

Ballard High School October 8 General Meeting Presentation, Virtual Learning Teacher Q&A

Moderated by Principal Keven Wynkoop

Eileen Yardley – World Language (Spanish)
Gordan Macdougall – Language Arts Teacher
Marie Lassley – Math Teacher
Laura McGinty - Science Teacher
Robin Dowdy – Social Studies Teacher
Tara Lozen – Science Teacher
Scott Gross – History Teacher
Sonja Petersen – School Counselor (Last Names A – Ci)

Q: WHAT ARE EXPECTATIONS FOR ASYNCHRONOUS TIME? HOW ARE YOU HELPING STUDENTS TRACK WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

Gordon Macdougall: Wednesdays are unfolding. I can now create breakrooms. The first month was more “get to know you” and establish the classroom culture. I can now create breakout rooms, establish partnerships so look for more of that to come down the road. Things keep changing and teachers are adapting. For asynchronous time, I use it to assess skill levels of students and develop social groups. It's not a required time so it's a bit of a question.

Eileen Yardley: The first few Wednesdays we met individually with each family or students was very valuable but it took a while to schedule. Asynchronous time is extremely busy for teachers and we are now able to create small groups for our classes. It is important to note that the time is not required and some kids work or need to watch younger siblings. There is a lot of onus placed on students which is particularly hard for the 9th graders. We are trying to put a lot of structures in and looking forward to the technology supporting the breakout rooms for small groups.

Marie Lassley: Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri I have a flipped classroom. They watch videos, do practice problems on their own, and now on Wednesdays I reach out to have small groups of kids come by on Wednesday time. I am getting a lot of student emails so I am pairing them up so we can address common concerns. It's getting 1:1 or 3:1 help. I'm sure it will morph into doing other things.

Robin Dowdy: I keep asking my kids “what would be helpful” and they suggested small groups. We spend time on Wednesdays meeting with students, parents and do a lot of tech troubleshooting: One group of kids wanted me to review a lesson I have already taught and I am happy to do that. I also want to be respectful of the kids who are working but I think it will be evolving. I have one call during async time and tell kids to join whenever they can. If parents can be a little patient that would be great. If students have a suggestion, have them connect with teachers. It is going to be different than regular school. In one way it's great as it gives them flexibility and it could prove to be very useful.

Q: HOW ARE TEACHERS DETERMINING WHAT IS WORKING? HOW ARE TEACHERS GETTING STUDENT FEEDBACK?

Gordon Macdougall: Things are getting more organized, we are learning from each other but it's an evolution. We're 5 weeks in and we have done a lot. Things are actually getting quite organized through the Building Leadership Team and the Instructional Council and it's an organic thing through the

building. It's always great to be a Beaver and it's really an interesting process and it is teaching me a lot about my practice and what I can do once we are done with Covid.

Laura McGinty: One of the things that has been really challenging is our teacher "intuition" is based on a whole lot of non-verbal cues – facial expressions like 'oh how I explained that is absolutely not working so now I need to shift that practice' and I don't have those any more. Even if they have their cameras we have tech glitches so it's harder to pick up on the minute cues. So, what I have been really impressed with is the depth and breadth of collaboration that has occurred in such a small time. My Teams chat history looks like the Library of Alexandria – it's just packed with chats all over the place. As a staff we are collaborating like crazy to make things work better and more efficiently. Weekly reflections allow students to provide feedback (am I going too fast, do I need to check in on someone). I sent out a survey today for students to see who they wanted to work with for lab groups. Small breakout rooms can be challenging but I am constantly asking questions (how is it going, do we need to change?). If you have any suggestions please send it to me.

Keven Wynkoop: One thing we have to experiment with is that we don't know how long things will take so we are asking for feedback from your students. Encourage your students when the surveys come.

Q: HOW CAN COUNSELORS BE A PART OF THE FEEDBACK LOOP?

Sonja Petersen: I am one of six counselors at Ballard and we work with students grouped by last names. We used to be called "guidance counselors" but we like "school counselors" because we are working with students holistically. We work with students in three main areas; academics, career and college (i.e. what comes next), and personal/social. The work we like to do with your students is face to face, one on one, in our offices in a private space and that obviously looks different right now. We recently rolled out a tool where students can book appointments online. You can find this information on the Ballard website. Students are always welcome to meet on Wednesdays. I have been working with students on workload and if they are overall feeling overwhelmed we can work with your students.

Q: HOW CAN WE BUILD IN ENGAGEMENT AND WILL STUDY GROUPS HAPPEN?

Laura McGinty: We use breakout rooms almost every day in Phys A and Chem A. There is an output, there is a product so the design is not just for them to have a conversation, they actually have to record their thinking and often it's coming to a group consensus on a concept. This is recorded in OneNote and this is actually one of the ways I determine what group I need to jump in on first. I have also learned to think about what engagement looks like and sounds like. Some students are very uncomfortable with having their cameras on and that is not the hill I am going to die on. What I want is the engagement with the lesson and if they choose to instant message chats through the conversation I can see that, I can listen in and I can see the product. This is an evolution and as the community gets more comfortable and has an established pace and space we will look at engagement in a whole new light.

Eileen Yardley: Now that we have gotten to know each other in Spanish, I think engagement is part of why we love to teach. We want to spark curiosity, we want to spark passion, so engagement starts at the beginning of class. Mistakes are encouraged, we are on a journey and sometimes tech is going to get in the way. Everyday there is someone who will have an issue (including me) but engagement is hard as it's hard to show your whole self onscreen. We are really trying to collaborate and get clear on what is the core lesson we are trying to teach. As a language teacher I really like their cameras on. I can't require

it but the everyday practice of students practicing the language so I really want them to turn on the camera. Encourage them to turn on their cameras and join us in this craziness of online learning.

Robin Dowdy: Sometimes I don't even bother with the cameras because they don't always pop up - I miss Zoom – but the kids are growing. I am really impressed and they have been so patient with us. We transitioned to OneNote too and the kids have been awesome. They are putting solutions in the text, helping each other, they are managing the chat and I am helping answer the questions. It's really become collaborative. Video call fatigue is a big deal and Async time is important. We're learning, they are learning and the connections are starting to be made. I think over time they are getting practice at speaking.

Scott Gross: I would love to see all of your students faces, it makes it so much easier to get to know them. However, for students that are shy they can be much braver about putting things in the chat and so I'm hearing voices that I don't think that I would hear. I'm starting to wonder how I can keep that in the class when we go back to in-person learning.

Q: WHAT ARE POSITIVE CHANGES YOU HAVE SEEN DURING THIS DISTANCE LEARNING?

Robin Dowdy: Today was the best day! I was so proud of the students, they were in small groups and when one person would give an answer and I would say 'yes – thank you for sharing that mistake' and soon they were all jumping in and sharing ideas. My heart was so full because I thought 'this is not the place where they have to show up and be perfect, this is the place that they get to show up and learn and grow.' You have amazing kids and it's going to get better.

Scott Gross: One of my classes they figured out that they all liked the same game so they set up a Discord server.

Tara Lozen: I have been super impressed by how supportive the students are of each other. It's been really amazing watching them step into this role. Even though students aren't turning on the cameras if a student asks something in the chat they feel comfortable enough and like it's part of their job and part of the community to help each other out in a really nice way. If a student asks me about something in OneNote another student will chime in and answer it so it's nice to not be the only one to provide that support.

Keven Wynkoop: I've seen the same things in classrooms and it's been really gratifying. If we were in the building they would be sitting quietly in a classroom but now they can help each other out.

Laura McGinty: There are two things that I love every single day – Tara has finally convinced me to include music so we have an artist of the week. For the first ten minutes of class they are working on reflections, setting their goals and objectives and reflecting on the day and we're just jamming out. I'm asking students for their input and it's been really fantastic. At the end of each class I ask them to turn their mics on and say goodbye and it's like having 30 something 'goodbyes' and 'thank yous' and I get that validation and it's so gratifying. It's a beautiful thing.

Gordon Macdougall: In sharing good news, today I had a 20 minute meeting with a student who did not put their camera on so all I could hear was their voice. Experiencing the conversation, the tone of voice,

the inflections and as the student started to “get it” I could hear it in their voice. Now I am very much attuned to it. While using digital equipment has its drawbacks, it also has its benefits and I appreciate the ability to be able to focus on these cues.

Q: SATURDAY AND SUNDAY DUE DATES – SCHOOL FEELS LIKE A 7 DAY A WEEK EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.

Eileen Yardley: I am one of those teachers who has 11:59pm due dates on Sunday night but I am changing it a bit. Older students like the deadline and it gives them the ability to schedule their homework assignments when they want. For younger students, I am finding that sometimes they procrastinate and it becomes overwhelming. I am starting to suggest earlier due dates but I want to teach them the freedom of a college schedule. You have a distant due date, it's up to you when you do it, but I expect it to be in. That being said, we are also flexible this year in terms of when they turn it in. We just want the work. If we are going to assign it as a professional, we want them to do it. If it becomes overwhelming or too much we need to know it. As parents, support your kids if they are saying it's too much. Encourage them to self-advocate – go to teachers and counselors – and they are ready to be flexible and change. I will have to add that to my feedback form and see what the students think and change based on their preference.

Keven Wynkoop: One of the things I like about the district email makes it super easy to message your teachers and counselors.

Marie Lassley: I am also a teacher with Sunday deadlines but I tell them ‘this is what you need to work on today’ but I really just need them to work on it before we meet. For Thursday kids it's probably going to be Sunday. I teach older students – mostly Sophomores, Junior, Seniors – teachers that have Freshmen may need to handle it differently.

Robin Dowdy: I make the deadline 9:00am on Monday, Tuesday or Thursday morning. I'm more of a get up early, go for a run, do your homework and go to school. I don't think there is any right or wrong, I think what is important is that students learn what their best practice is and start using it and not using 11:59pm is when they do it. If you don't want to do homework over the weekend then finish it on Friday night. I do want to argue that in regular school there was homework on the weekend so it is not like it is new. I have also been stressing to them that it is not about perfection. If you find you are spending 5 hours on homework because you want it to be perfect, that is not the goal. Every teacher probably wants to spend 30 – 45 minutes doing homework. If you can't get it done draw a line in the paper and tell me why.

Laura McGinty: Fun fact about Schoology is the default time is 11:59pm so unless you are really intentional it will default. I have been doing 5pm because my goal is to have students shut down by 5, like a 9 to 5 job and really hone in on the physical and mental aspect. I also try to stress if you are not able to hit a deadline, then send me an email with when they will have it in. That's it – no judgement.

Eileen Yardley: As a staff we are trying to not give more homework than the length of the class. If it is over that, then let me know. If you find that your student is spending an exorbitant amount of time on one subject maybe you should talk to the teacher.

Sonja Petersen: One of the really great things to work on this year is balance. If you are finding that your student is spending 8 hours on homework then there is a problem. Help your student get a little data – is it one class, are they not focused, do they need to take a break – and take this year as an opportunity to build in some of these habits.

Q: HOW CAN PARENTS SUPPORT TEACHERS?

Marie Lassley: If parents can look at the 'Week in Advance' and help kids remember what is due that week and make sure they turn it in. They have six classes and they might forget.

Gordon Macdougall: Students are aching for social connectivity. Check the club list, join one temporarily and say hi, it's a good way to get involved outside of academics. I hope that we as a community can help us support the kids socially and emotionally.

Robin Dowdy: I recommend a paper planner where they can cross things off. It can help to have a paper on the side. It's a responsibility builder.

Q: HOW WILL STUDENTS CATCH UP ON MISSED WORK?

Keven Wynkoop: They are going to be ok – the whole country is in a similar place so we are not losing ground. We hope by second semester we hope to be back in the building but there are still a lot of hurdles. The teachers are really focusing on the core skills, what do kids really need to know when they leave this class, but they are going to be good.

Textbooks – in some cases the building bought "class sets" which doesn't work. The district is working on getting digital versions of the textbooks.

Thanks to the teachers for your fantastic input and for our great Ballard community. We appreciate the support!