



MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Directors

From: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

Date: February 22, 2024

Subject: **Monitoring Report for EL-4, Staff Treatment, Compensation and Evaluation**

I certify that the following is accurate as of February 22, 2024. The reporting period is from February 17, 2023 through February 22, 2024.

Policy type: Executive Limitation (EL)

Policy: [EL-4 Staff Treatment, Compensation and Evaluation](#)

“The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that staff is treated with respect and dignity and that the district’s public image or credibility does not fall into disrespect or ill repute due to imprudent employment decisions.”

Adopted: September 10, 2009

Revised: April 18, 2013, June 26, 2014, March 9, 2017, April 17, 2019

Interpretation of items: None in question

Background information: This report is about Executive Limitation 4 – Staff Treatment, Compensation, and Evaluation (EL-4). It was created in April 2013 by combining three prior Els: Staff Treatment EL-4, Staff Compensation EL-5, and Staff Evaluation EL-6. The board adopted the revised/combined edition of this EL in April 2013.

*Some of the information in this report has not changed from previous reports but provides needed context for each area. **Bolded words** or phrases within the text of this report have been used to signal new initiatives, strategies and work. EL-4 has five major areas and a response to each of them follows.*

1. The superintendent shall not fail to take all reasonable and prudent actions with respect to the hiring and continued employment of district employees that are typical for similar and highly effective school districts.

Each year the district reviews hiring practices, processes and timelines and makes necessary adjustments to recruit the most qualified candidates for each position. Although some requirements for different positions vary, we require an application form, letter of application, reference letters, confidential reference forms, disclosures, applicable licenses/certificates and a written response to “The Bellingham Promise”. Applicants apply and submit their application materials through our web-based application system (HRM+). Each year, the human resources staff work with and train administrators and supervisors on sound and legal hiring practices, especially our new administrators to the district.

Once a position has been posted/advertised, principals or program administrators screen files electronically to determine candidates most qualified for the position. Candidates then go through various processes such as interview(s), testing, reference checks and certification checks prior to recommendation for hire. The district also conducts background checks, in accordance with law, including fingerprint and State Patrol/FBI checks.

We are continuing our outreach through job fairs and advertising on websites such as Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), Washington School Personnel Association (WSPA), Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS), National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), Diversitywashington.com, Washington Association of School Business Officials (WSBO), Government Finance Officers Association, NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement, The National Association of Educational Procurement (NAEP), Washington State Paralegal Association (WSPA), LinkedIn, The Bellingham Herald, Craigslist, Indeed, WorkSource and other online sites as applicable. We continue to partner with universities for student teaching to attract the highest quality staff and increase the diversity of candidates.



Budget reductions limited our ability to hire new employees in 2023. We adjusted our focus to retaining our existing staff. In some cases, staff were involuntarily transferred into different positions. Reductions are always challenging, but our goal was to make the necessary budget reductions through natural attrition, rather than laying off employees. As the dust settled, we were very successful with this approach, achieving nearly all our administrative and certificated reductions through attrition. Statutory deadlines did force us to make some reductions prior to the state legislature finishing their budget. Therefore, we were forced to non-renew some provisional employees.

We followed our collective bargaining agreements to reduce the total number of budgeted positions, both certificated and classified. Certificated positions were initially reduced by not renewing provisional contracts. It was a bit of a puzzle to honor the continuing contracts of some employees working in programs that were reduced. For instance, elementary and middle school librarian positions and instructional coaches were reduced. We were able to transfer employees into other teaching positions for which they were qualified.

As retirements, resignations and leaves came in, we emphasized rehiring teachers that had their provisional contracts non-renewed. Many of our newly hired teachers also enhanced the diversity of our workforce. It was a priority for us to bring back staff that better represent our diverse student population. **Nearly all our teaching staff were hired back.** We also prioritized bringing staff back to schools that would have been impacted by a disproportionate number of provisional teachers. Cordata Elementary is a great example. They had six classroom teachers who held provisional contracts and faced non-renewal. We successfully rehired all six teachers and by doing so, maintained consistency amongst the staff which is critically important to supporting a school with Cordata's demographic makeup.

Classified staff reductions were also quite challenging to navigate. Many positions were reduced initially by 45 minutes. This approach effectively prevented layoffs but did spread the impact across more positions. **Since that initial reduction, we have worked to restore hours to as many positions as possible. Also, nearly all staff that had reduced hours were offered the chance to transfer into different positions with increased hours.** It is still a goal of ours to restore the hours of the positions.

Our Department of Facilities and Sustainability also made some reductions by leaving open positions unfilled. Over the past months, some of those positions have been filled. This includes some custodial hours and journeyman positions. The department continues to evaluate which positions are necessary and advocate for restored positions as needed.

Substitutes

The daily need for substitute teachers and paraeducators continues to challenge our systems as we attempt to fill vacant positions in our schools. **While we are not yet at our pre-pandemic numbers, there is a significant decline in the number of substitutes needed each day in our schools.** For example, last year we needed almost 16,000 subs during the first semester of the

school year (August 2022-January 2023). This year, for the same period (August 2023-January 2024), our overall need decreased by about 1,500. This data suggests two things: (1) there are fewer requests by contracted staff to use sick days or other types of leave; and (2) we have proactively hired more temporary paraeducators instead of subbing needed positions for extended periods of time. See chart below.

Substitute Rates for Semester 1 2019-2024			
School Year (Semester 1 only)	Total Vacancies	Percent of Absences Filled	Notes
2019-2020	13,394	98.49%	Pre-pandemic, closed March 2020
2020-2021			Staggered return, no sub data for comparison
2021-2022	17,601	90.63%	All students and staff returned in August
2022-2023	15,998	86.55%	
2023-2024	14,508	89.89%	

Our goal continues to focus on the percentage fill rate. During the 2019-2020 school year, our fill rate was about 98% on average, as compared to the current year, which is just under 90% on average. When we further examine this year's data, there is a significant difference in the percentage of certificated positions as compared to classified positions that are filled each day (97% as compared to 84%).

Substitute Fill Rate August 31, 2023 – January 31, 2024						
	Total Absences/Vacancies	Absences/Vacancies Needing a Substitute	Absences/Vacancies Not Needing a Substitute	Unfilled	Filled	Percent of Absences/Vacancies Filled
Classified	7,599	6,998	601	1,087	5,911	84%
Certificated	6,883	5,360	1,523	163	5,197	97%

Overall, we are making strides in ensuring our schools are adequately staffed with the needed substitutes each day. Specially, **this year, we have implemented the following systems to ensure recruitment, interviewing, onboarding and support are as efficient as possible:**

- Monthly job postings for both classified and certificated substitute pools. In years past, the department's practice was to post one job posting for subs for the entire school year. With this system, some subs would apply for a job, but not get a call back for several weeks or months. This was not aligned to our practice of strong customer service and responsive support. By changing the system to monthly postings, our team is better able to reach out to candidates in a timely manner and provide our buildings with new subs on a more regular basis.
- Weekly schedule for onboarding process. This year, our HR Specialist has worked hard to develop a reliable system for screening and onboarding new subs. She schedules her week in a such a way that screenings, interviews, onboarding, and follow up each happen on specific days. This allows for more efficiency and better time management. For example, when onboarding new subs, the amount of time is about the same for a group of 2 new subs as it is for a group of 10 new subs. By streamlining the interview process, we are better able to fill onboarding sessions and have more subs ready to work each week.
- Intentional partnership with Western Washington University's Elementary Education Department. This year, we've partnered with WWU to welcome new interns to Bellingham Public Schools. We know that subbing in our schools is a great way for pre-service teachers to gain valuable experience while completing their internship. Through this partnership, Western was able to adjust class schedules so that interns have 1-2 days per week where they do not have classes or internship responsibilities and can sub in our schools. This has been a great way to allow more paraeducator subs in our schools and build stronger relationships with our university partners.

Employee Recognition

Recognition is an important aspect of hiring and retaining qualified staff. The Department of Communications and Community Relations helps manage staff recognition by providing an avenue for staff to celebrate each other; developing criteria and a process for selection of districtwide staff and community partners in our annual awards; planning and implementing events; and offering a variety of ways to recognize staff and others.

Here are some examples of this work during this reporting period:

Good Apples: Two to three times per school year, communications staff asks employees for submissions to recognize staff accomplishments, shine a spotlight on the work of a colleague, and extend special thanks and appreciation in a positive way. We collect and edit submissions and produce an interactive film, as well as a PDF version. These are generally shared in a message of gratitude from the superintendent. In this reporting period, Good Apples recognition occurred twice, once in [February 2023](#) and again during American Education Week in [November 2023](#).

- 1) **Promise Awards:** We are committed to recognizing the special achievements and outstanding contributions of staff, volunteers and community partners. The annual [Promise Awards](#) provide an opportunity to highlight the exceptional work of select honorees who make a significant difference in our schools and community. These award recipients represent our school system and help increase awareness of the important contributions of our staff. The 2023 Promise Awards included surprise visits and award recipients received engraved trophies. [Read full release here.](#)

Above and Beyond Service Award: Jim Hammett, head custodian at Alderwood

Collaboration Award: Sports Medicine teachers/athletic trainers Maggie Hite, Tido Nakazato and Katie Owens

Compassion and Service Award: Fairhaven teacher Michael Finley

Great Teaching Award: Carl Cozier teacher Rachel Roeder

One Schoolhouse Award: music teacher David Jones

Outstanding Leadership Award: Northern Heights principal Pam Pottle

PHOTO BELOW: *Top row:* custodian Jim Hammett, principal Pam Pottle, music teacher David Jones; *Bottom row:* teacher Michael Finley, teachers Tido Nakazato, Katie Owens, Maggie Hite, and teacher Rachel Roeder



[Additional photos from the surprise visits are found here.](#)

[A compilation video of the 2023 Promise Awards was shared in spring 2023.](#)



There were also multiple posts and short videos about the Promise Awards shared on social media.

- 2) **Retirements:** The Department of Communications and Community Relations annually hosts a semi-formal dinner to honor retirees in the district. In spring 2023, nearly 50 invitations were sent out and 26 retirees (including teachers, classified staff, bus drivers and food service staff) chose to attend the dinner at the Hotel Bellwether on June 1, 2023. To show appreciation for their years of service, every retiree who attended the dinner received a tribute read aloud during the program, a sit-down dinner, and an engraved vase with flowers. The retirement dinner and tribute program are supported by the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation. [A full album of retirement dinner photos is on Flickr.](#)





- 3) **Staff Kick Off:** The All Staff Kick-Off Celebration was held on Aug. 30, 2023 at Civic Stadium. Emceed in 2023 by Whatcom Middle School assistant principal Breann Hulford and campus monitor Gerardo Cisneros, with special performances by high school dance teams and choral groups, the event brings together all staff the day before students return as a fun and inspirational way to start the school year. This year’s event had a distinct “swiftly” theme riffing on the popular artist’s tour of U.S. cities in 2023.

IT'S THE START OF A NEW ERA!

JOIN US AT THE ALL STAFF KICK-OFF CELEBRATION!

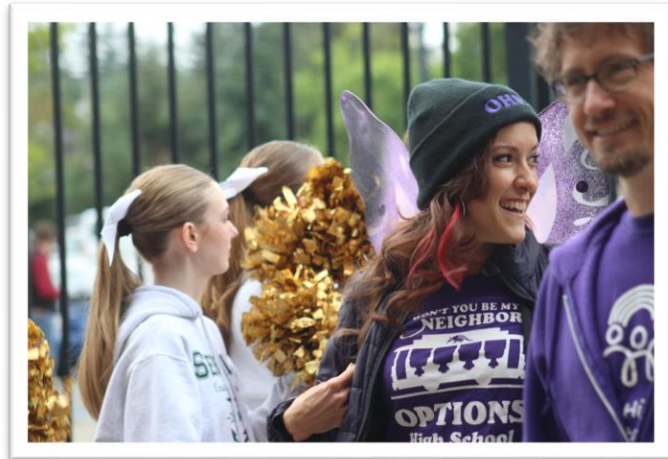
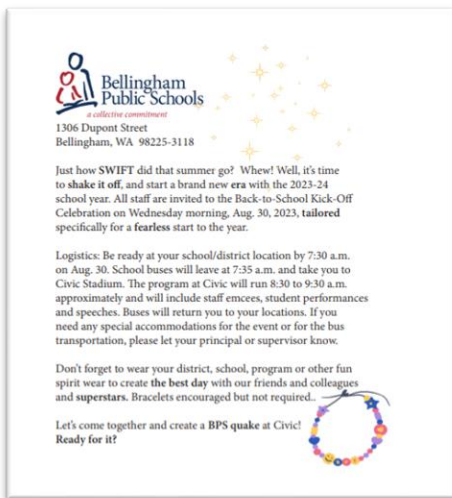
Wednesday morning, Aug. 30, 2023 Civic Stadium

NORTHERN HEIGHTS CORDATA
ALDERWOOD LOWELL OPTIONS
SILVER BEACH GENEVA PARKVIEW
HAPPY VALLEY KULSHAN SEHOME
SUNNYLAND BELLINGHAM
SQUALICUM BIRCHWOOD
COLUMBIA WADE KING
ROOSEVELT WHATCOM
COMMUNITY TRANSITIONS
NORTHERN HEIGHTS SHUKSAN
CORDATA OPTIONS SILVER BEACH
SUNNYLAND BELLINGHAM
FAIRHAVEN COLUMBIA
SQUALICUM ROOSEVELT
CARL COZIER ALDERWOOD
HAPPY VALLEY KULSHAN SEHOME
FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
CORDATA GENEVA OPTIONS
BELLINGHAM PARKVIEW

COLUMBIA WHATCOM
LOWELL WADE KING GENEVA
SILVER BEACH KULSHAN SEHOME
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PARKVIEW SUNNYLAND
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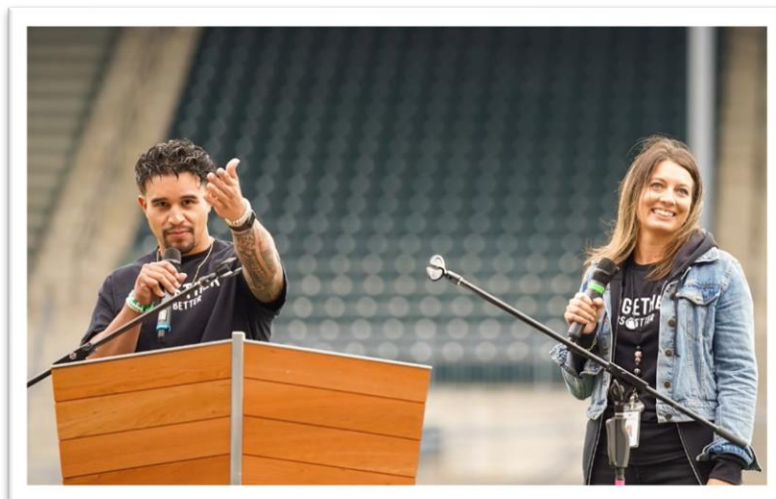
KULSHAN SEHOME
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COMMUNITY TRANSITIONS
NORTHERN HEIGHTS

Bellingham Public Schools

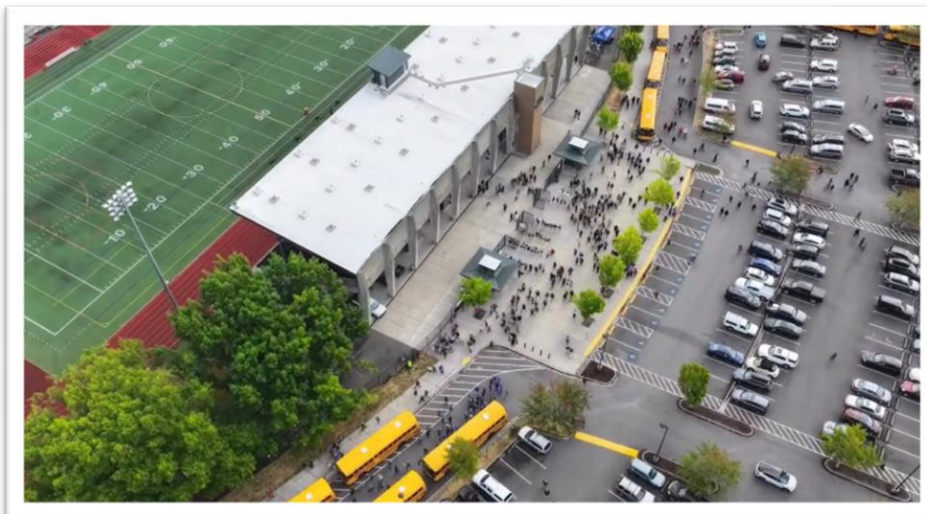


The social media post for this year's staff kickoff event garnered nearly 434 likes on Instagram and 83 likes on Facebook and included a drone flyover.

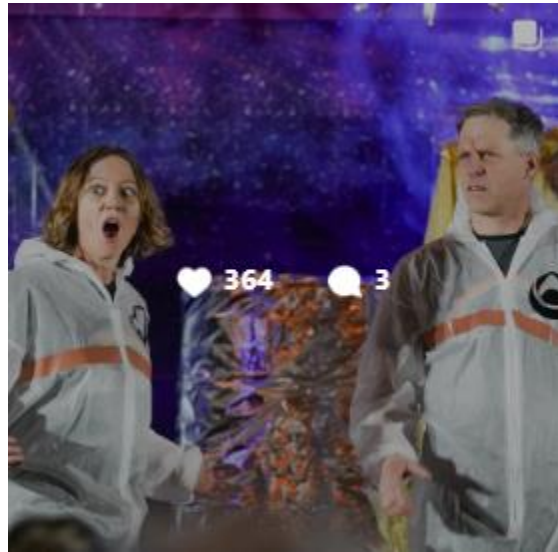
[Photos from the 2023 Kick Off are also available on Flickr.](#)



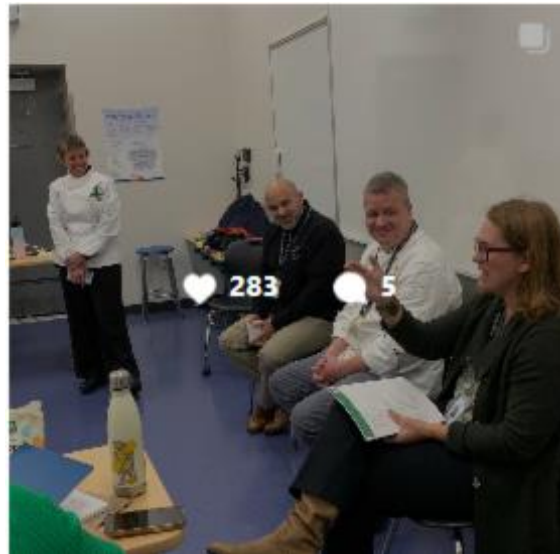
[See drone flyover video and social media post.](#)



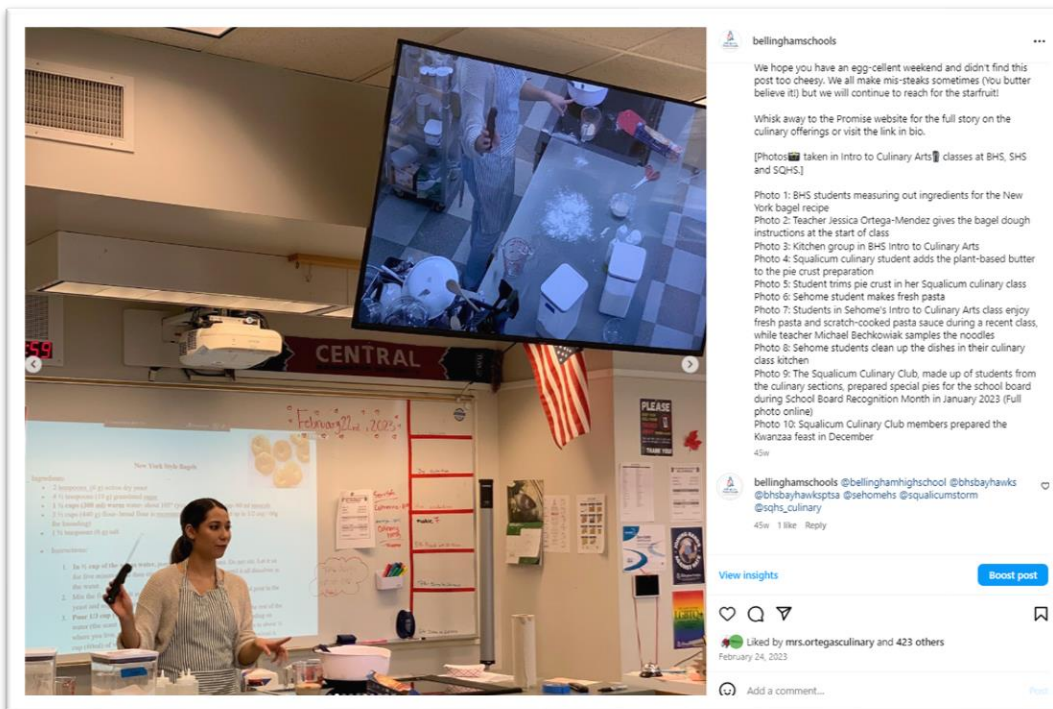
- 4) **Social media posts highlighting staff:** Between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2023, staff members were highlighted regularly in district social media on Facebook, Instagram, X formerly Twitter and LinkedIn. Here is a sampling of these posts, captions and photos:



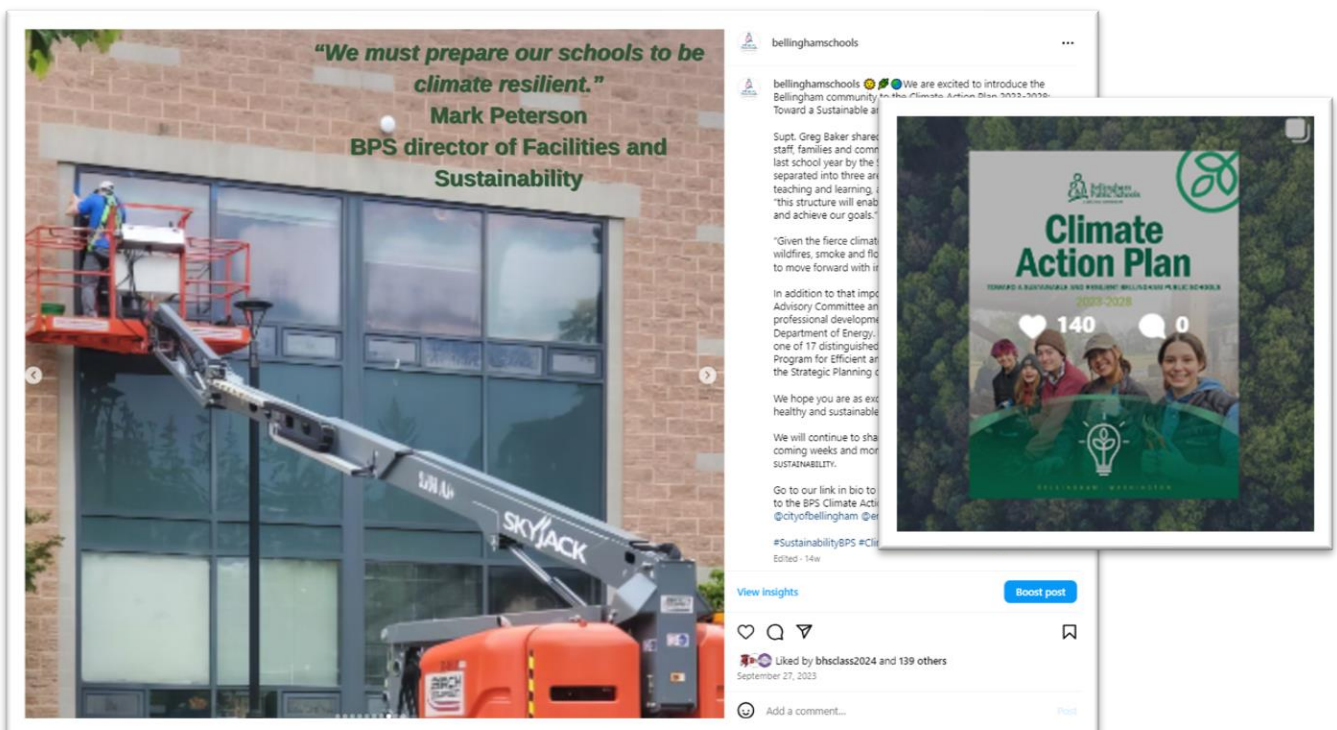
Roosevelt staff plays in December 2022 and 2023. Posts in January 2023 (see Promise story below) and December 2023, both in this reporting period.



Post highlighting the Central Kitchen and cafeterias with a visit from Chef Ann

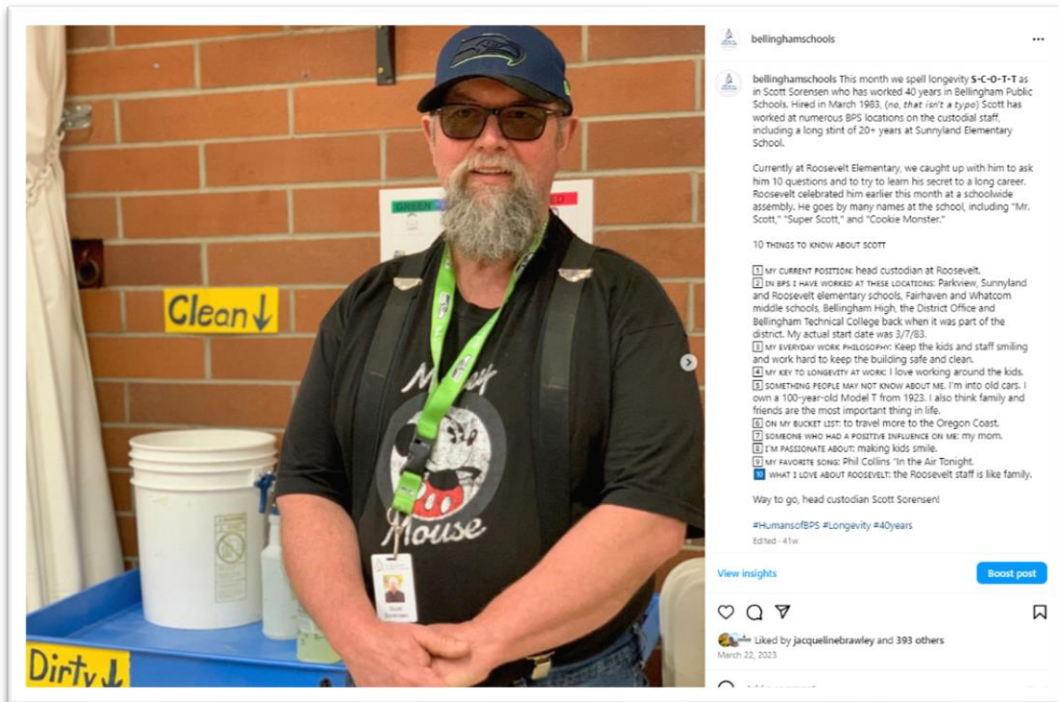


Post highlighting the culinary arts classes and teachers in BPS (food pun alert!) See Promise story below.

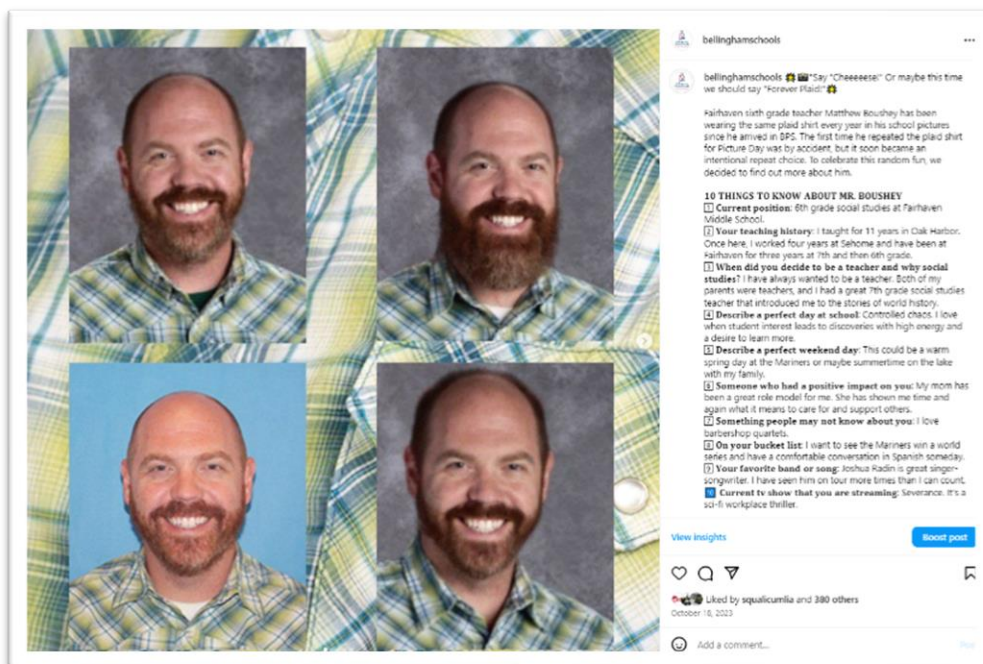


Several posts in this reporting period shared updates on the Sustainability Advisory Committee, the district's new Climate Action Plan (adopted Sept. 2023), and updates highlighting the important work of transportation, facilities and operations staff.

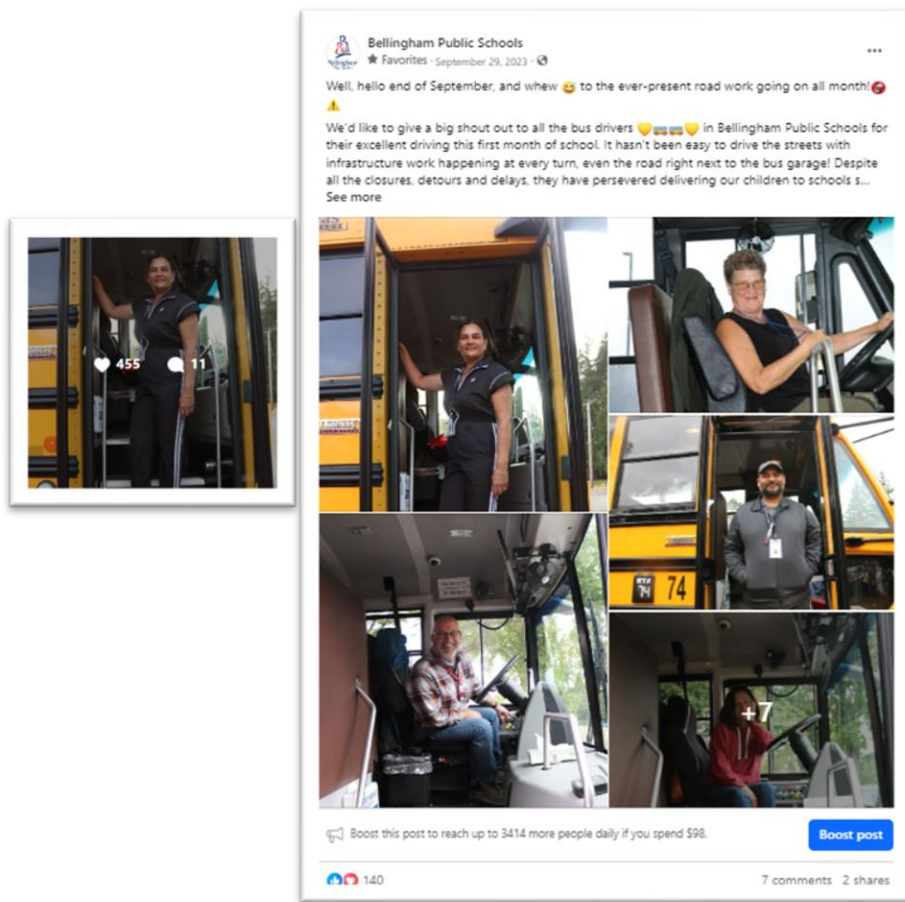
Individual staff were also highlighted on social media occasionally:



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



A post about social studies teacher Matthew Boushey and his plaid shirt garnered 380 likes on Instagram and 82 likes on Facebook.



A post at the end of September highlighted our bus drivers garnering 140 likes on Facebook and 455 likes on Instagram. See Promise story below on Oct. 12.

5) Promise stories with staff focus (Educators in Action) are published online and often included in our printed InsideSchools community newsletter, shared in social media posts, and emailed in Promise story highlights.

Teacher Academy: Exploring careers in education: (Published online Jan. 5, 2023, included in spring 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/01/05/teacher-academy-exploring-careers-in-education/>

Roosevelt staff brings joy to the stage annually (Published online Jan. 6, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/01/06/roosevelt-staff-brings-joy-to-the-stage-annually/>

A chance meeting leads to books for Alderwood students (Published online Jan. 31, 2023; included in spring 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/01/31/a-chance-meeting-leads-to-books-for-alderwood-students/>

BPS partners with local film company on Treaty Day history: (Published online Feb. 1, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/02/01/bps-partners-with-film-company-on-treaty-day-history/>

The road to healthy school food comes full circle for BPS (Published online Feb. 17, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/02/17/the-road-to-healthy-school-food-comes-full-circle/>

Senior photo shoots and yearbooks, now part of Project Free Education (Published online Feb. 22, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/02/22/senior-photo-shoots-and-yearbooks-now-part-of-project-free-education/>

AP Human Geography provides early access to college-level rigor: (Published online Feb. 23, 2023; included in spring 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/02/23/ap-human-geography-provides-early-access-to-college-level-rigor/>

Culinary electives teach cooking skills and important life lessons: (Published online Feb. 24, 2023; included in spring 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/02/24/culinary-electives-teach-cooking-skills-and-important-life-lessons-along-the-way/>

Middle School Math: Building students ready for high school math, career, college: (Published online March 27, 2023; included in spring 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/03/27/middle-school-math-building-students-ready-for-high-school-math-career-college/>

Shuksan artists inspired by the work of Alma Thomas: (Published online May 2, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/05/02/shuksan-student-artists-inspired-by-the-work-of-alma-thomas/>

Music Educators learn world music drumming in summer workshop: (Published online Sept. 11, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/09/11/music-educators-learn-world-music-drumming-through-summer-workshop-experience/>

Project Free Education: Fifth Grade Strings (Published online Sept. 27, 2023; included in fall 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/09/27/project-free-education-5th-grade-strings/>

What makes us smile? A children's book and translation with connections to district: (Published online Oct. 5, 2023; included in fall 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/10/05/what-makes-us-smile-a-childrens-book-and-translation-with-connections-to-district/>

Roots of Empathy program enhances social and emotional learning: (Published online Oct. 4, 2023; included in fall 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/10/04/roots-of-empathy-program-enhances-social-and-emotional-learning-curriculum>

Transportation staff delivers on The Bellingham Promise: (Published online Oct. 12, 2023; included in fall 2023 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/10/12/transportation-staff-delivers-on-the-bellingham-promise>

Developing literacy skills in our K-2 students: (Published online Oct. 27, 2023; to be included in winter 2024 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/10/27/developing-literacy-skills-in-our-k-2-students/>

Commemorating Treaty Day through collaboration, listening and learning: (Published online Nov. 29, 2023; to be included in winter 2024)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/11/29/commemorating-treaty-day-through-collaboration-listening-and-learning/>

Climate Corps Fellow joins BPS this fall: (Nov. 27, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/11/27/climate-corps-fellow-joins-bps-this-fall/>

Facilities and Operations Update, Fall 2023: (Dec. 4, 2023)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/12/04/a-facilities-and-operations-update/>

Understanding work-based and worksite learning opportunities (Dec. 18, 2023, reposted 1/2/2024; to be included in winter 2024 InsideSchools)

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2024/01/02/understanding-work-based-and-worksite-learning-opportunities-for-high-schoolers/>

Volunteers

With no COVID-19 restrictions in place, volunteer engagement returned to pre-pandemic levels with nearly 5,000 approved volunteers in the database this year. More than half of these volunteers are comprised of parents and guardians of BPS students with community members and WWU students providing additional support in our schools. Volunteers are serving our students and teachers in the capacities:

- AVID and after-school tutors,
- supporting classroom teachers,
- lunch and recess duty,

- bilingual tutors for newcomers,
- after-school enrichment,
- athletic support for coaches,
- field trip chaperones, and
- bulletin board builders, materials preparation and a plethora of additional roles as needed.

Based on teacher feedback this year, a new program, Reading Pals, was developed to support students who would benefit from added reading practice. This has been a popular program, particularly with retired educators, and has grown to 38 reading pal tutors reading with elementary students in nine schools this year.

Block Party

In partnership with the Bellingham Schools Foundation and several community sponsorships, the district held its 3rd annual Block Party/school readiness event in 2023.

Approximately 2,300 students and families attended the block party with over 150 BPS staff and community volunteers and partners supporting the event. Here is a snapshot of the event's impact:

- 85 onsite sports physicals provided by four PeaceHealth doctors,
- 80 childhood vaccines dispensed by the Whatcom County Health Department,
- More than 3,000 free books distributed by the Lion's Club,
- Hundreds of backpacks with crayons and other art supplies given out by Blue Skies for Children,
- More than 75 haircuts completed by the Evergreen Beauty College, and 40 haircut coupons distributed, and
- 600 slices of pizza, 300 vegetarian plates and 670 taco plates served!

In addition to the providers above, twenty-five community partners provided additional resources on early childhood education, after-school care and enrichment, utility bill assistance and multiple health care options.



Community Partners

The volunteer coordinator continues to support over 25 community partners and meets quarterly alongside the Executive Director of Family Engagement, Isabel Meaker, to discuss district updates, share resources and ideas on how to support our students and families. Based on the positive feedback from last year's training, the Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion will provide community partners with another three-hour training which will help build a consistent framework of student advocacy and support across the district.

2. The superintendent shall not fail to:

a. Ensure all staff are qualified and effective.

Ensuring qualified and effective staff members is core work for our district. Human resources processes described previously in this report help us to continue to hire able and effective staff. We often start this relationship with teachers-in-training and are privileged to host practica and student teaching placements as part of ensuring access to a pipeline of high-quality candidates. In 2022-23, for example, our Bellingham teachers hosted 171 student teaching interns across our district from 84 different institutions of higher education; this year, 2023-24, we have placed another 166 so far, and more likely to come. Many of these students attend Western Washington University, who also complete their pre-student-teaching practicum requirements through participation in classrooms in our district. And we hire a lot of these candidates.

Once hired, we take seriously the commitment to on-going training, professional development, supervision, and evaluation to ensure staff continue to grow professionally, utilize research-based best practices, and develop powerful teaching and learning strategies. Our district's Department of Teaching and Learning, in collaboration with school leaders and labor group leaders, continuously plan and develop professional learning opportunities for staff. Professional learning occurs across the whole district, within each school, and within the daily practices of each of our 1600+ professionals, whether they are working as classroom teachers, paraeducators, bus drivers, cafeteria or maintenance workers, or in school or district leadership roles.

Professional learning efforts comprise whole district efforts, efforts within schools or departments, as well as specific opportunities for individuals, and take time and intentionality. Our professional learning calendar carves out time for districtwide work, often led by Department of Teaching and Learning directors or teachers-on-special-assignment (TOSAs), as well as for building-based work where principals and school leadership teams direct specific, school-based learning. **Of note, in negotiating our district calendar for the next three years, we have instituted a new schedule of collaboration time for our teachers.** This time privileges collaborative work done in grade level teams, in job-alike group, or between general education and special education teachers. The calendar also specifically identifies time and space for professional learning at each school site, as well as for cross-district professional learning.

Districtwide efforts this year continue to emphasize learning more effective means of inclusion of all students, and the brain science undergirding student behavior. Once again this year, each school identified a group of staff to take on the leadership of planning for professional learning at the school level. These teams from across all 23 school sites gathered in retreat on August 10, 2023 to develop school-based plans that are used to guide professional learning at each site. The retreat work focused on specific goals in professional learning identified by the school district dealing with issues of student conduct, and inclusive instructional practices. School teams connected their school-based work to one of several districtwide goals in these two areas. In most cases, the plans that schools developed during this year’s August retreat carried forward from and built upon the prior year’s work.

To support the two areas of focus on inclusive instructional practices and student conduct, examples of cross district learning have included:

- A series of choice courses that have been offered during the October professional development Friday (10/13/23) and will be offered again during the March PD Friday (3/13/23). These courses were all developed and delivered by staff members and can be reviewed [here](#). Each of the approximately twenty-five courses was developed with an intention to directly address aspects of the two identified areas of focus for the district’s work.
- All school-based professional development plans, as previously noted, center around one or more district goals for professional learning.
- In late August 2023, we implemented a “train the trainer” approach to providing professional learning for all staff in student behavioral regulation strategies led by Shuksan principal Alli Chryst and her teaching partner, Shuksan teacher Carrie Swackhammer. Phase I of this training was delivered in August, and Phase II is scheduled to roll out in January 2024. Initiation of this effort came from the [Joint Committee on Student Conduct](#) that includes members from the district’s leadership team, as well as BEA representatives from each level.
- Leadership team professional learning focused on regulations strategies in both understanding and addressing student behaviors. These trainings took place over the course of three monthly leadership team meetings this fall of 2023, and were led by Alli Chryst, Kevin Terpstra and Laura Burke. These professional development opportunities included the work of neuroscientist Bruce Perry, as discussed in a series of PBS-sponsored video interviews with Dr. Perry. Perry’s discussion of brain science provided a fascinating backdrop to our learning about strategies. Link to the video series is [here](#).
- Departmental trainings focused on these same sets of issues were provided across the organization including with the maintenance and food services teams.

Professional learning connects to the strategic areas of work in The Bellingham Promise.

Some specific examples of work this year include:

- Various book study efforts focused on equity, diversity and inclusion continued this year. Many schools built or continued a focus on Universal Design for Learning into their professional learning plan for the year, which links directly to the overall focus for the district leadership team for this year as discussed above. For example, a group of directors and TOSAs from the Department of Teaching and Learning has engaged in an ongoing read of the book [*Co-Planning by Honigfeld and Dove*](#), which digs into the practices associated with productive co-teaching arrangements. In another example, Shuksan Middle School hosted Dr. Yemi Stenbridge, well-known author of [*Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom*](#), spent two, two-day in-service residencies with over 20 teachers at Shuksan Middle School this past spring focused on high leverage moves in unit planning. Stenbridge encourages teachers to look at five questions when planning, starting with the 'why' and how we want students to feel about their learning, and then moving to the actual nuts and bolts of a lesson or project. This culturally responsive approach to backwards design, creates engaging and inclusive opportunities for students and reinvigorates our teachers.
- We are engaged in an examination of our mathematics program, particularly in the elementary schools, and this fall sent a team to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference in Washington, DC. In addition, we have engaged in a series of conversations with elementary teachers, led by Director Tom Gresham, to explore teachers' experiences with the current Bridges curriculum that was implemented some years ago.
- Efforts to train around units of inquiry in IB elementary schools continue to build. Ten of fourteen elementary schools are now either certified or on the path toward IB certification. This number continues to grow.
- Training for elementary schools in the implementation of a Child Study Team (CST) approach continued to grow this year. CST provides a process for teachers to bring students of concern forward, where brainstorming and planning for intervention both in terms of academic and socio-emotional supports that serve the whole child can occur. CST serves as precursor step/process to student referrals for Special Education services.

The Teacher Principal Evaluation Process (TPEP) continued with a focus on inquiry cycles. Our approach to teacher evaluation continues to fully embrace the idea of supporting continuous improvement around teacher established goals. School administrators once again led their staff through reflection and goal setting around the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (5D). District trainers ensure that our school administrators' training is current and provide continuous opportunities for professional development on the use of the 5D Tools in the TPEP process. Teachers established areas of focus, in many cases aligned to the schoolwide professional development focus and set student growth goals to work toward. Dialogue

throughout the school year of the administrator and certificated staff member around these goals supported refinements to teaching and learning in a continuous improvement process.

Paraeducator Training and Professional Development

As reported previously, the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) requires all Bellingham Public Schools paraeducators and substitute paraeducators to meet minimum employee requirements and provide training on the Fundamental Course of Study. The human resources department monitors and ensures that all employed paraeducators required the ESSA standards are met. Those minimum standards are:

- Be at least eighteen years of age and hold a high school diploma or its equivalent.

In addition, a paraeducator must meet **one** of the following:

- Have received a qualifying score on the Education Testing Service (ETS) paraeducator assessment. The ETS ParaPro test assesses knowledge and skills in reading, writing, math, and assisting classroom instruction. Test takers have two and a half hours to finish the assessment, and they must meet or exceed Washington's qualifying score of 455.
- Hold an associate degree or higher from an accredited college or university.
- Have earned 72 quarter credits or 48 semester credits at the 100 level or higher at an accredited college or university.

The Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB) also requires the completion of the Fundamental Course of Study (FCS) Program for all K-12 instructional paraeducators. Our district offers these FCS courses and also invites non-instructional paraeducators who provide student supervision to participate in these learning opportunities.

The training includes professional development in the following areas:

- Introduction to cultural identity and diversity
- Methods of educational and instructional support
- Technology basics
- Using and collecting data
- District orientation of rules & responsibilities
- Equity
- Behavior management strategies including de-escalation techniques
- Child & adolescent development
- Emergency & health safety
- Positive & safe learning environment
- Communication basics
- Communication challenges

This course work in some cases can be completed during the workday such as an early release day or staff can be paid additional time through a professional development fund which was established in partnership with our BASE leadership.

The district has a grant through PESB that provides funding toward 14 hours of paraeducator training toward completion of FCS units. Once a paraeducator completes the required 28 FCS hours, they then have the opportunity to work towards their General Paraeducator Certificate, which requires a total of 78 course hours. In many cases, course work through college classes count towards the GPC credits.

The district has developed a [webpage](#) regarding all the necessary information regarding the paraeducator certification program. Our webpage also links to the Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board for additional information.

Beginning Educator Support

2023-24 is our ninth year as a Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) grant-funded district. A requirement of the BEST grant is that a representative stakeholder team guide the work, using the [State Standards for Beginning Educator Induction](#) which includes hiring, orientation, mentoring and professional learning standards. Our current stakeholder team meets frequently to assess our implementation in each of the BEST standards, set goals and monitor progress. Members of the stakeholder team participate in ongoing professional learning around best practices in supporting beginning educators such as the state BEST convening conference (in March) and monthly Zoom-based Induction Leader roundtables sponsored by OSPI BEST staff. The benefit of these meetings being on Zoom is that we are learning with and from leaders from across the state as opposed to pre-pandemic in person, regional meetings. The Induction Leaders meetings assist us in refining our induction practices that lead to more equitable outcomes such as hiring and supporting staff of color.

The stakeholder team continues to study the [State Standards for Beginning Educator Induction](#) as well as use the feedback from new teachers to set focused and specific goals for action.

Current goals include:

- Adapting our whole group monthly novice teacher meetings into small group, job-alike sessions based on our smaller than typical numbers of new teachers.
- Building shared leadership by recruiting teacher leaders to co-facilitate learning sessions.
- Provide differentiated mentoring for beginning educators in challenging situations- title 1 schools and Special Education.
- Partner with building administrators to build collective sense of responsibility.
- Continue developing intentional partnership with WWU to increase the effectiveness of our student-teacher placements, which has a significant impact on the effectiveness of beginning educators.

- Building supports for our beginning educators of color through affinity groups and recruiting mentors of color.

Using a blend of BEST grant and Title IIA funding, we have a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) leading the mentoring of new teachers, alongside other duties. The TOSA coordinates the assignment and support for mentors needed to support our novices. She also provides ongoing professional development for our mentors and communicates with district and building administrators to coordinate support for our novice educators. All new teachers receive support from mentors that can include classroom setup, co-planning, regular classroom observations with feedback, learning focused conversations and guided observations in veteran teachers' classrooms.

In addition to mentoring, we provide our novices with monthly small-group job-alike sessions facilitated by our TOSA in conjunction with content leaders.

The BEST grant has allowed us to build a comprehensive system for new teacher induction that includes ongoing reflection, evaluation, and improvement. **We are hopeful to be able to apply and qualify for BEST grant funding for the 2024-25 school year.**

	Fall 17-18	Fall 18-19	Fall 19-20	Fall 20-21	Fall 21-22	Fall 22-23	Fall 23-24
Elementary	7	14	9	11	17	26	6
Middle	11	8	3	8	9	4	4
High	9	7	7	4	5	7	5
Total	27	29	19	23	33	37	15

*The number of novice educators has increased from 15-20 since this fall data was gathered.

b. Provide appropriate training for all employee classifications required by law.

Vector Training

We offer trainings in our district to approximately 2,400 staff. In order to effectively train all staff during each school year, as well as minimize the need for substitutes, we use a combination of both in-person and online trainings. Both training methods have inherent benefits.

The district is continuing our **online training program through Vector Training** for all employees. **Beginning this past fall, all new employees are assigned Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Prevention (full course) as well as the following mandated trainings assigned to**

all staff annually: Child Abuse: Mandatory Reporting, Bullying: Recognition and Response and Health Emergencies: Overview. In addition, a refresher course of the Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Prevention training is assigned each year to returning staff in an “at risk for bloodborne pathogens” position.

All employees receive the annual mandated training required by law or best practice through Vector Training or staff in-service sessions. These trainings provide legally sound instruction for all employees and many of the online trainings require successful completion of required testing prior to completion of the training. In some cases, such as with our transportation staff, training is conducted as a presentation from staff. Although this is not possible or even preferable for all employees based on time constraints, it does allow for additional discussion and individual questions.

Our online training ensures all employees receive the same consistent training information and employees may access the training content throughout the year. Online training is highly cost-effective and allows us to track compliance and ensure our staff are trained within the required timelines. If staff have additional questions after viewing online trainings, they may consult with their supervisor or a department director to receive further information.

This year, we assigned mandatory trainings on October 2 and provided a window of time for completions through October 31. The chart below shows the number of online training completions on an annual basis and year-to-date for 2023-24. Some years may be higher due to the requirement of non-annual required trainings. For example, in 2021-22 all employees needed to complete the Child Abuse - Mandatory Reporting training which is required every three years. Beginning with the 2022-23 school year, we elected to assign the Child Abuse – Mandatory Reporting training on an annual basis to ensure consistent training for all employees.

Bellingham Public Schools Employee Vector Training Course Completions by School Year (Through January 31, 2024)									
2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
1664	3704	2872	3423	7376	5892	5129	6942	7,482	7,764

- i. Maintain salary schedules for all employee classifications comparing district salary and benefits relative to appropriate comparable districts.**

For the 2023-24 school year, the district adjusted compensation for all our employees. The adjustments for our employees covered by bargaining agreements were based on previously agreed upon contracts with Bellingham Association of School Employees (BASE), Teamsters and Bellingham Administrators' Organization (BAO). SEIU and the Bellingham Education Association (BEA) also received an adjustment to salary through a newly agreed upon collective bargaining agreement. Salaries for other non-represented employees such as many district office staff, executives and coaches were also adjusted.

The district continues to examine the compensation data with our comparator districts to guide our work in negotiations. After completing our agreements, the district believes we will continue to remain competitive by remaining in the 75th percentile of our comparisons.

The chart below shows our bargaining groups, members and current duration of contracts.

Bargaining Group	Positions	Term of Agreement
Teamsters (Local Union 231)	Bus driver, warehouse delivery driver, utility driver, mechanic, dispatcher	2022-2024
SEIU (Service Employees' International Union 925)	Custodial, maintenance, grounds, food services, educational technology	2023-2025
BASE (Bellingham Association of School Employees)	Administrative assistants, paraeducators, business/accounting, educational support, specialists	2021-2024
BAO (Bellingham Administrators' Organization)	Principals, assistant principals, directors	2022-2024
BEA (Bellingham Education Association)	Certificated instructional staff	2023-2026

This spring we will be working with BASE and Teamsters to negotiate new contracts set to expire in 2024. The current Base and Teamsters contracts expire August 31.

ii. Maintain a system to evaluate all employees, provide written improvement plans and monitor employee improvement.

The human resources department continues, in coordination with the Department of Teaching and Learning, building principals and clerical staff, to maintain a system to track evaluations for all employees. Supervisors receive notification of timelines, forms, and requirements for new employee and annual evaluations. The human resources staff track and file all completed evaluations in employee personnel files. Administrators, directors, and managers receive ongoing coaching and support from the human resources team when working with employees on written plans of improvement. Employees with performance concerns are provided opportunities for support, training, mentoring and assistance. Supervisors work closely with the director or assistant superintendent of human resources to monitor improvement and determine if continued support is necessary, or if improvement goals are met. Union and employee association representatives also provide support to employees experiencing performance difficulties.

For certificated teaching staff, the district has adopted the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership's Instructional Framework, [5-Dimensions of Teaching & Learning](#) (CEL 5D). This state framework provides a common language for discussing effective teaching, along with a process that uses a cycle of inquiry and growth focused conversations. The evaluation cycle for teaching staff is focused on this framework where staff, working with their supervisor, select areas of focus for continuous improvement. The framework is aligned to the state evaluation criteria, and final evaluations reflect both the 5D and the state criteria, commonly referred to as "the state eight". Employees rotate between comprehensive (all areas) and focused (one-two areas) evaluations, having a comprehensive evaluation a minimum of every six years. Executive team members in teaching and learning and human resources supervise principals and directors following a parallel process using the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework to guide cycles of inquiry and growth focused conversations. This framework focuses on improvement of principals and leaders in areas that are most likely to result in increased student achievement and is directly aligned with state evaluation criteria, rules and regulation.

In the instructional evaluation model, we also provide continuous training for our teachers and principals/evaluators. Training is provided for all new teachers on the instructional framework and cycle of inquiry process. This takes place in a full day Teacher Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) 5-D Training taught by a State Instructional Framework Specialist. For administrators there are stages of training required, Stage 1 (two days), Stage 2 (four days), as well as Rater Reliability and ongoing training in calibration of the evaluation model and growth. The district provides these training opportunities, taught by a State Instructional Framework Specialist, to all administrators and tracks completion for Stage 1 and Stage 2 training requirements. Administrators track their completion of Rater Reliability and ongoing training, referred to as Stage 3 trainings. The number of teachers and administrators requiring and receiving training is reported to OSPI annually, and the state grants TPEP funds to support the required trainings for new teachers and for Stage 1 and 2 administrator training. Ongoing

training provided by the district includes Instructional Rounds for teachers and administrators. Administrator supervisors meet quarterly for ongoing collaboration and support around principal supervision.

Human resources continually works with employee groups and associations to review and update evaluation tools as needed. Current evaluation forms are accessible on the intranet for easy access.

iii. Make continuous improvement towards hiring and retention of under-represented minority teachers and support personnel in classrooms and supervisory/administrative positions, to better reflect the ethnic makeup of our district's students.

The human resources department develops and maintains an Affirmative Action Plan and provides an annual report on progress towards our goals. The district's most recent [five-year plan](#) was approved by the board for the years 2019-2024. Each year, a report on progress is provided to the district staff and board in the spring. **Our May 2023 progress report was on the June 15, 2023 board report and can be accessed on our [human resources website page](#). That report shows a slight increase in the overall percentage of ethnic minority of our district staff to 12.18%. This included a significant increase in our Instructional support/Coordinator/Accounting/Tech job group from 15.91% to 25%. All other categories also experience increased percentages of ethnic minority employees.**

Also, as noted earlier in the report, we were able to rehire many non-renewed teaching staff. **We successfully rehired all the ethnic minority classroom teachers who were non-renewed due to budget reductions.**

At the time of this report, the district is **collecting data for the 2023** report and will be submitted to the board in the coming months.

In addition, and as reported in EL-10 the district has:

- Added multiple staff members who grow our diversity as a direct result of job fairs conducted within the Russian and Punjabi communities, as well as our BIPOC job fair. Our human resources department's continual work is to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.
- Continuing into its sixth year, our high school Teacher Academy program is working hard to prepare our future teachers. The teacher team leading that effort includes Lori French at Bellingham High School, Mary Hooker at Sehome High School, and Angelica Garcia at Squalicum High School. The team is continuing to broaden recruiting efforts with teaching colleagues to expand placements for students to gain the valuable experience of working directly with a classroom teacher and students. **This spring will be the first group of Academy students who have completed university teaching programs. All Academy students are guaranteed an interview with our district.**

Other specific strategies used to recruit and hire a diverse workforce include:

- Target web-based posting options in venues connected with ethnically diverse candidates, and district and community-based job fairs. Collaboration and participation with other public and community agencies on diversity and affirmative action matters to increase the diversity of the applicant pool.
- Family and community engagement strategies to connect with employable adults in the ethnic minority community.
- Host job fairs at community facilities to attract diverse candidates. Human resources staff plan and coordinate with other district staff and community partners to provide technical supports, share information about job opportunities, how to apply for positions, and other supports available for interested community members who are pursuing job opportunities with the district.
- Post and fill positions early in the hiring season.
- Increase collaboration with WorkSource and DSHS to advertise openings and provide support for applicants to access and complete online applications.
- Banners outside schools and other facilities such as the transportation department, with high community traffic.
- Update recruiting information to highlight advantages of living in the Bellingham community and working for the school district.
- Distribute job recruitment information in schools and the family resource centers.
- Continue trainings to ensure personal, cultural, and institutional biases do not interfere with the screening, interviewing, and hiring of diverse candidates.
- Establish employee resource groups to support district staff of color.
- **Enhance partnership with WWU Woodring interns by hosting orientation, learning sessions, and creating applications.**

Statement of Compliance: The superintendent is **in compliance** with EL-4.