

OLYMPIA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Balanced Calendar Exploratory Committee (BCEC)  
September 21, 2022 (Meeting #1 of 5)  
6-7:30 pm  
Board Room, 111 Bethel Street NE, Olympia

Meeting Notes

**Welcome, coming together**

Dr. Patrick Murphy, Superintendent of Olympia School District, welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Balanced Calendar Exploratory Committee and thanked them for their time and attention to this topic. He talked about the school board's interest in continuing the conversation around the possibility of adjusting the Olympia School District calendar to be more balanced (to potentially increase the number of breaks throughout the school year while shortening the summer break by the duration of the additional breaks). He noted that this group is coming together to build on the work of an earlier Citizens' Advisory Committee and emphasized that there is no predetermined outcome.

**Introductions**

Attendees introduced themselves, sharing their schools and roles.

**Meeting norms**

J. Marie Riche, in-person facilitator, introduced meeting norms / agreements for how the committee will work together. She also outlined details about the hybrid meeting process and dual facilitator roles – one facilitator will be in-person each meeting and one will join by Zoom to support the online participants. She presented some initial agreements for the group to consider and welcomed edits and additions from the group. After discussion, the committee agreed on the following norms for their work together:

- Be present. (Be here now.)
- Mind your “air time” (those who tend to speak a lot will make room for others; those who tend to be more reserved will be intentional about sharing their views).
- Use technology intentionally.
- Listen to understand, not just to respond.
- Take good care of yourself (ex: stand, take breaks as needed).
- Collaborate with facilitators for meeting efficiency (ex: come back together quickly from small groups).
- Zoom participants: keep camera on for parity with in-person attendees
- Meeting notes will be high level, focused on big ideas and agreements.
- Speak your own truth from your own perspective
- All ideas are welcome
- All participants will be respected

**Brief review of past work on the subject**

Dr. Murphy introduced Sandy Hallstrom, Chairperson of the school board's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), which did preparatory work last year on the question of whether Olympia might move toward a balanced calendar. She described the work of the CAC, and noted that the CAC put out a survey to explore the larger community's thoughts on the concept and determine whether or not to move forward with an exploratory committee to study the topic further. Of 3,000 responses, the reaction was mixed, but there was more interest to move forward than not. There was also strong interest in taking a regional approach along with North Thurston, Griffin, and Tumwater School Districts. Dr. Murphy noted that what the BCEC is looking at is whether to change the structure of the same 180-day school year, not year-round school. To get a better understanding of the CAC's work and what is meant by a balanced calendar,

BCEC participants are encouraged to review the information on the school district website at [https://osd.wednet.edu/news/announcements/balanced\\_calendar\\_information](https://osd.wednet.edu/news/announcements/balanced_calendar_information)

### **Overview of the steps in our work together**

Frank Kwan, Zoom facilitator, outlined the process this committee will go through to perform this work. There will be 5 meetings of the larger committee every 2 weeks, and tonight is the first meeting. He noted that there will be some tasks to be done between meetings. After the meetings, a summary report will be prepared for the board and community. The BCEC will identify information needs, explore the possible ways to structure an alternative break schedule, and think about whether it is worth going forward with a regional conversation about this idea. The facilitators noted that while it is known that many members naturally come into this work with an opinion about the idea, they stressed the importance of approaching this work with an open mind.

Ms. Riche discussed ThoughtExchange, a tool that combines a survey with a social media style opportunity to upvote others' ideas in order to produce a broad picture of how a group thinks and feels about a topic. A ThoughtExchange survey will be put out to the community as part of the BCEC work. Depending on the outcome of the survey and the BCEC's reflections, the committee's work could lead to a regional conversation with neighboring districts.

### **Explain selection process**

Ms. Riche and Superintendent Murphy described the process used to select those invited to attend the BCEC meetings. Initially, principals were asked to invite representatives from their school community, including parents, staff, students, and community partners, such as childcare providers and those who provide programs for students. A steering committee met to review the lists, add missing voices, and review the proposed plan for the committee's work. The goal is to include a breadth of perspective and diversity of every kind.

### **Determine if there are voices missing**

The committee broke into small groups of 4 to brainstorm additional names / groups that could be included in order to increase the community representation for this committee. Recommendations for additional participation are:

- |                                      |  |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| • YCore                              | • DLC / Leap teachers and/or advocate  | • Frank Wilson or facilities rep   |
| • Boys & Girls Club                  | • ELL teacher or para  | • Bus driver or teamster rep       |
| • Preschool / Childcare              | • More families of students with special needs   | • Special ed staff                 |
| • Summer camp providers              | • Coaches  | • Diverse educators – kindergarten |
| • Timberland Library                 | • Teachers, counselors, social workers   | • Wide variety of schools          |
| • Athletics / sports                 | • Family liaison   | • Transportation                   |
| • Student support                    | • Reps from extra-curricular groups who have summer tournaments – OAR, Black Hills Soccer Club, Black Hills Baseball, etc. | • Dance schools, gymnastics        |
| • Newmarket                          |  | • Chamber of Commerce              |
| • Community Colleges / Running Start |  |                                    |
| • CIHS                               |  |                                    |
| • Staff / admin                      |  |                                    |
| • Clubs                              |  |                                    |
| • Elementary principals              |  |                                    |

### **What additional information would be helpful to you?**

Using ThoughtExchange Live, the BCEC members were asked to identify additional information they would like to receive to do the work of exploring what a balanced calendar might look like in Olympia. Key thoughts are (Ratings indicate how people rated the importance of each idea.):

- Measurable evidence / peer-reviewed research for all BCEC participants that shows the benefits for all students / impact on student achievement. (9 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 4.0 out of 5.)
- Questions about implementation. How will it play out in the long run? Can we see a cause/effect layout? Do you consider incremental steps, such as adding a fall or mid-winter break, or starting with one middle school and its partner elementaries? What is the timeline? (8 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.5 out of 5.)
- What are the pros and cons / how has a balanced calendar worked for other districts / other states? How do students feel about it? (6 people mentioned this idea with a rating of 4.0 out of 5 stars.)
- What are different options of how the calendar might be split? (6 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.8 out of 5.)
- More school personnel on the BCEC; are the teachers behind this? Do you need union buy-in? What do OSD decisionmakers think are the pros and cons? (4 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.8 out of 5.)
- How will a balanced calendar affect our community partners / childcare providers? (3 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.7 out of 5.)
- Good communication and good outreach to all affected. What are the demographics of the BCEC so we know whose input to seek out? (4 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.7 out of 5.)
- What work has been done to collaborate with neighboring school districts; it is important to coordinate with the larger region. (3 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.8 out of 5.)
- Information on support systems for high needs students, families, transportation, daycare, funding for daycare, food, vouchers, teachers with summer jobs, summer school. (3 people mentioned this idea with a rating of 3.7 out of 5.)
- How many students and staff rely on summer jobs? (2 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.8 out of 5.)
- Information on air conditioning and hvac. Smoke season? (2 people mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.7 out of 5.)
- What benefits do we see for our most marginalized families and students (equity)? (1 person mentioned this idea, with a rating of 4.2 out of 5.)
- Will we see more staffing reduction for bus drivers and paras, many work to have the summer off (1 person mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.4 out of 5.)
- What are the reasons for pursuing this? (1 person mentioned this idea, with a rating of 3.5 out of 5.)

### **Tasks / activities between meetings**

District staff and the Facilitation Team will invite additional representatives as suggested by BCEC participants.

BCEC participants are asked to review the balanced calendar information and survey results on the district website (see link above).

Mr. Kwan reviewed the draft agenda for Meeting #2, October 5. Ms. Riche invited feedback.

Ms. Riche conducted a brief meeting evaluation.

Things that went well

- Putting times on the agenda

- The hybrid option
- Online participants keeping their screens on

Things to do differently:

- Name tags for in-person participants
- Turn on captioning
- Attendees would like more information about those participating
- Online participants couldn't hear those in the room well; add more microphones
- Put any web links in the chat, not just on screen
- Reminder that in-room participants can look at others in the room, not just at those on the screen

Dr. Murphy thanked everyone for attending. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

BCEC Participants Attending:

- Jade Austin (Zoom)
- Paul A. Bitar (Zoom)
- Jennifer W. Cole
- Scott Cushing
- Aimee C. Delamater (Zoom)
- Quinn M. Dickason
- Tad Earley (Zoom)
- Kaylin J. Furry
- Aziza B. Glast (Zoom)
- Noir Graves (Zoom)
- Alyssa Griffith
- Emily J. Griffith
- Eowyn E. Grubbs
- Sandy Hallstrom (Zoom)
- John Hanby (Zoom)
- Sonia E. Hernandez (Zoom)
- Pastora Hernandez-Barbee
- Leslie Huff
- Robbi Kesler
- Ava G. Miller (Zoom)
- Emily M. Nichols
- Collette C. Paulson (Zoom)
- Sarah Pearson (Zoom)
- Joel M. Plewa
- MJ (Jennifer) Sathers
- Christianne G. Smith (Zoom)
- Allison E. Weide
- Cole Wilson
- Condee L. Wood
- Dana A. Woods (Zoom)
- Karen Zarate (Zoom)
- Christine Zhang (Zoom).

Also attending: Dr. Patrick Murphy, Superintendent, and J.Marie Riche, Frank Kwan, Candace Wilson, Facilitation Team.