columbia is such a small school.

Silver Beach students are already bussing, but transportation times are important as well as how they are affected by time of day. Families wanted to know bus routes - will buses go on the freeway? How will afterschool activities impact transportation? Agate Bay students already spend a lot of time bussing and don't want extra transportation time. Silver Beach is a large school and there haven't been any boundary change scenarios discussed that don't affect it.

**Q: Would the district consider moving kids already in middle school?**

A: We try to grandfather kids where it makes sense. For the recent boundary changes that moved students from Squalicum to Bellingham High, we didn't bother moving juniors and seniors. We let them finish high school where they were already connected. For freshman and sophomores, there have been some exceptions. Not all have moved.

**Q: Is the most important criteria proximity?**

A: Not always. Some students that live a street away from Bellingham High go to Sehome. But we do try to use natural boundaries and develop scenarios that make sense.

**Q: Would you explain "natural boundary"?**

A: Natural boundaries are physical boundaries, like a creek, or physical boundaries like arterial streets that are difficult to cross safely.

Safety for walking and biking routes is very important. We have people thinking about this and are also coordinating with the city. But we also look at socioeconomic factors.

**Comment: Thank you to the committee for your work on this. The equity issue is important.** The speaker's family is willing to go to any school to help support the goal of greater equity.

**Comment: The speaker said her mind has been put at ease tonight. The willingness to provide grandfathering is important to her family.** She lives in an area that has been highlighted for change in all the scenarios she has seen so far. She has 4 kids — 2 older and 2 younger, and hopes that grandfathering will be honored. She would like to keep her older kids on their present tracks and keep them with their school cohorts. The younger kids haven't started school yet, and can go to any school. They will likely require bus service in any scenario as their neighborhood is hemmed in by Meridian and Northwest, both busy streets, and lacks sidewalks. All Bellingham schools are great, but the connections her school-aged kids have already made are important.

**Comment: Downtown isn't safe for walking. The commenter believes it makes sense to send kids that live downtown to schools further south.**

**Q: Is there a timeline for when boundary scenarios will be less of a draft and more ready for all of us to examine?**

A: The goal was to have a recommendation this spring but the process has been more challenging than expected. The committee is still hopeful that they can submit a recommendation by the end of the school year but dealing with both elementary and middle school boundaries together is a big task.

**Comment: The speaker said she wants to keep the students together as they move to middle school. She is against splitting the students and sending them to two different**

**middle schools.** Middle school is a challenging time. She appreciates the connections that have been made with their kids' friends and their kids' friend's families.

Response: The Committee appreciates that. They would prefer not to split any schools.

**Comment: The commenter seconded the above comment. It's not an issue of which school, just that the cohort stay together.** His kid knows 20 friends and their families between their house and Whatcom. His kid knows only a couple from their house to Shuksan. He would like the community to stay together.

**Q: What is the most important priority when looking at scenarios? Budget? Equity? Cohort?**

A: It's hard to answer this. Different committee members represent different priorities. It's impossible to answer. Equity is important but so are all the elements listed in policy 3130. It's also a balancing act. Where neighborhoods are in transition, or boundary lines move, that leads to change. For example, a year ago Sunnyland was a Title school and received specific federal funding. Now the neighborhood has changed and the school isn't even close to qualifying for Title funding. This happened without a boundary change, and it has large impacts for the school.

**Q: What metrics are used to generate/analyze balance?**

A: There are many. Parkview ranks 7th out of 14 elementary schools for free and reduced price lunch rates at 39%. The Bridges program is located here. Lots of factors are considered: number of students, free and reduced lunch rate, building capacity, input from the committee, specific programs and their associated space requirements, and teaching loads.

The middle schools use a teaming model with each student having a team of 4 teachers. Right now Whatcom has nearly 100 more students than Fairhaven and that places a higher teaching load on those teachers.

**Comment: Equity is important. Thank you for explicitly addressing it.**

**Q: At what point does a student qualify for bussing?**

A: Usually a mile from the school is the boundary. However, if there is busy street between the student's home and the school, these areas may also qualify for bus transportation.

**Comment: Northwest is a very safe road. Meridian and Cornwall are not.**

Steve said that the district works with a transportation person to figure out what makes sense. Keeping kids safe is a priority.

The models they're looking at include having all growth in the north end go to Shuksan, or a model where the growth is split between Shuksan and Whatcom.

**Comment: Safety is also a function of time of day. The speaker has lived on Northwest and questions how safe it is.** Please have a District person try walking all these routes, and walking during different times of the day.

**Comment: Walk the route together with your kids and ask them about their thoughts.** One parent thought she was sending her kid on a safe route but her child reported back that it was “too quiet” and that the child felt safer walking on the sidewalk of a street with more activity.

**Q: What steps are being taken to increase biking safety and walking safety?**

A: One neat new program is a grant-funded middle school bike program. Kids are able to check out bikes and ride them. There is supervision of the program, and it’s a way to increase comfort for new riders or riders on new routes.

**Comment: The speaker advocates for all Parkview kids to go to Whatcom. That is a big reason why his family moved here.**

**Comment: E Sunset Drive is already busy and new growth is planned. E Sunset is an existing elementary school boundary line, but please don’t change this and require kids to cross this street to get to school.**

**Comment: Thank you. The committee is considering lots of details. The speaker said she bought a house in this neighborhood because her family was already connected to the attendance area. All Bellingham schools are great, but please keep the Parkview cohort together and keep those connections that families build over so many years together.**

**Q: What is the District role in growth and zoning? This is also a part of long term work to create equity.**

A: Steve agrees. He personally endorsed the recent housing levy. We must figure out how to provide inclusion more centrally than parking low-income housing further out from the city center. This is challenging.

**Comment: Safety is important. Be sure to also look at routes at the time of day kids will be out. Time of the year is also a factor, since it can still be dark when the elementary schools begin during wintertime.**

**Comment: Crossing guards could be helpful at Birchwood.**

**Q: How does the “blue slip” (grandfathering) process work?**

A: It is a transfer process.

1. The family fills out a form with justifications for the request.
2. The district reviews the form and looks at current enrollment.
3. The family has to resubmit the form for each school year.

The decision is made by the affected school principal. Mylo said he will almost always approve blue slips. In his 5 years at Parkview he has denied a transfer only one time, and it was a unique situation. From his perspective, accepting a blue slip is a long-term agreement, and he will honor that unless something highly unusual, such as a grade-level enrollment spike, occurs.

**Comment: Blue slips have many “layers.”** The speaker’s family lives in the “wedge” on the west side of Meridian that is quite likely to be impacted under all scenarios she has seen so far. Even if a student is grandfathered into Parkview, that does not mean that the student will be grandfathered into Whatcom.

## **Wrap up**

The committee isn’t ready to show scenario maps now. They want to present the best scenarios possible, and they are not there yet. The timeline isn’t clear, but please stay involved in this. The committee’s minutes are accessible at <http://bellinghamschools.org/about/committees-advisory-groups/attendance-areas-prek-12-standing-committee/>. Comments and questions are welcomed.

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Parkview PTO at [contact@parkviewpto.org](mailto:contact@parkviewpto.org),

Mylo at [mylo.allen@bellinghamschools.org](mailto:mylo.allen@bellinghamschools.org).

Tommy and Miguel will report back to the PTO and are happy to talk more as well.

Thank you for being here tonight.

**7:30**

**Adjourn**