



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: Feb. 22, 2024
RE: Monitoring Report for EL- 3, Treatment and Communication with Public, Parents and Students

I certify that the following is accurate as of Feb. 14, 2024. The reporting period is from Dec. 1, 2022, through Nov. 30, 2023.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation

Policy: EL-3 Treatment and Communication with Public, Parents and Students

“The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that non-employee stakeholders are treated with respect and dignity throughout the organization and are provided with communications regarding district events, plans, and actions.”

Adopted: Sept. 10, 2009

Revised: Jan. 19, 2020

Interpretation of items: None in question.

Description of Evidence of Compliance:

EL-3 directs the superintendent to treat non-employee stakeholders with respect and dignity throughout the organization, and appropriately communicate district events, actions and plans. Specifically,

1. The superintendent shall not fail to take all reasonable and prudent actions with respect to non-employee stakeholder interactions and communications that are typical for similar and highly effective organizations.

Before making districtwide decisions or implementing large-scale change, our standard practice is to engage our stakeholders in being part of the decision or solution. In this report, we highlight several examples of stakeholder engagement and communications during the listed reporting period. The examples highlight change management around the following topics and/or initiatives:

Budget

We typically send regular updates to students, staff, families and our community about our budget process from January to early summer.

During this reporting period, we went with the rule of thumb “early and often.” We sent frequent updates and shared our first message to our community in December 2022 that we were anticipating significant challenges.

Our strategy was to be transparent, informative, consistent and personable. While some were upset and frustrated by the budget shortfall, many people in our community were aware of the cuts and the reasons why.

We messaged our community multiple times regarding the budget, asked for feedback and provided different ways to understand and digest “the why”: December 2022, updates into the spring, using feedback forms, videos, FAQs, visuals, multiple messages and in-person meetings with staff and families to share information, context and next steps.

We regularly update our budget webpage, which links to our process and timeline. We continue to receive accolades on the district’s comprehensive budget book, as well as inquiries from other districts to replicate our publication.

While our budget is typically approved by the board over the summer, we believe it is paramount to keep our community well-informed of our financial standing as a government entity throughout the school year. I also share budget updates as I speak at staff meetings and with other groups.

Student safety concerns related to sexual assault and mandatory reporting.

In December 2022, three assistant principals (two at Squalicum High and one at Bellingham High) received citations from police related to their duties as mandatory reporters. These incidents sparked a walkout at Squalicum, a student protest at a board meeting, and many concerns and questions from students, our general community and the media. We received emotional feedback and comments that were often reflective of the pain people were experiencing from incidents at school or from past traumas.

Over the course of several months, we sent messages to the school communities most impacted and, in some cases, the entire district (here and here). The steps our staff took to support a student were intimately tied to the legal issues being considered by the courts, and we were unable to directly respond to a number of inquiries from community members and media. We shared what we could in follow-up messages in January here and here and appropriately answered questions from the media.

In August, Squalicum and Bellingham high school principals shared that the assistant principals would be returning to their posts after working out of the District Office for several months. While just a few days beyond this reporting period (and nearly a year after the citations were first received), the court reached resolution and the charges were dropped.

These events were challenging for all involved, including the student survivors, their families, other survivors whose traumas were triggered and the staff who faced accusations. Some beneficial outcomes include staff receiving more frequent and robust trainings to further their understanding and expectations of legal requirements related to mandatory reporting and Title IX laws. A number of district staff have improved collaborative relationships with law enforcement, child advocates and sexual assault/domestic violence advocates to ensure consistent expectations with reporting rules and best practices for listening to and supporting victims/survivors.

Safety concerns and refinement of safety protocols

Our team helped support different safety related concerns and incidents at our schools including a swatting incident/scare at Sehome in November which led to a lockdown; a lockdown and then a series of lockouts at Squalicum High School because of a student needing support (see messaging [here](#) and [here](#)); and multiple lockouts/secure protocols due to safety concerns around the Carl Cozier campus.

In the summer of 2023, district leadership attended a training on our safety protocols, which helped our principals lead training sessions for staff in the fall. Classrooms and departments now have new materials to reflect the standard response protocol, which is based on materials from the I love you guys Foundation.

Since the summer training, our leaders and staff have been better prepared to handle emergency events and used consistent language. Here are messages we used at Shuksan and Roosevelt.

Bond and facilities communications

We regularly share information and engage with the public about our work regarding capital projects and efforts to improve our facilities.

During this reporting period, we shared the following messages with our broader community: Construction news and facilities update for March 2023, Budget and Construction news and facilities update for June 2023, InsideSchools Spring 2023 and InsideSchools Fall 2023.

Dr. Baker also includes construction photos and visuals regularly during meetings with the school board, district leadership, Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent and other external group presentations.

In June 2023, we sent communications to our school communities and neighbors living near our schools about upcoming construction. Kulshan Middle School received news about its new science classroom wing and new field, Silver Beach received news about its new reader board and playground, Cordata received news about its new reader board, parking lot and internal wayfinding improvements and Lowell received news about its planned reader board. After hearing from members of the South Hill neighborhood, we paused our plans and permitting for construction at Lowell.

Capital projects planning generally starts at the committee level, which includes key stakeholders from our community and staff. Our process also includes engaging with the broader community to hear hopes, dreams, assumptions and concerns.

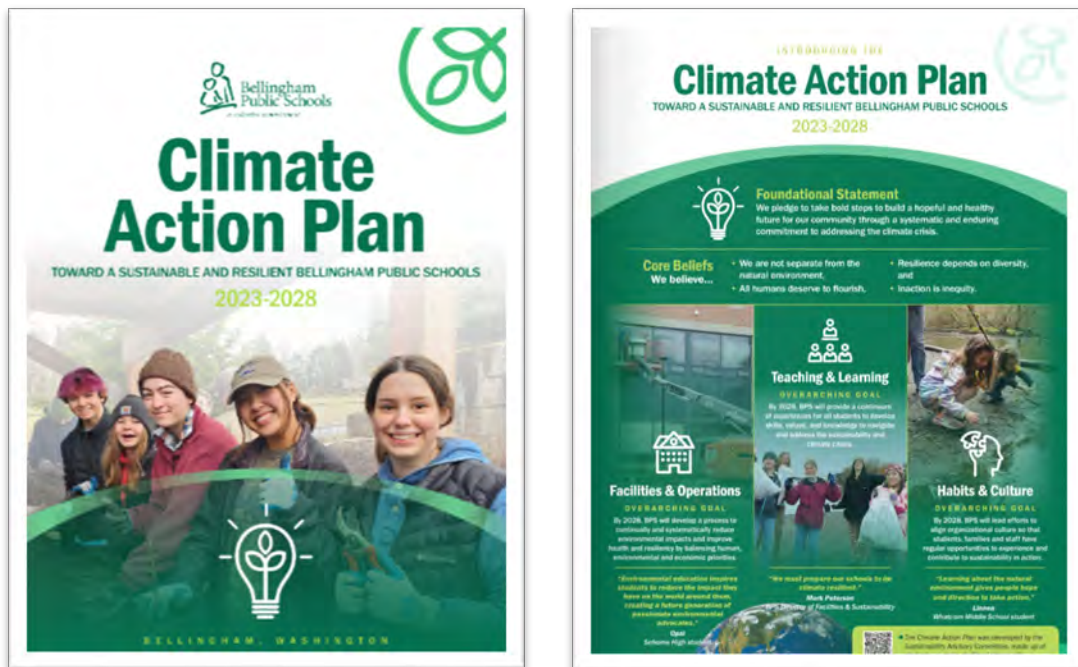
Both the Elementary 15 Educational Specifications Design Advisory Committee and Kulshan Middle School Field Ad Hoc Committee engaged with neighbors, staff, families and community members about their respective projects to help influence design and decisions.

During this reporting period, a call for applications was sent for the new Community Transitions Educational Specifications Design Advisory Committee was sent. The committee's meetings started in December 2023.

Coming next year: we will share levy communications ahead of the February 2024 election.

Sustainability

During this reporting period, district focus on sustainability continued through the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC). In spring/summer 2023, the SAC developed and finalized a Climate Action Plan (CAP) for Bellingham Public Schools. Communications staff helped produce and publish the Climate Action Plan: Toward a Sustainable and Resilient Bellingham Public Schools 2023-2028. A summary of the CAP and its development was highlighted in the fall 2023 InsideSchools. See images below:



This will be ongoing work in the coming years as BPS implements tactical goals in the CAP while engaging students, staff, families and community in this important work.

Related storytelling and communications began in earnest this fall with several announcements, Promise stories and social media posts sharing this important work. These include:

- Announcement of the Climate Action Plan: A Message from Superintendent Greg Baker (news items and social media)

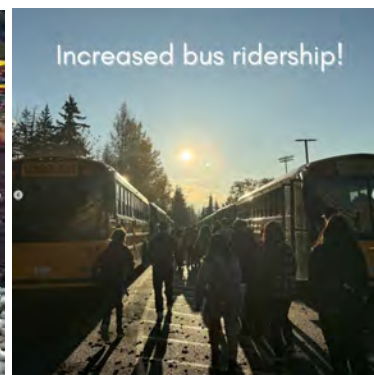


- Gagandeep Kaur Q and A: Climate Corps Fellow joins BPS this fall (Promise story)



- Fall 2023 update from Facilities and Operations (Promise story and social media post). This update included a collection of stories from across our Operations staff including work with new boilers, rain gardens and LED lights (Facilities), increased ridership on buses (Transportation) and the push for reusable utensils, composting and food recovery efforts in our schools' cafeterias (Food Services.)

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Public Records

Communications fulfilled more than 100 records requests during the reporting period, compared to around 75 and around 50 during the previous two reporting periods, respectively, and furnished more than 60 total gigabytes of records to requestors.

Requests included records requested under the state Public Records Act (PRA) and requests furnished to students and/or their guardians under the Family Educational Records and Privacy Act (FERPA). Requests made by agencies such as the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX investigations generally have a records component that must be handled with care, efficiency and accuracy. The scope of each request ranged from a single piece of information about our district to thousands of responsive records requiring extensive review and redaction.

The uptick in volume of records requests continues the trend of the past reporting periods: we observe both an increase of number of requests as well as individual requests being more complex and broader, e.g., “any and all communications” regarding a topic or an individual. These trends are noted state- and nationwide by public agencies, including school districts, and are not unique to BPS.

Last reporting period, we also noted that the installation of our hundreds of district security cameras over the past years would likely create a new body of work within both PRA and FERPA requests, and that prediction has been borne out. Communications works closely with our district tech team, safety supervisor and legal counsel, if needed, to fulfill video requests and redact video as needed.

Video requests range from short videos of parking lot fender benders to multi-view videos of student behavior to safety/security incidents. Our safety supervisor and records officer work closely with law enforcement to ensure that video requests that involve public safety needs are fulfilled efficiently and accurately. As awareness grows of the capabilities of our security cameras, we anticipate that video requests will continue to rise in both number and volume/complexity.

Communications appreciates the support of colleagues across the district, including finance, accounting, human resources, educational technology, teaching and learning, capital projects and building leaders to assist in this important function of transparent government.

The assistant director of communications, who is the district records officer, continues to receive regular training in public records law by attending training webinars hosted by the state Attorney General's office and holding a membership in the Washington Association of Public Records Officers.

The records officer also receives support for questions regarding records requests from our district legal team as needed and appreciates their timely responses, which allow us to fulfill complex requests with efficiency and confidence.

Focusing on Family Engagement

Family engagement is a crucial aspect of a child's education. It is a collaborative effort between families and educators to ensure that children receive the best possible education. However, when it comes to families that speak languages other than English, we need to make sure we do all we can to welcome them and remove the barriers that can make it difficult for families to engage with their child's education.

It is essential to develop family engagement strategies that consider the language needs of families, the different cultural backgrounds and values, and the lack of access to resources and information, to mention a few.

We believe it is important to develop inclusive family engagement strategies that are responsive to the unique needs of families and provide families with the information and resources they need to support their child's education.

We want to highlight three activities.

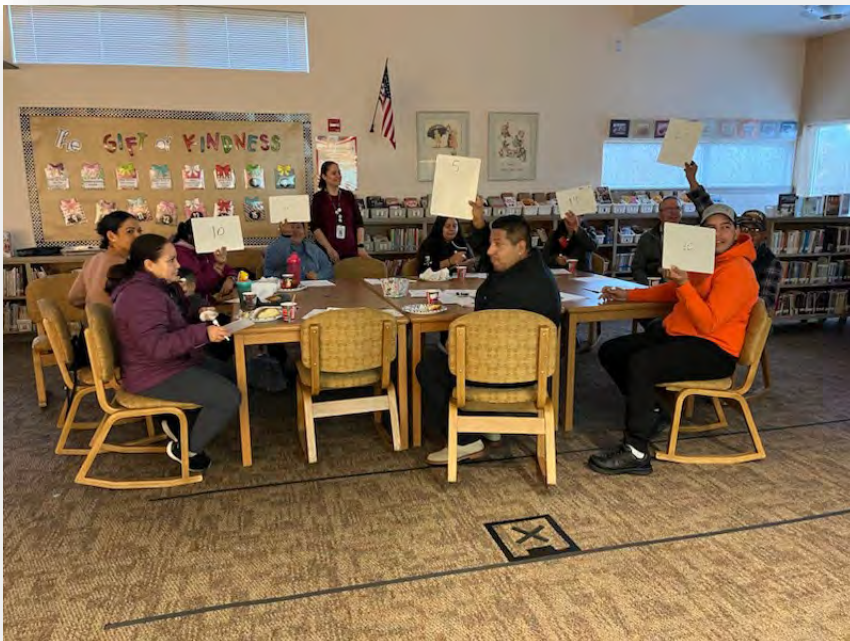
Café con Pan (Coffee and Bread) at all elementary schools.

This activity is designed to engage Spanish-speaking families with the school community at a time dedicated only to them. Because the activity is done completely in Spanish, when only those parents are invited, they feel comfortable and appreciate the effort made by the school staff to engage them in a unique way.

The event begins with a warm welcome, with parents invited to enjoy coffee and sweet bread, which is a tradition from Latin America. At the same time, they mingle with other Spanish-speaking parents and staff members. The principals are present to answer questions from the parents about the school and its programs. The biggest highlights are the guided tour of the school and the fun trivia game where they learn some fun facts about their school.

These events are a great success, with parents expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to connect with the school community. The feedback received from the parents is overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing their desire for similar events.

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Conexiones Latinas

Conexiones Latinas is a well-attended monthly online meeting that connects the Spanish-speaking community to discuss various topics. The meetings in Spanish on Friday evenings cover subjects such as starting a new school year, support, grades, attendance, and more. It also offers more focused groups, such as informational sessions for incoming sixth and ninth graders, and one for juniors and seniors to help them understand and prepare for their life beyond high school. Additional topics include mental health, substance abuse, and self-care.

Conexiones Latinas is a great way to connect Spanish-speaking families with topics about the schools and beyond. The online format makes it easy to participate from anywhere and allows us to provide very valuable information in a way that is less intimidating and easily accessible.



Latinx Graduation Celebration

There has been a long-standing dream to create an intimate and meaningful graduation celebration for our Latinx students and their families. This came to fruition last May when we celebrated our first graduation with an elegant dinner and scholarship awards. Thanks to Hillcrest Church for providing an amazing space, including all the furnishings, at no cost, and generous donors who contributed the funds. We plan to continue this event again this year.



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Graduations

For the class of 2023, we continued our post-COVID traditions of hosting graduation ceremonies at one location and providing online streaming access. For the third consecutive year, the district hosted all four high school graduation ceremonies at Civic Stadium in one day. The Community Transitions program graduation was held at Depot Market Square two days before the four high school ceremonies.

Significant time was spent planning, listening to stakeholder feedback and messaging seniors, staff and families with details and expectations of the day and event. BPS staff and students streamed all five ceremonies to the BPS YouTube channel, which totaled nearly 5,800 collective views, including live streams and on demand replays.

BPS communications was the primary photographer for the Community Transitions program graduation, taking portrait photos of each graduate along with scenes of the event. BPS communications also complemented the contracted photographer team at the high school graduations with candid coverage of the events.

In total, over 900 downloadable graduation photos taken by BPS communications were published to Flickr, generating over 4,300 views on the platform. The team shared subsets of each collection shared to social media in well-performing posts (CT, BHS, SHS, SQHS, OHS) for a combined accounts-reached total of over 37,000 across all social mediums ((Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn, Flickr).

Similar graduation photography coverage from the last reporting period earned national social media recognition during the current reporting period, receiving the Outstanding Photography Award from SocialSchool4EDU.



A promotional graphic for Bellingham Schools' graduation ceremonies. It features a light blue background with white bokeh lights. On the left, four school logos are arranged in a 2x2 grid: SHS (Seaside High School) with an anchor logo, SQUALICUM (Squalicum High School) with a lightning bolt logo, a red cardinal head logo, and OPTIONS HIGH SCHOOL with a circular logo. Below each logo is a time slot: 10 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m., and 7 p.m. To the right, a laptop and a smartphone display the Bellingham Schools website, which shows the same logos and a 'Class of 2025 Graduation Ceremonies' announcement. At the bottom, the website URL bellinghamschools.org/grad-ceremonies is written in a bold, dark blue font.





Graduation Programs

New in 2023, Communications supported the creation of graduation programs to give each high school similar, consistent production and print values. Bellingham High School trifold program below shown as sample. List of graduates listed on inside.



High school weekly advisory schedule

The High School Advisory Task Force completed a review of our high school advisory practices and weekly schedule to improve the benefits and use of high school advisory minutes for all high school students.

The task force's work marked the first major review and revision of the 4x8 high school schedule since its adoption for the 2017-18 school year--not counting the adaptations made to the schedule during the days of fully online and/or hybrid school due to COVID-19 health protocols. The task force recommended a change from daily advisory class to advisory twice a week.

In addition to the typical actions Communications takes to support a district task force engaged in change processes, they also helped create an instrument to collect helpful and accurate student, family and staff perspectives on the benefits and use of high school advisory, supported timely communications with our high school staff, students and families, and updated visual support for high school schedules in advance of the launch of the 2023 school year (examples below):



**A/B Day
(no Storm)**

1st/5th	8:30 - 9:55		
2nd/6th	10:05 - 11:30		
first lunch	11:35 - 12:10	3rd/7th	12:35 - 12:55
3rd/7th	12:15 - 1:45	second lunch	12:30 - 12:55
4th/8th	1:50 - 3:15		




**Daily
Schedule**

1st/5th	8:30 - 9:55
2nd/6th	10:05 - 11:30
Lunch	11:35 - 12:10
3rd/7th	12:15 - 1:45
4th/8th	1:50 - 3:15




**Early
Dismissal**

1st/5th	8:30 - 9:40		
2nd/6th	9:45 - 10:55		
first lunch	11:00 - 11:55	3rd/7th	11:00 - 12:10
3rd/7th	11:55 - 12:45	second lunch	12:55 - 1:45
4th/8th	12:50 - 2:00		




**A/B Day
+ Anchor**

1st/5th	8:30 - 9:45		
Anchor	9:50 - 10:30		
2nd/6th	10:35 - 11:50		
first lunch	11:55 - 12:30	3rd/7th	11:55 - 12:35
3rd/7th	12:35 - 1:55	second lunch	12:40 - 1:15
4th/8th	2:00 - 3:15		

Inclusive practices

Our district's work to increase training for and implementation of inclusive practices, such as inclusive preschool and co-teaching, and the reduction of segregated programs continued and increased during this reporting period. Communications supported this work with attention to the needs and questions of both internal and external stakeholders.

Internally, communications supported DTL leadership with messages to staff clarifying the scope and intention of our inclusion work. The assistant director of communications sits on the newly created Inclusive Practices Standing Committee.

Sehome High School's partnership with the Haring Center at University of Washington as a model site for inclusive practices also became a focus of earned media attention during this period, and Communications coordinated a site visit with UW's communications department for a video and article; this media coverage in turn prompted coverage by the Bellingham Herald.

2. The superintendent shall not fail to:

a. Use multiple media resources including, but not limited to:

i. Community and school newsletter(s):

A) InsideSchools

In this reporting period, the Department of Communications and Community Relations produced two community newsletters called InsideSchools. For each edition, 56,000 are printed and mailed to saturate the entirety of postal routes within School District 501, including both businesses and residences. These newsletters inform stakeholders about our schools and engage them in the collective work of The Bellingham Promise. InsideSchools is also published online and shared via email and our website. Stories highlight major initiatives and areas of focus; other articles recognize staff and students. Most editions include updates from facilities, the school board and the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation.

Spring 2023: This edition included stories about high school course offerings, a school visit from poet laureate Rena Priest, a round-up of our Promise Award recipients as well as an article about the Assistance League of Bellingham and a book donation to Alderwood Elementary.



Fall 2023: This edition included stories on the Roots of Empathy program, the announcement of our Climate Action Plan, fifth grade strings and a retired BPS educator collaborating on a book with current staff.



B) Mass messaging tools: Continued transition and launch ParentSquare

ParentSquare overview and background:

A family notification vendor workgroup convened in January 2021 and unanimously decided to transition the district's family notification tool to ParentSquare. The move to ParentSquare represented a new comprehensive family notification tool after utilizing SchoolMessenger for the 12 years prior.

ParentSquare is used for mass communications (school newsletters, district information, urgent alerts), classroom communication (one-to-one and group messaging, parent-teacher conferences), and related school services.

The 2023-24 school year marks the second full academic year utilizing ParentSquare.

While the fall of 2022 focused on general education and onboarding, the fall of 2023 was focused on ensuring families and staff moved from general familiarity to maximizing uses of the tool.

Training and support of ParentSquare use:

ParentSquare's capabilities represent comprehensive services exceeding the abilities of the previous notification tool. As such, our team anticipated it would take multiple years for the

majority of our community to become familiar with, and maximize the use of, customization tools available to each user in the platform. Though well regarded as an easy-to-learn tool, the comprehensive aspects of the new tool called for continued support and education for best use cases.

Our communications team assists staff and parents/guardians on a daily basis via phone and email with account settings and permissions to optimize usage.

Much of this support is resolved with expertise of our team, but we also routinely reach out to ParentSquare's support team to better understand the tool and suggest feature enhancements, based on feedback from our community. For example, the communications technician specialist had 89 ticket conversations with ParentSquare support during the reporting period.

Our team has also orchestrated several group trainings during the back-to-school season, though fewer than the year prior based on needs of our school communities.

Expanded usage:

We continue to receive a positive response to ParentSquare's role as a communication tool in our community.

Here are a few examples: easy-to-use attendance notifications and excuse notes, language translation in two-way digital conversations with translators are not available and offering large-scale messaging to grades or classes along with one-to-one direct messaging all in one platform.

During the most recent reporting period, our team has supported numerous staff in creating custom groups for communication that extend beyond class rosters. Examples include middle school choir clubs, caseloads of students for special education staff and multi-class groups such as all of fifth grade at a school for communicating about mountain school.

ParentSquare analytics numbers support the expanded usage of the tool in its second full year in our school district.

As an example of expanding usage, we began using the auto notice feature in ParentSquare during this reporting period. It is connected to our food services meal balance system. 12,786 auto notices were generated/sent during the current year, compared to 1,751 in the year prior.

From July 2023 through the conclusion of the last reporting period, ParentSquare was used to send 3,641 posts (district, school or class group messages), 32,165 direct messages (one-to-one or small group back-and-forth messaging – similar to texting) and 77 smart alerts (higher priority messages related to school schedules changes due to weather, bus transportation, school safety etc.).

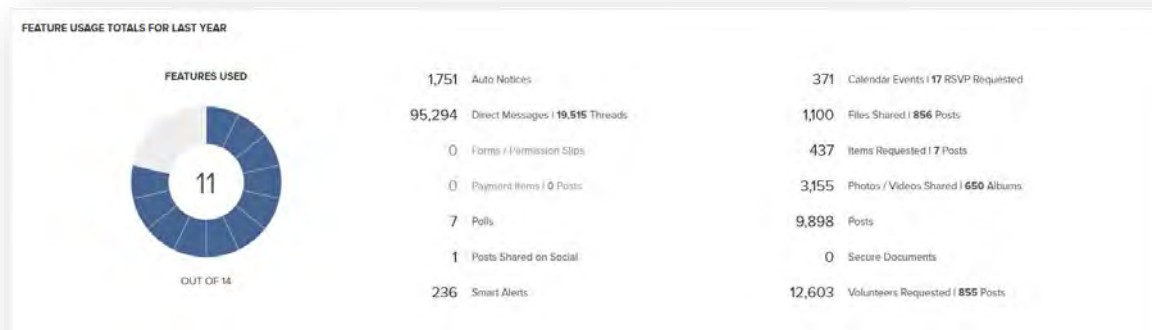
From July 2024 through the conclusion of the reporting period, ParentSquare was used to send 4,041 posts (district, school or class group messages) compared to 3,642 from the year prior;

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43,823 direct messages (one-to-one or small group back-and-forth messaging – similar to texting) compared to 32,165 direct messages the year prior, and 158 smart alerts (higher priority messages related to school schedules changes due to weather, bus transportation, school safety etc.) compared to 77 smart alerts the year prior.



Compares July 2023-February 2024 (current year); some metrics have already exceeded the 12-month prior period reported below while many other are on pace to equal or exceed by June 2024

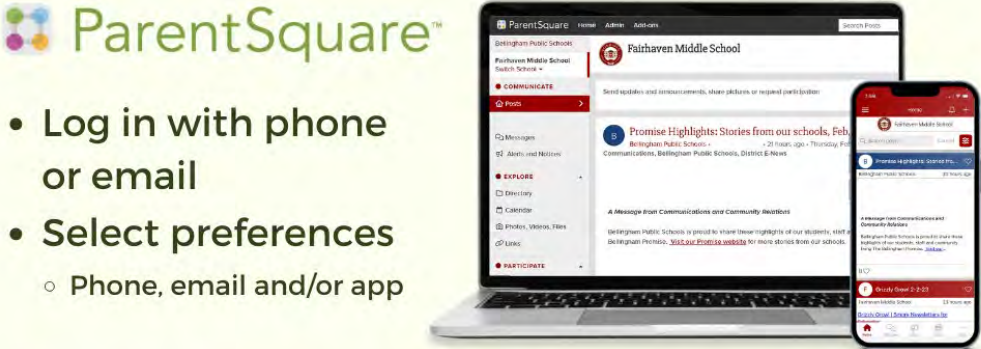


Compares July 2022-June 2023 (last year)



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Compares July 1, 2022-July 1, 2023 (past year) and July 2023-February 2024 (current year)



The image shows the ParentSquare logo on the left, which consists of four colored dots (green, blue, orange, and purple) arranged in a square. To the right of the logo is the text "ParentSquare™". Below the logo, there are two bullet points: "Log in with phone or email" and "Select preferences", with a sub-bullet "Phone, email and/or app" under the second point. To the right of the text, there is a laptop and a smartphone displaying the ParentSquare interface. The laptop screen shows the "Fairhaven Middle School" page with a "Promise Highlights" section. The smartphone screen shows the same page on a mobile device. Below the laptop and smartphone, the URL "bellinghamschools.org/parentsquare" is displayed in a large, bold, green font.

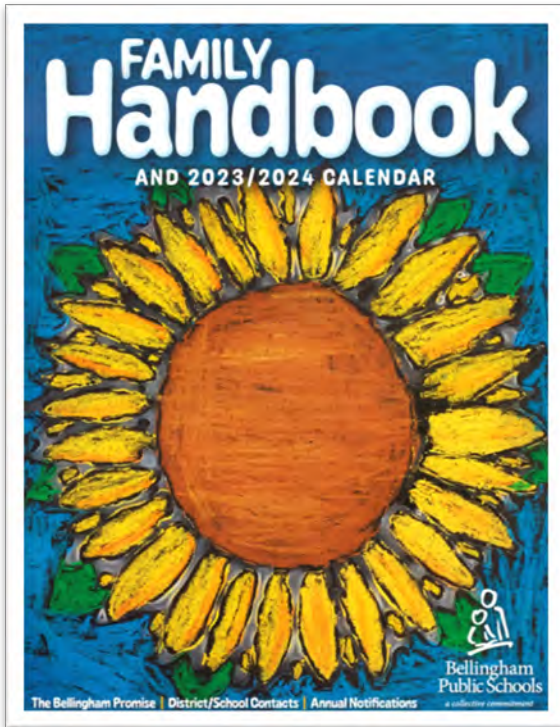
- Log in with phone or email
- Select preferences
 - Phone, email and/or app

bellinghamschools.org/parentsquare

C) Other publications shared with family and student stakeholders:

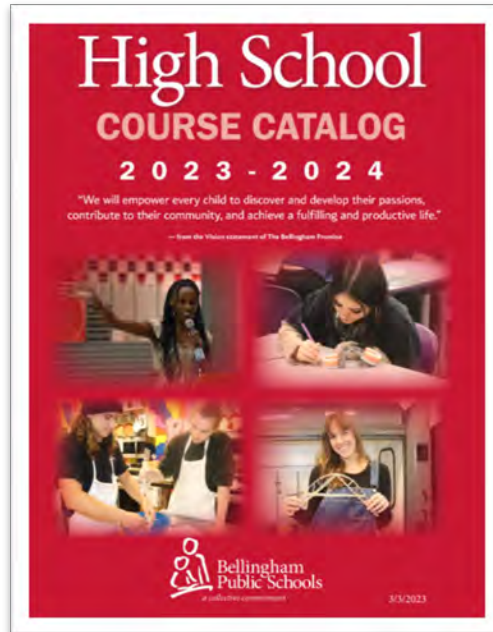
Family Handbook and Calendar 2023-24

This annual publication is mailed home before the start of the school year, usually in early August, and includes important notifications and a full calendar highlighting student artistic talent. It is printed in English and Spanish.



Working with the Department of Teaching and Learning, communications staff updated the high school course catalog for 2023-24. The catalog is used by all four high schools and includes the registration schedule, new classes and regular course offerings. This remains an important publication relevant to nearly 35 percent of all students and their families, which shares three important graduation requirements: 1) the credits needed to graduate, 2) the High School and Beyond Plan and 3) graduation pathways. The front pages of the catalog also include critical information about registration.

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Priorities for Progress 2023-24

Produced every fall, this publication is a companion document to The Bellingham Promise that provides detail for anyone who wants to learn about our work in each of the six key strategies. Each key strategy lists the top five priorities, plus a list of other important priorities. The 2023-24 edition moved [online](#).

Promotion

Promotional materials for everything from kindergarten registration to career and college planning events are created annually in communications.

For this reporting period, these included:

Kindergarten flyers and posters were updated, printed and distributed at elementary schools in numerous languages in spring 2023.



There was also effort to locate young children for Promise K. These children needed to be 4 by Sept. 1.



Additionally, for the first time in spring 2023, the seven school districts in Whatcom County put together a joint press release and produced countywide flyers listing all districts. This collaboration assisted families across the county in registering at their correct district. Some

families may have childcare in Bellingham but live in Meridian, Ferndale or another county school district. Our communications team was happy to be the lead on the media release, which yielded earned coverage in the Cascadia Daily.



Communications supported events for job, career and college planning with posters, flyers and social media promotion.



Above: Sample web slider for Teen Job Fair 2023. Half-sheet flyers and posters and social media were also designed, printed and posted for promotion.



Above: Instagram reminder graphic for the 2023 College Fair. Half-sheet flyers, web sliders and social media were designed, printed and posted for promotion.

Districtwide Block Party marketing and support

During this reporting period, Bellingham Public Schools hosted the third annual Back-to-School Block Party. The communications team once again supported the event with promotional materials, social media promotion, flyers and onsite signage. The communications team was also onsite photographing the event.

Family attendance and community partner tabling continues to increase year over year as families see this as a very efficient school readiness event as they prepare the school year.



Developing strategic partnerships to help provide resources and opportunities to our students and families

The Family Engagement Team works to organize, contact, and implement the delivery of resources to hundreds of students and their families. Due to the amazing relationships that we have developed with so many community partners, our resources have continued to expand. Here are just a few highlights:

The Assistance League provided over \$70,000 in store cards for new clothing to more than 600 BPS students.

Holiday support – we connected countless families to community partners over the years during the holidays, and the number of those relationships continues to grow. This year, we connected families with the Community Toy Store, BP Cherry Point, Hillcrest Church, Love, Inc., the Port of Bellingham, the Sheriff's Department, Bellingham Police Department, and Windemere Real Estate to provide support to over 300 hundred families. The FE team worked with our partners to bring resources and joy to many students and families.

Year-round support: Thanks to our partnerships with Windemere Real Estate, Muljat Real Estate, Brandon Real Estate, the YMCA, many faith-based organizations, Haggen, BP, Bright's Laundry, Sports Clip, and so many more, we have been able to connect and deliver resources to many students and their families in need.





World Relief – our partnership with World Relief and the relationship we have grown with them has led to academic resources for our refugee students and a refugee grant that will provide extra support for our refugee students.

Professional Development

To accomplish communications work that is “typical for similar and highly effective organizations” as defined in the EL, we look nationally and regionally to identify and implement best practices from other school districts. For professional development in the last reporting period, team members participated in the following learning opportunities:

- The communications department attended a one-day team retreat in August. The team completed the Strength Finders assessment prior to the retreat and during the retreat shared/discussed/learned about each team member’s results. In another session human resources executive director Ari Feeney shared information about inclusion. The team also set goals, reviewed team norms and the matrix, discussed levy planning, storytelling and other future strategic work.
- Members of the communications team participated in the following trainings:
 - National School Public Relations Association “Power Hours”
 - Ghostwriting & Speechwriting Best Practices
 - Culture Shock: Keys to Multilingual Communication
 - I love u guys crisis response training – Jan. 30 and August 8, 2023.
 - NSPRA mini labs:
 - Instagram Stories
 - Instagram
 - LinkedIn
 - Using Data to Evaluate and Improve District Communications.

- Photography
 - Facebook
- Multiple online training courses by ParentSquare, the district's mass notification platform.
- WSPRA professional development – Teachers in the News: Why it Matters and How We can Help.
- WSPRA Virtual PD: How to Create Powerful Messages and Ambassadors for Your Organization, Brand or Program.
- Ed Lab Live: what to know about school funding and spending in Washington
- Washington Education Funding and School District Budget Challenges
- LinkedIn for Schools: The Impact of Social Media Storytelling on Recruiting & Retention
- 9 Tips for Finishing the Year Strong on Social Media
- Bi-weekly Northwest ESD meetings when available. An opportunity to share and learn from colleagues in our region.
- The assistant director of communications attended several conferences and webinars related to public records:
 - PRA University webinars in December 2022, June, July, August and September 2023 to support her continued proficiency as district records officer.
 - Public Records training in Lynden on April 28, 2023 taught by Porter, Foster Rorick law firm.
 - The assistant director of communications attended a two-day Washington Public Records conference May 17 & 18, 2023.
- The assistant director of communications attended a webinar entitled, "The Science of Writing for Busy Readers".
- The executive director and communications technician specialist regularly attend the Northwest Educational Service District 189 Zoom meetings that are held for communications professionals once to twice per month to share ideas, plans, new laws and/or crises management.
- The executive director of communications regularly attends regional public information officer meetings (PIOs) and has participated in panel discussions. This group provides trainings, speakers and opportunities for collaboration with communications colleagues from school districts, cities, counties, fire, police, libraries, transit, public works and other public and private agencies.

D) Website and Social Media

Website

During this reporting period, the district website had 1,684,173 views.

Peak website traffic occurred during possible weather events with snow falling and during the first day of school or semester. These three event days were considerably higher than most other web traffic days.

Highest web traffic days:

Feb. 28, 2023 – 21,200 pageviews (on time school day, but snow falling)

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Jan. 31, 2023 – 13,418 pageviews (first day of second semester)

Aug. 31, 2023 – 11,889 pageviews (first day of school year)

The top 5 most visited district webpages during this reporting period (excluding the homepage):

School Menus – 160,446 pageviews

Calendars – 107,472 pageviews

Human Resources – 93,234 pageviews

Contact (Staff Directory) – 59,036 pageviews

School Index – 30,075 pageviews

Salary Schedules – 22,657 pageviews

General web inquiries:

Our district website has a general web inquiry inbox, which visitors can access via the contact webpage. The inbox is monitored by our reception staff. When able, reception staff respond directly to the inquiry with the answer. When additional information is required, reception staff will forward the inquiry to the appropriate staff member to follow up on.

During this reporting period the inbox received 559 inquiries from staff, families, students and community members. The total was nearly identical to the total from the last reporting period (563).

Social Media

During this reporting period, the district social media presence continued to grow.

X, formerly known as Twitter: Gained 59 followers, giving us 2,563 followers*.

*followers as of February 2024, analytics unable to isolate to end of reporting period.

LinkedIn: This reporting period was our second reporting period utilizing LinkedIn as an active social media outlet for content. In particular, LinkedIn has an audience of both current and prospective employees. We continue to explore ways to uniquely use this medium.

We have 1,529 followers, gaining 265 followers during the reporting period.

Facebook: Our analytics reported a negative of 348 follows during the reporting period. This is consistent with some decreasing engagement we are seeing on Facebook compared to other mediums. We have 6,588 followers*.

*followers available lifetime only and is as of February 2024, analytics unable to isolate to end of reporting period.

Below are the top five most popular posts on Facebook for this reporting period in chronological order (based on Reach):

Date	Post	Interactions (reactions,	Reach
------	------	-----------------------------	-------

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		shares comments)	(people reached via their newsfeed)
1/6/23	Roosevelt staff show Secrets from the Swamp	168	6,668
1/27/23	Bellingham at Sehome unified basketball	271	6,021
10/30/23	Translated children's book feature	99	5,811
2/24/23	High school registration and culinary pun promo	91	5,523
6/13/23	SQHS class of 2023 graduation	127	4,806

Instagram: Our Instagram followers total increased by about 300 followers during this reporting period. We have 6,448 followers*.

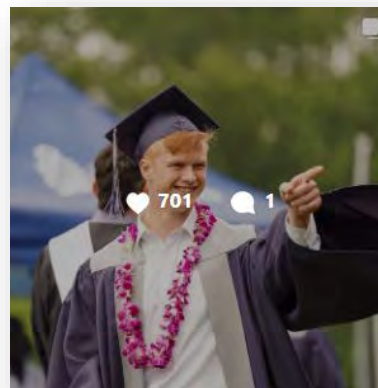
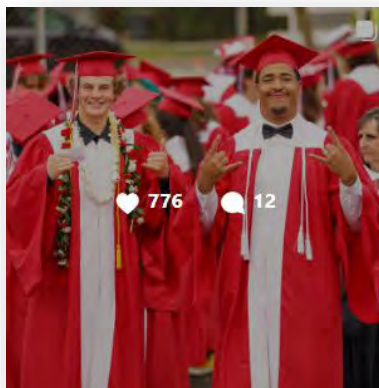
*followers available lifetime only and is as of February 2024, analytics unable to isolate to end of reporting period.

Popular Instagram posts:

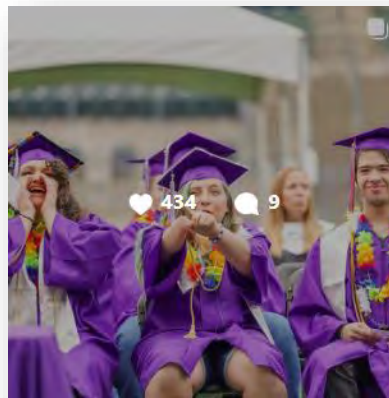
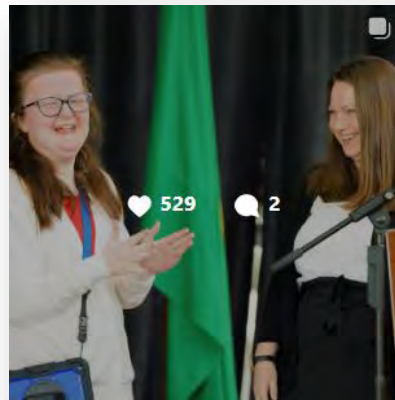
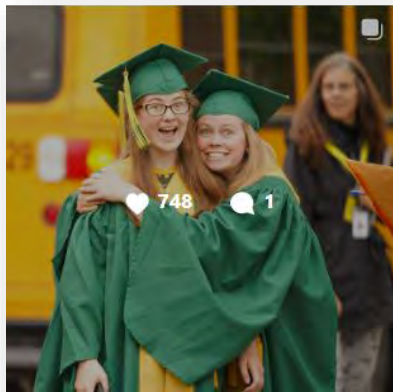
The hearts are likes and the bubbles are comments.

Graduation highlights

Similar graduation photography coverage from the last reporting period earned national social media recognition during the current reporting period, receiving the Outstanding Photography Award from SocialSchool4EDU.



Monitoring Report for EL-3



Celebrating student events, activities and moments

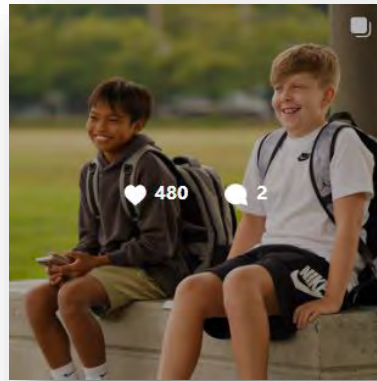
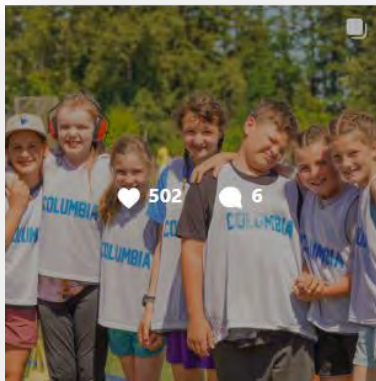
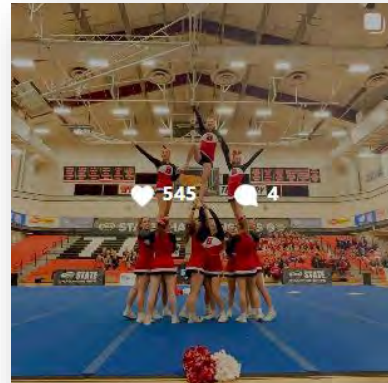
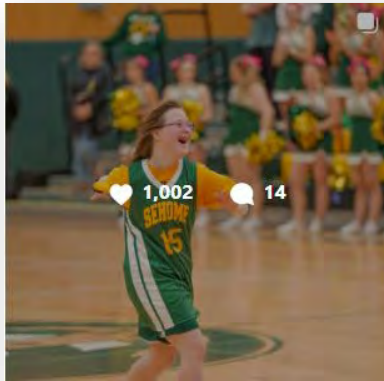
Top left: Bellingham and Sehome unified basketball (this post set a BPS Instagram record for most likes with 1,002)

Top right: Celebrating BHS cheerleading winning a state title

Bottom right: Celebrating another All-City 5th Grade Track & Field Meet

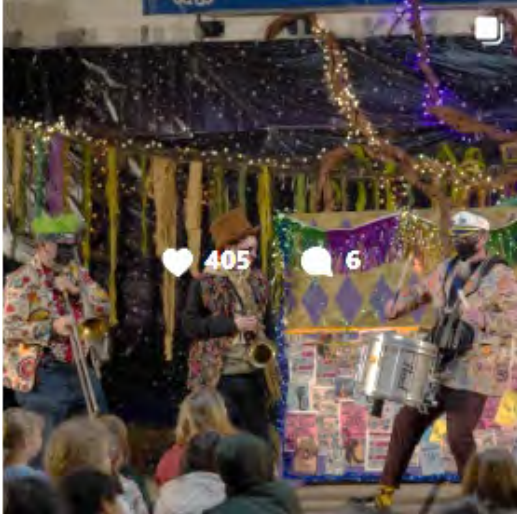
Bottom left: Scenes from the first day of school in fall 2023 for grades 1-12

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Celebrating our staff –

Social media posts highlighting staff: Between Dec. 1, 2022 and Nov. 30, 2023, staff members were highlighted regularly in district social media on Facebook, Instagram, X formerly Twitter and LinkedIn. Here is a sampling of these posts, captions and photos:



Roosevelt staff play in December 2022. Promise story and post in January 2023

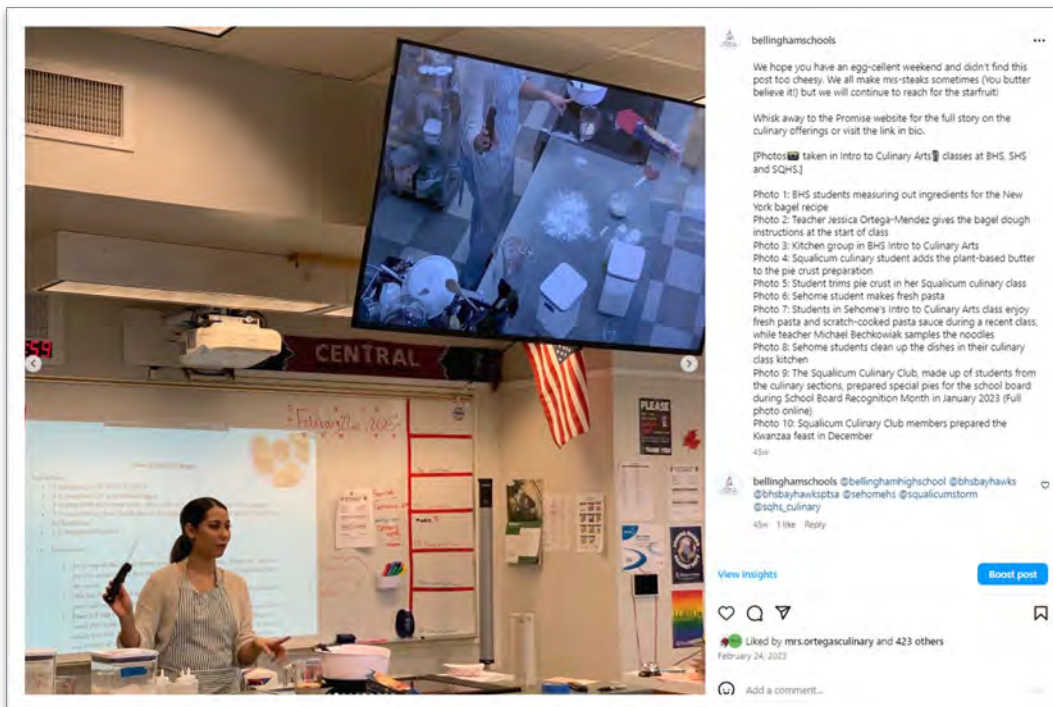


Post highlighting the Central Kitchen and cafeterias with a visit from Chef Ann. 283 likes on Instagram (February 2023)

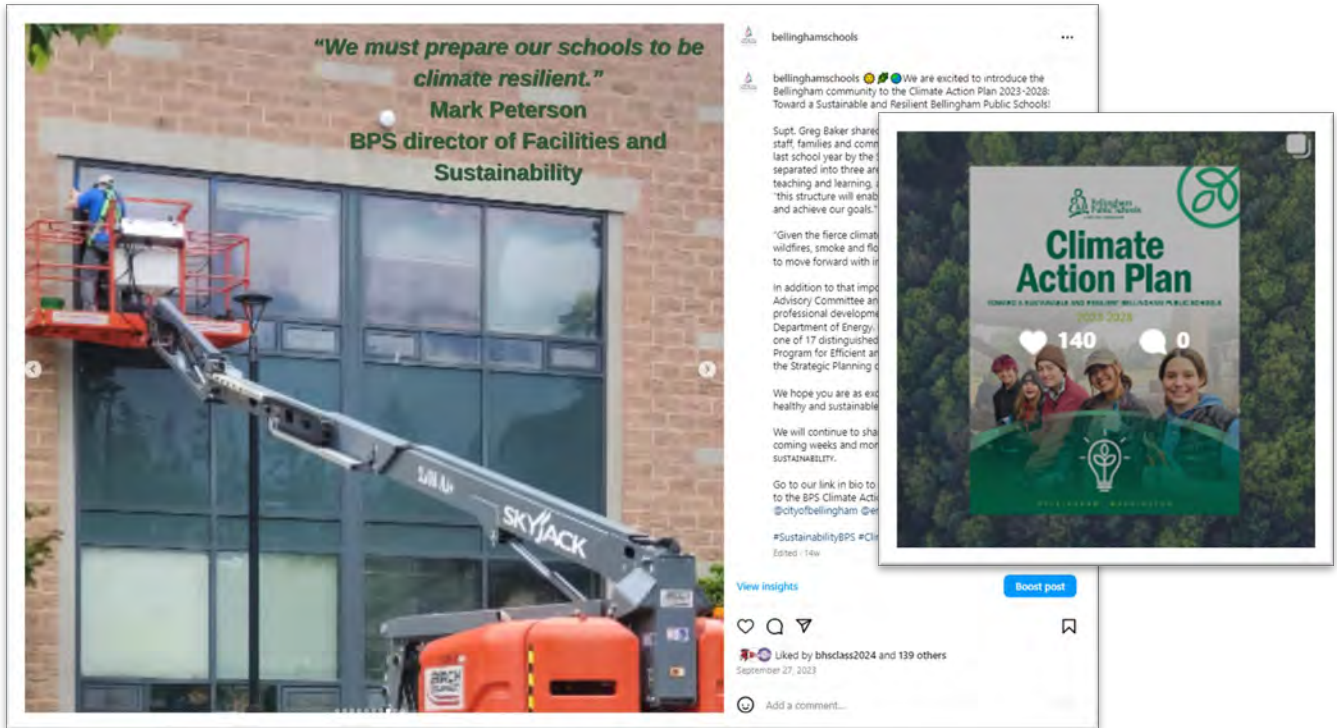
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Post highlighting retiree Margie Kimberley and her book translated by current staff Isabel Meaker and Cristina Manterola. (Post and Promise story October 2023)

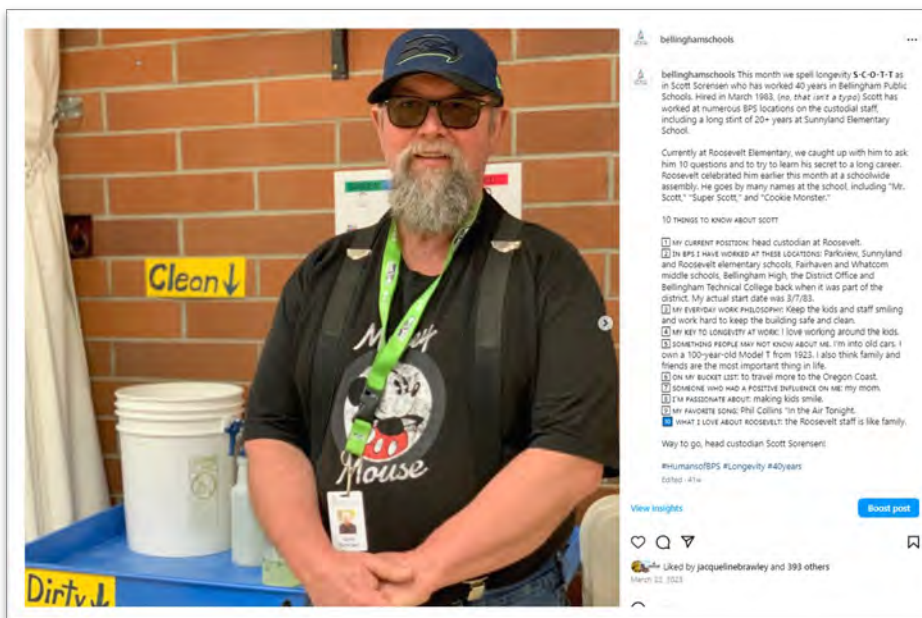


Post highlighting the culinary arts classes and teachers in BPS (food pun alert!) Based on Promise story. 424 likes on Instagram (February 2023)



Several posts in this reporting period shared updates on the Sustainability Advisory Committee, the district's new Climate Action Plan (adopted Sept. 2023), and updates highlighting the important work of transportation, facilities and operations staff (Nov. 2023)

Individual staff were also highlighted on social media occasionally:



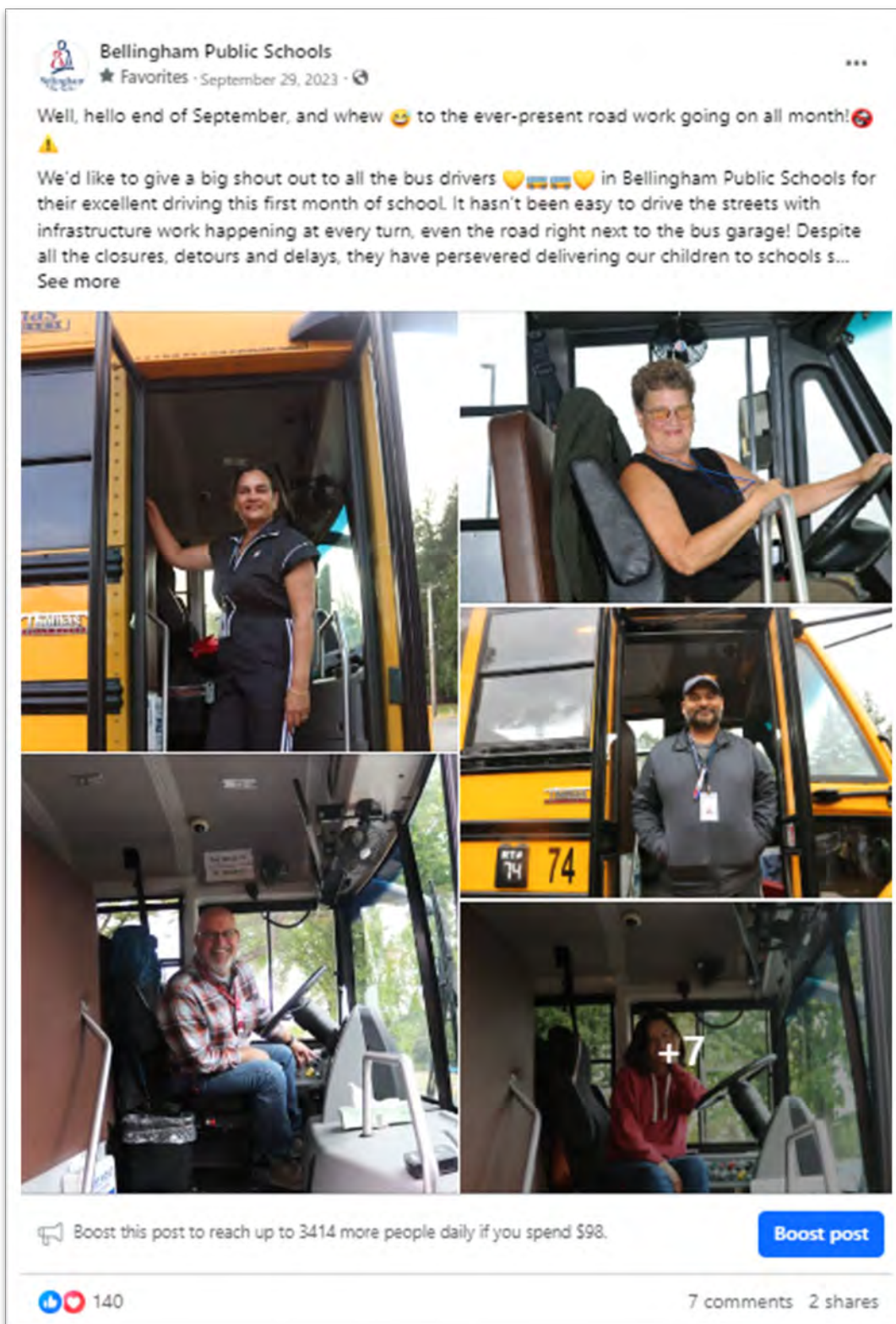
A post about custodian Scott Sorenson and his longevity in BPS (40 years!) garnered 394 likes on Instagram and 169 likes on Facebook. (March 2023)

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A post about social studies teacher Matthew Boushey and his plaid shirt garnered 382 likes on Instagram and 82 likes on Facebook. (October 2023)

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A post at the end of September highlighted our bus drivers garnering 140 likes on Facebook and 455 likes on Instagram.



Celebrating legendary BPS volunteer Naaman Hinton during volunteer week

E) Digital Forms

Qualtrics

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic greatly expanded our use of Qualtrics, and we continue to see its uses expanding during our most recent reporting period.

Though we have closed some projects that had purposes exclusive to health and safety protocols during the COVID-19 era, the use of Qualtrics continues to expand.

All initial training and troubleshooting are provided by the communications technician specialist.

Our uses for Qualtrics are close to endless, we continue to work to find operating and upkeep capacities to develop and maintain new projects in the system.

We continue to explore opportunities to empower other departments with a “train the trainer” mode, to share capacities and empower continued use of the product.

The largest and most robust annual Qualtrics project continues to be our climate survey. The project has specific audience questions for staff, families and students. All data is connected to a summary dashboard that can be viewed by district and school leadership. During the reporting period, we had 5,188 total responses to climate surveys.

Other examples of heavily used Qualtrics projects used on recurring basis include: districtwide transfer requests, student athletics, activities and clubs interest survey, post-occupancy evaluation surveys for new buildings in our district and Promise Kindergarten applications.

Qualtrics is also supported by communications and used for many one-time surveys such as vaccine clinic scheduling, advisory committees and budget planning feedback.

Forms used during this reporting period included:

- Family, student and staff climate surveys (5,199 responses)
- Request for Student Attendance Area Transfer (4,591 responses since 2019)
- Student athletic interest survey (1,125 responses)
- 2023-24 staff vaccine clinics (379 responses)
- Bellingham High School Staff Vaccine Clinic (298 responses)
- Operation School Benn Consent (254 responses)
- Promise Awards nomination form 2023 (236 responses)
- Post occupancy evaluation (139 responses)

F) Digital Signage

External reader boards

The communications team continues to develop the use of external school reader board signs, funded by the 2018 bond.

Six signs were installed during the last reporting period, with one school reader board (Silver Beach Elementary) added during the current reporting period.

The signs provide a strong public presence to share messages such as school specific events and districtwide calendar reminders. Staff can add any combination of content slides (a single slide or as many as desired) that will rotate and play during sign “on” hours.

The communications technician specialist provides all training and support to school leadership and staff designated to provide content updates to signs. The communications team also provides templates and visual resources to support the sign content design process for school staff.

Initial training includes access and overview of the web-based sign updating software, which controls sign content. During the reporting period, the communications technician specialist provided a new training session to Silver Beach Elementary and a couple of training refreshers.

The communication staff also provides content monitoring support of the signs. This includes adding districtwide reminders to signs (ex. early dismissal days) so that school staff can focus efforts on messaging unique to their respective schools. The communications team also works to ensure proper function signs are “on” and “off” at appropriate times to abide by city code parameters.

Monitoring Report for EL-3

Presently, our schools with reader boards are:

- Alderwood Elementary School
- Bellingham High School
- Cordata Elementary School
- Parkview Elementary School
- Shuksan Middle School
- Silver Beach Elementary School
- Sunnyland Elementary School





TruDigital internal displays

TruDigital is a digital signage software used by a portion of our schools to share content within school buildings on TV displays. Content shared through the software is typically specific to internal student audiences.

The communications technician specialist supports training and troubleshooting requests for identified school staff tasked with updating their school displays. The communications team also supports the sharing and sizing of graphics for display, upon request, and can push content remotely to signs.

Across the district, 12 TruDigital display systems were active during the reporting period.

Media Coverage and Relations

The communications team continues our track record of timely and excellent customer service with traditional and new media outlets in our community, typically responding in one working day to any media request, often more quickly, depending upon the reporter's deadline or other circumstances, and working to arrange interviews with district staff, families and/or students as appropriate.

Communications cultivates positive and responsive working relationships with our local media, the goal of which is a high level of trust and mutual respect. During this reporting period, the executive director and assistant director met in person with editors and reporters from the Bellingham Herald, the Cascadia Daily News, and KGMI (Cascade Radio Group) to make intentional personal connections, share district initiatives, learn about changes/adaptations being made by each media outlet, and learn more about local media trends and community interest. The assistant director also connects bi-weekly with the education reporter from the Cascadia Daily.

Cultivating a regular schedule of conversations with our media partners builds trust and an ability to proactively work to connect them with stories about district initiatives and programs. We understand that the Bellingham Herald may have a reporter more dedicated to the education beat soon; we have offered and hope to initiate regular meetings with their reporting staff as well.

Communications also provides support and media coaching/orientations to staff members concerned or nervous about being interviewed and works to connect reporters with a wide range of subject matter experts from across the district, both geographically and by level.

Although our messages to families, the wider community and our media list serve as press releases and often result in inquiries, the communications team has also increased our proactive press releases and direct pitches to local outlets. We have made this change due to each local outlet expressing the wish to expand coverage of education topics and local events.

We continue to field more media inquiries than in prior years. In our judgement, this is in part due to media trends and best practices regarding local coverage, and in part due to the introduction of the Cascadia Daily to our local media landscape, which has created a "rising tide that lifts all [media] ships."

While professional press inquiries increased, requests from student reporters from our local college publications decreased during this reporting period. WWU is a valued community partner, and communications works with collegiate journalists following the same protocols as the professional press.

Media relations by the numbers

- Direct inquiries received in this reporting period: more than 100, an increase from around 73 in previous reporting period. This represents an average of 1.9 inquiries / week, with some topics/issues bringing multiple inquiries from multiple outlets or requiring multiple follow-ups.
 - Around 60 inquiries resulted in published stories and/or broadcast coverage
 - Estimated staff time spent on published stories: approx. 190 hours for responding, researching, providing statements, facilitating site visits, and/or participating in interviews.
 - Around five inquiries resulted in unpublished stories (e.g., for a collegiate class)
 - Staff time spent on unpublished stories: approx. 6 hours spent responding, researching, providing statements, and/or participating in interviews.
 - The balance of inquiries represented a variety of scenarios, such as checking in on scanner activity or the validity of a community tip, a story that may have been dropped due to the editorial process at a publication, or a story that had to be postponed due to scheduling conflicts.
 - Staff time spent responding to these inquiries: approx. 28 hours.
- This data does not include the increase in reporting on public events such as plays, concerts and prep sports, which are coordinated primarily through our high school coaches and athletics & activities coordinators, with support from our media liaison as needed.
- Coverage varied widely. During this reporting period our media reported on a variety of topics and events related to BPS, including our fifth grade track meet; an arrest at Civic field after OHS graduation; budget cuts; various capital projects including the new playground at Silver Beach, concerns about Carl Cozier, and school reader boards; child care access in our community; climate anxiety; CTE classes/programs; retirement of longtime swim coach; a false alarm regarding fentanyl at a middle school; school safety protocols and situations; and “What’s the deal with the steps at Whatcom Middle School?”
- The most reported-on topics were the 2023-24 school budget cuts and the ongoing legal case regarding our three assistant principals, resolved in December 2023.
- COVID-19 appears to have dropped very far down most outlets’ priority list, and the only inquiries regarding COVID that we received were in response to erroneous/exaggerated tips about illness rates at schools during the flu/cold/respiratory illness season.

New and notable media trends or activities:

- Live broadcasts: We experienced increased interest in and coordination of live / recorded radio activity in our schools. In June we hosted KAFE radio live on site at Squalicum, Birchwood, and in Sept. 2023 at Sehome to mark the last day of school and the first week of school, respectively. The KAFE morning show crew interviewed staff and students,

providing strong and positive P.R., and even rode around on a school bus in June! This coverage is outstanding and priceless P.R. for our district.

- KAFE Kids – KAFE Kids is a weekly feature on KAFE 104.1 radio station, featuring children engaged in light and usually funny conversation with the hosts, Dave and Allan. Prior to this year we did not have a centralized method to connect KAFE with our elementary classrooms, so sometimes this media activity happened outside of our protocols, or our schools were underrepresented compared to the rest of the KAFE reach. Our media liaison worked to connect KAFE with schools across our district and, during the reporting period, visited Alderwood and Parkview, with additional visits scheduled during the next reporting period.
- During this reporting period, our district also wrote a letter to the editor of CDN regarding community access to school facilities and athletic fields. The Herald does not appear to have a current mechanism for publishing letters to the editor.
- Cascadia Daily initiated a practice in fall 2022 for each prep sports season, featuring two student athletes from each local school in a special edition, and launched a spring senior/graduation spotlight edition that featured two graduates from each local high school. High school administrators help to coordinate this coverage with support from our media liaison.
 - o Spring sports 2023
 - o Graduation 2023
 - o Fall sports 2023
 - o Winter sports 2023

In order of volume of inquiries, the most common media inquiries came from: The Bellingham Herald (33, up from 24 in previous reporting period), Cascadia Daily (32, nearly double the last reporting period's 17), KGMI (7), WWU reporters (10) and the Salish Current (2).

Communications also worked with Good Housekeeping magazine, Bellingham radio station KMRE, University of Washington communications, the Daily Journal of Commerce (Seattle), Seattle TV stations KOMO, KIRO and Q13, and additional websites or researchers.

2a ii) School board meetings and materials

During the reporting period, the school board met in-person for its meetings at Options High School. Our board meeting materials are on the website and available before each meeting.

2b) communicate short-term and long-term district and school strategic plans describing initiatives and programs to achieve board ends policies

We communicate and share short-term and long-term district and school strategic plans, initiatives and programs to achieve board ends policies, which are part of The Bellingham Promise, in a number of ways. Here are some examples:

- Linkages, student roundtables and school visits: The school board regularly shares that they enjoy in-person events such as school visits, linkages and student roundtables. These visits allow board members and executive team the chance to hear firsthand from students and staff about experiences, reflections and special programs. Photos and reflections from these visits are shared on social media.

During this reporting period, the board visited several schools, including Bellingham Family Partnership, Cordata, Whatcom, Roosevelt, Shuksan and Geneva. The board also hosted a student roundtables at Options with GRADS students, at Shuksan with AVID students, at Sunnyland and Bellingham High with teacher academy students and a community linkage with students and families served in Special Education.

- Promise website: Our strategic plan, The Bellingham Promise, is referenced in many of our communications. During this reporting period, we have published 27 Promise stories with 23,771 pageviews on the Promise website. We continue to share these stories to staff and families via email regularly and post them on social media.
- Superintendent reports at board meetings: At the beginning of each board meeting, I share a slideshow of a variety of photos, events, celebrations, initiatives and updates from across our district.
- Priorities for Progress, which is organized by The Bellingham Promise's key strategies. This annual publication includes priorities under each strategy to support the board ends.
- Committees and advisory groups: much of the work accomplished in Bellingham Public Schools is the result of committees and task forces. Membership consists of representatives from stakeholder groups. All do specific work at the direction of the superintendent.

2c) provide the public, parents and students relevant information on student progress toward achieving board ends policies;

A silver lining of the pandemic was staff's increased use, access and adaptability in communicating with families, including in-person meetings and teacher/parent conferences to web tools (Skyward, Zoom, email, social media and ParentSquare). Our staff consistently engage with families about student progress, including progress reports, report cards, graduation requirements and state assessments.

Both staff and families are more adept at utilizing apps and technology to share information about student progress. This includes the use of tools such as SeeSaw and Teams in addition to the tools previously noted.

Our family engagement team plays a significant role in connecting families with our schools and staff not only regarding student progress but also sharing resources, news, important dates and emergency notification.

The Department of Communications and Community Relations includes and highlights the 17 outcomes in The Bellingham Promise in much of what it communicates to staff, families and our community, including the Promise site, our storytelling tool, and general communications (press releases) from the superintendent, the Department of Teaching and Learning and our schools.

Monitoring Report for EL-3

We continue to use The Bellingham Promise website and social media to share stories about The Bellingham Promise in action in our schools and community.

Collectively, our Promise web pages had 23,771 pageviews during the reporting period.

Below are the top five most viewed Promise stories for this reporting period:

1. AP Human Geography provides early access to college-level rigor (790 pageviews)
2. Reading Pals Volunteer Program Needs You! (731 pageviews)
3. Celebrating 50 years of the All-City Fifth Grade Track & Field Meet (582 pageviews)
4. Teacher academy exploring careers in education (468 pageview)
5. Roots of Empathy program enhances social and emotional learning (457 pageview)

Also from EL-3:

2d) provide an affirmative (or negative) statement that the following actions have been taken:

- i. **a process is in place to address student, parent, and stakeholder concerns in a timely manner;**

Affirmative. The process is outlined in our Family Handbook, and there are many other avenues for stakeholders to share concerns, including our general inquiry form on our website, emails directly to the superintendent, visits or calls to the District Office or schools, and even on social media.

Members of the executive team, principals and other leaders and staff communicate and meet with parents and others who have concerns. Parents or community members who email or call the District Office with concerns or questions typically receive a phone call, email or an offer to meet with an executive team member or staff member, often within a few hours after they sent their question or concern. Staff in our schools follow a similar protocol. Our staff do not shy away from resolving conflict and strive to model the tenets of The Bellingham Promise to act as respectful and compassionate humans.

During this reporting period, 46 audience members spoke during the public comment period of the board meeting. 88 comments were submitted to the Listening Post. (Some were duplicates and 48 of the 88 messages were sent by the same person.) Listening Post submissions contain complaints, concerns and/or general comments for the board.

- ii. **the district engages with appropriate community advisory groups on important questions. Andrew**

Affirmative. The Department of Communications and Community Relations helps develop the committee processes with district and school leaders, then publicizes the call for applicants, attends the group's meetings and assists with strategic communications for internal and external audiences.

The following groups were active during this reporting period:

Facilities

- Elementary School 15 Educational Specifications Design Advisory Committee
- District Office Design Advisory Committee
- Kulshan Middle School Field Ad Hoc Committee

Parent Advisory Committees

- Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent

Teaching and Learning

- CTE General Advisory Council
- Dual Language Program Planning Task Force
- High School Advisory Task Force
- Inclusionary Instruction Strategies Standing Committee
- Instructional Materials Committee
- Professional Development Study Joint Committee with BEA
- Student Conduct Join Committee with BEA

Superintendent

- Student Advisory Committee to the Superintendent

Other

- Occupational Health & Safety Committee
- Promise Awards Advisory Group
- School-Based Health Center Planning Task Force
- Sustainability Advisory Committee

Statement of Compliance: The superintendent is in compliance with EL-3.