



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: April 17, 2025
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-6, Academic Standards and Practices

I certify that the following is accurate as of April 17, 2025. The reporting period is from April 13, 2024, to April 17, 2025.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation
Policy: EL-6 Academic Standards and Practices
Adopted: September 10, 2009, revised February 14, 2013, and July 6, 2017

Background Information: This is our report on Executive Limitation 6 - Academic Standards and Practices. Reports are annual, they often feature an update on work in progress, as well as an emphasis on “new” work. As with many of the reports we produce for the board, this report is intended as a representative sample of the overall work in the district, not a comprehensive accounting of everything that is happening.

- 1. The superintendent shall not fail to take all reasonable and prudent actions with respect to academic standards and practices that are typical for similar and highly effective organizations.**

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to implement state and content-area standards and research-based instructional practices.

Evidence of Compliance:

- New/Update:** The Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Standing Committee, convened in the Fall of 2024, was designed to encapsulate the work previously done by the Joint Committee on Student Conduct and the Inclusionary Instructional Strategies Committee, both of which concluded with the start of this new standing committee. The purpose of the MTSS Standing Committee is to create a systematic, data-driven approach to supporting all students and to prepare for state-mandated changes to the special education evaluation process that will require our schools to be consistent in the approach to core instruction. The committee’s work this year will involve investigation and dissemination of instructional

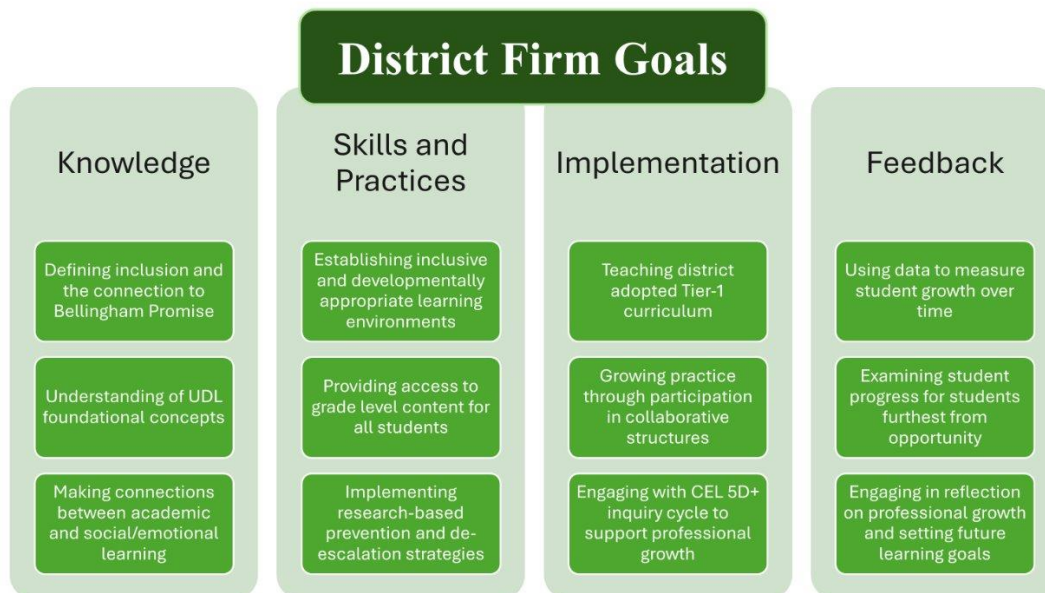
strategies, interventions and associated helpful practices in support of professional learning in our school district. The goals of the MTSS Standing Committee include:

- Establish a vision for how to implement a strong, evidence-based multi-tiered system of support for all students in Bellingham Public Schools.
- Use the collective expertise of the committee to develop a curated list of resources that demonstrate best practices.
- Investigate, review and recommend professional learning experiences that can be accessed by district employees in support of growing our work in inclusive instructional strategies.
- Focus on growing inclusive strategies and increasing the scope of inclusion over time, beginning with the early grades.

The committee has met monthly since November, and meeting notes and minutes can be viewed [here](#). Work coming out of this committee will include menus of tiered intervention supports in various content areas (SEL, literacy, attendance, etc.) that can be used by school teams in their collaboration time, in Child Study Team meetings, in Attendance Team meetings and other planning settings that are part of the regular work to support student learning needs in schools.

- *Update/Ongoing:* We continued our focus on planning for instructional improvement through common districtwide goals for professional learning by once again convening School-based PD Leadership teams in a summer retreat, August 15-16, 2024. Firm goals established back in August of 2022 continue to guide our district's work in four categories for professional learning. These firm goals (see Figure 1) continued as our school district's focus for ongoing work into the 2024-25 school year.

Figure 1. Firm Goals for BPS Professional Learning 2024-25



Four specific goals have been our focus for this year's work: (1) Knowledge: Making Connections Between Academic and Social/Emotional Learning; (2) Skills and Practices:

Providing access to grade level content for all students; (3) Implementation: Teaching District Adopted Tier-1 Curriculum; and (4) Feedback: Using Data to Measure Student Growth Over Time. School teams each developed plans coming out of the August retreat for their school specific focus for the year. The professional learning calendar includes periodic time for building-based professional development and the plans that were made in August were designed to support the coherent use of this built in time for buildings to focus on staff learning.

- **New:** A new series of professional learning opportunities for paraeducators and teachers they work with has also been implemented this year, led by School Support Lead Rebecca Sauter and other members of our district’s Student Support Team (SST). This series of in-person training has been designed to increase knowledge of best practices for inclusive learning environments. Attendance by paraeducator and case manager teams (teacher, other support personnel) was encouraged and the classes offered credits toward the General Paraeducator Certificate as well as clock hours for certificated staff. Classes offered included:
 - Use of Positive Reinforcement, 12/5/24.
 - Make a Change: Strategies to Help Learners Make Daily Transitions, 1/9/25.
 - Strategies to Decrease the Incidence of Problem Behavior, 1/23/25.
 - Visual Supports and Strategies, 2/6/25.
 - Chaining, Shaping and Prompting, 2/27/25.
 - Discrete Trial Teaching, 3/6/25.
 - Data Collection for Paraeducators: Data Driven Decisions, 3/27/25.
 - Pivotal Response Teaching Across the Day, 4/3/25.

The SST also ran multiple sessions of a course entitled “Supporting All Students: Effective Paraeducator Support in an Inclusive Setting for Learners with Complex Needs.” This 1-hour asynchronous course provides introductory material that is relevant to all paraeducator positions but particularly Student Support paraeducators and their substitutes. Staff, including newly hired permanent, temporary or substitute staff members were offered the opportunity to complete the course asynchronously and receive General Paraeducator Certificate hours by completing a brief completion quiz.

- **New:** Professional development in artificial intelligence (AI) continued along with a focus on the Healthy Tech Promise. Director Bill Palmer has been leading work with secondary instructional coaches on better understanding available AI tools for teachers and supporting learning around appropriate use of screentime with all digital devices. In March, a panel of leaders participated in a discussion with the Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Committee with the central focus on student access and use of cell phones. The discussion broadened to include aspects of the [Healthy Tech Promise](#).
- **New:** Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings for elementary. Within our focus on embedding time specifically for collaboration¹ in service of teacher professional learning

¹ By way of reminder, specific parameters for the collaboration time for teachers is spelled out on page 50 of the BEA contract, in Article VIII, Section L.

during Thursday afternoon early release time, we included the addition of two opportunities in the calendar for PLC time for grade levels and specialist groups in elementary schools to come together around a common focus. These meetings occurred during October and March and included time set aside for each grade level, as well as specialist teams. Literacy and a focus specifically on guided reading and racial literacy have been the focus for these elementary PLC meetings this year.

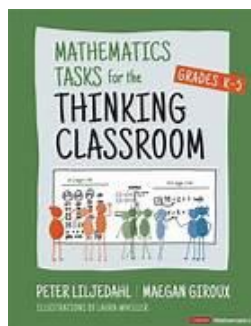
2a. The superintendent shall not fail to implement best practices for aligned and rigorous: (i) academic content and standards; (ii) curriculum and materials; (iii) world-class instruction; and (iv) appropriately differentiated curriculum, materials and instruction for all students.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff will provide ongoing professional development in support of the development and implementation of clearly defined standards, aligned assessments, high quality research-based instructional materials and innovative instructional strategies.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *Update:* Implementation of *iReady* math and literacy assessments and instructional support continued this year. School teams and staff from the Department of Teaching and Learning have been engaged with trainers from Curriculum Associates to help us go deeper into the use of these materials, and to understand the data on student progress.
- *New:* Elementary math pilot. Teacher on special assignment (TOSA) Rey Ramos and Director Tom Gresham are leading a pilot group of elementary teachers in developing their pedagogical skills with math instruction. We began this work envisioning that this group of elementary teachers once trained will be able to host other teachers in observing their shifts in math instruction through a lab classroom approach. The foundations of the work are rooted in Peter Liljedahl's "Thinking Classroom" (cover seen in Figure 2) approach to math instruction. Professor Liljedahl, from Simon Fraser University, has conducted several staff development sessions for our secondary math teachers on the use of vertical white boards to enhance group problem solving.

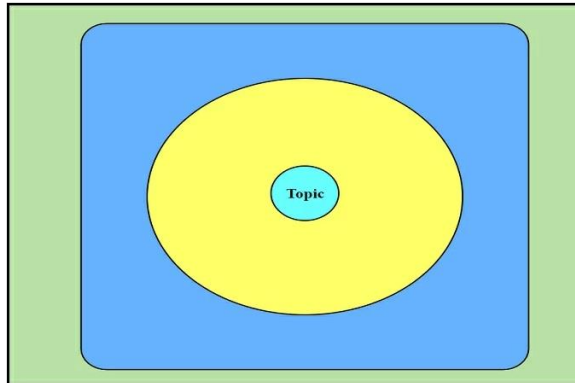
Figure 2. Mathematics Tasks for the Thinking Classroom



- *New/Update:* TOSAs Andrea Quigley, Yana Mansfield and Jessica Wallace provided a series of three trainings for 40 participants on the use of Thinking Maps in the instructional process. Thinking Maps are visual tools that support cognitive processes, critical thinking,

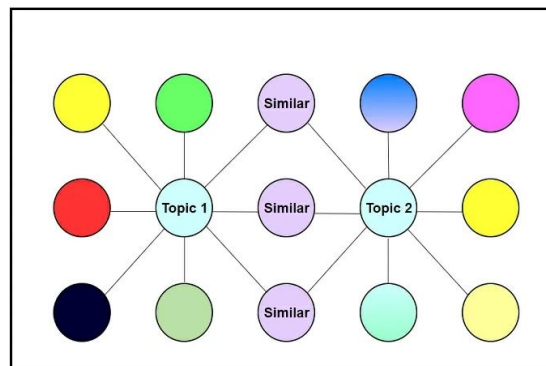
creativity, and collaboration. The maps provide inclusive access points for students to engage in content and grade-level standards. During the training, participants learned how to teach and integrate content into each Thinking Map as well as how students can collaboratively speak, read, write, and question off the map. Eight map types each provide a different avenue to support different types of work. The simplest is the circle map (see Figure 3 below) which is used for brainstorming and capturing the free

Figure 3. Circle Map



flow of information. Double bubble maps (see Figure 4), in contrast, help to define the similarities between two different topics. General education, special education teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators attending our training learned the different map types, and how to use them to provide access for all students.

Figure 4. Double Bubble Map



- *Update:* Mountain School/Camp Kirby outdoor learning experiences. Last year, to provide an outdoor experience for the seven schools who were unable to attend Mountain School, we added a three-day, two-night trip to Camp Kirby, located on Samish Island. This experience proved to be of high value and offers a meaningful outdoor experience in addition to Mountain School at North Cascades Institute (NCI). As a result of the success of this new opportunity, we have integrated this into our regular program offerings; schools will be on a rotation so that every year some schools will attend Kirby and some will attend NCI.

- *Update:* Mental health supports continue to grow. Mental health support in Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) continues to expand with our district mental health staff and community partners providing both school-based and community-based support for students and families. Dr. Laura Cardinal, Director of Mental Health, has also assumed a high degree of responsibility in serving as our Title IX coordinator. Partnerships with community providers continue.
- *Update:* Additional training on *Morpheme Magic for Little Ones* was provided for third grade teachers in December 2024. This resource was provided in school year 2023-24 for primary grade teachers (K-2) and this additional training was to support foundational skills development in grade 3.

2b. The superintendent shall not fail to periodically report on: (i) systemic instructional training and development activities that are expected to lead to increases in efficiency and effectiveness; and (ii) programs and other school-related activities implemented to develop and promote the well-being of the whole child consistent with Board Ends.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff will facilitate the use of multiple strategies to periodically communicate training and development activities that increase efficiency and effectiveness and promote whole-child initiatives.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New/Update:* Bias and Hate Training work expands and continues. Training for staff in dealing with incidents of bias and hate, led by Director Janis Velasquez-Farmer and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) TOSA Yana Mansfield continued this year. Building on the foundations of Bias and Hate Pt. I: Interrupting Harm, the second workshop in a three-part series shifted the focus from interrupting harm to actively promoting safety and security. This training explores the practical application of Policy and Procedure 3209 Bias Incident and Hate Speech and is intended to deepen our understanding of culturally responsive practices that foster meaningful cultural change. These trainings are designed to be communicated out and implemented in every one of our schools.
- *New/Update:* Corresponding with the training on bias and hate incidents, an [educational resource kit](#) supports our training efforts and includes resources in a variety of areas such as anti-Black/racism, anti-LGBTQ, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian, anti-disability, as well as quick access point for all our policies and procedures that relate to supporting education for students who exhibit biased and hate-based behaviors. Policies in place include 3209 Bias Incident and Hate Speech, 3241 Student Discipline, 3210 Nondiscrimination and 3207 Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying.
- *Update:* In reporting on our identified district outcomes, we continue to seek out evidence that sheds light on our work in new and more informative ways. Ends reports were shared at school board meetings this year. Dates and times for the 2024-25 school year follow:
 - Ends 2.1, part 1: February 13, 2025
 - Ends 2.1, part 2: March 13, 2025.
 - Ends 1, 2 and 3 combined report: To be presented May 15, 2025.

- *Update:* In addition, we have included the following opportunities for the board to hear from schools and community groups:
 - Monthly visits by school board members to schools to learn about the work in our schools consistent with the Ends outlined in The Bellingham Promise. Schools visited since we last reported included:

Wade King	June 4, 2024
Happy Valley	October 1, 2024
Sehome	December 3, 2024
Sunnyland	March 4, 2025
Fairhaven	May 6, 2025 (Scheduled)
 - Periodic opportunities for the school board's deeper study of topics, linkages with specific groups in the community and student roundtables included:
 - Study Session: School Safety (November 14, 2024)
 - Student Roundtable: Traffic Safety, Squalicum HS (February 26, 2025)
 - Linkage #1: Childcare Providers (January 23, 2025)
 - Linkage #2: Students/Families Who Did Not Graduate from BPS (March 26, 2025)
- *Update:* The superintendent offers a report at regular public school board meetings on topics directly about the instructional program to keep the school board apprised of initiatives underway in the district that serve to promote the improvement of teaching and learning. Examples of reports since the last writing of this report include:
 - Update on Kulshan Middle School new classrooms and turf field (September 14, 2024)
 - Update on Native American Heritage Month events and Title VI Family Committee (November 14, 2024)
 - Update on Washington State/District budget picture (December 12, 2024, + various other meetings)
 - Update on the opening of the health center at Options High School (February 13, 2025)

2c. The superintendent shall not fail to encourage reasoned instructional innovation.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff will design and implement educational programs that respond to the diverse and ever-changing needs of our students.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* Electric Vehicle (EV) course. The launch of our new EV course will occur in fall of 2025, made possible through a generous grant from *Foundry 10*, which also provided essential teacher training. This innovative program, taught by Bellingham High School (BHS) teacher Paul Clement with support from Career and Technical Education (CTE) TOSA Jenny Styer, will be located at Options High School. The curriculum will encompass sustainability, energy, engineering, technology and auto shop, allowing students to engage hands-on in

building and taking apart (for reuse) a real EV designed to seat three people and be licensed for the road.

- *New/Update:* Audiology Van in use. Also funded through support from philanthropic partner *Foundry 10*, our new district audiology van is now in use. Audiologist Geeta Sawh is now able to drive state of the art audiology equipment to the parking lot outside of schools, enabling students and families access to real-time opportunities for screening and testing. The investment in this van and the equipment it contains was the product of conversations between our Special Education department and *Foundry 10* sponsors.
- *New:* Opening year of Early Learning Center (ELC) at the district office. The inaugural group of early learners has inhabited our ELC space this year. The student population has grown over the course of the fall and winter of 2024-25. We are hosting 30 seats for students eligible for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance (ECEAP) program, which is a state-funded program that offers free early learning childcare or preschool to support children’s development and learning. The program is administered by our partners at Educational Service District #189.
- *New/Update:* Development of common curricular units of inquiry continues in elementary schools. Instructional coaches are once again working in collaboration with teachers to lead the development of new units of inquiry at various grade levels in the elementary program this year. For example, second grade teachers at Silver Beach (Sadie Hostetler), Lowell (Blayne Lambert) and Birchwood (Angie Titus) have been working with instructional coaches Rachel Frye, Kristin Gresham and Tess Ridgway to build an inquiry unit around the central idea “Living things are connected and rely on one another.” Key elements of this integrated work:
 - The unit incorporates material from Open SciEd’s NGSS aligned curriculum so that students can investigate how seeds disperse and what plants need to grow.
 - The unit also incorporates the *Since Time Immemorial* pathway 2: Honoring the Salmon. When students are studying how living things are connected and rely on each other they’re learning about *natural helpers* (how black bears and rodents distribute salmonberry seeds) and *human helpers* like the Nooksack Tribe and Lummi Nation working collaboratively to restore salmon habitats.
 - The unit further incorporates learning happening through elementary PLC time (noted earlier) and weaves in interactive read-alouds with picture books written by local Indigenous authors.
 - Future work involves refining lessons based on feedback from Lummi and Nooksack partners, piloting the units with students this spring and updating the instructional materials and supplies based on teacher and student feedback.
- *New/Update:* School-based health center opens. The school-based health center housed at Options High School opened this year, and this effort will serve students’ learning in multiple important ways and serves as an example of the innovative practices and approaches to serving the whole child that we continue to develop in our district.

2d. The superintendent shall not fail to provide an affirmative (or negative) statement the following actions have been taken: (i) involve stakeholder groups in substantive academic

standards and practice decisions; (ii) provide access and utilization of electronically delivered curriculum, materials and instruction; and a periodic systematic review of academic content, standards, curriculum, materials, and (iii) instruction, involving stakeholders, has taken place to ensure continuous improvement and adherence to best practices.

Interpretation: None in question.

Evidence of Compliance: (Affirmative Statements)

- *New:* Title VI Family Committee. The Title VI Native American Family Committee (NAFC) supports the educational needs of Native American students. The NAFC is made up of parents and family members of Native American children who attend Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) and will advise and guide the design and implementation of the Native American Student Program (NASP) which is supported by Title VI grant funds. NASP focuses on educational and social emotional opportunities that address the specific needs of Native American students. Over time, the NAFC will review data, participate in programming and support relationship building between the district and local tribes, all in support of Native American student success.
- *Update:* The district's Instructional Materials Committee (IMC) continues to meet regularly, typically quarterly, and review core and supplemental curricular resources. The committee includes administrators, teachers and community members. Meeting dates for 2024-25: October 1, February 4 and May 6. More information can be seen on the [IMC webpage](#).
- *Update:* Efforts to continue to seek advice from our community members in the various stakeholder groups are well-established. These include formal (ongoing) structures for stakeholder feedback and informal structures that invite feedback from our community members. Formal structures include:
 - *Update:* The Bellingham Public Schools Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS) focused on engaging parent representatives from each of the district's schools in review of curricular and programmatic directions underway in the district has continued to meet regularly under the leadership of parent co-chairs. At each meeting (see the list [here](#)), the superintendent's report focuses on providing information and asking for feedback on various aspects of the ongoing work of the district. Meeting dates and topics this year included:
 - Budget Planning for 2025-26 (October 10, 2024)
 - Discussion of District Equity Work (December 12, 2024)
 - Inclusion (February 13, 2025)
 - Student Use of Technology in Schools (March 13, 2025)
 - TBD (April 17, 2025-scheduled)
 - TBD (May 15, 2025-scheduled)
 - *Update:* For a number of years, the Student Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (SACS) has had student representatives from each of the district's four high schools engaging monthly with the superintendent in review of programmatic directions underway in the district. This year we took a different

approach with our Student Advisory Committee. Instead of a small group of eight students, the superintendent, working with each high school principal, met with different groups of students at each school, to talk about relevant topics at their schools. Examples include a recent meeting in April 2025, during which Dr. Baker met with approximately 40 students at SQHS in the Latinos in Action classes. This included discussions around federal immigration policy and impact to schools, our students and families.

- Frequent communications about the instructional program to families also occur through various means including the publication of *Inside Schools*. Below are links to two recent editions:
 - **Winter 2025:** <https://www.flipsnack.com/bellinghamschools/insideschools-winter-2025/full-view.html>
 - **Fall 2024:** <https://www.flipsnack.com/bellinghamschools/insideschools-fall-2024/full-view.html>
- The annual publication of the district's *Priorities for Progress* highlights aspects of our instructional program work in progress, addresses work in all strategic areas of *The Bellingham Promise* and invites community input on our work. The 2024-25 edition is linked below:
 - Priorities for Progress 2024-25: <https://bellinghamschools.org/priorities-for-progress-2024-2025/>

Statement of Compliance: The superintendent is **in compliance** with EL-6 Academic Standards and Practices.