



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: April 12, 2024
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-6, Academic Standards and Practices

I certify that the following is accurate as of April 12, 2024. The reporting period is from April 17, 2023, to April 12, 2024.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation

Policy: EL-6 Academic Standards and Practices

Adopted: September 10, 2009, revised February 14, 2013 and July 6, 2017

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

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

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

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New/Update:* Inclusionary instructional strategies work. Our work on developing greater inclusion opportunities for all students and enhancing inclusive instructional strategies continued this year. These efforts are multi-faceted, encompassing work across all schools, including:

- BPS definition of inclusion. We kicked off the school year with an all-staff zoom meeting on August 28, 2023, during which the district definition of inclusion was presented and reviewed. The definition developed as a part of the work of the Inclusive Instructional Practices Committee, and reads as follows:

“Inclusion means that students experience meaningful participation in all educational settings, both academically and socially. Inclusion is realized when *all* students are presumed capable and are provided the interventions, supports and accommodations that they need to learn at high levels; when *all* students are welcomed and appreciated as valued members of each learning space and the school community as a whole; and when *all* students experience reciprocal social relationships with their peers. When our learning environments and practices are inclusive of all students and families, equitable access to achieving the Promise Outcomes can occur.”
- Repeat implementation of a 1.5-day summer retreat for school leadership teams who spent this time planning professional learning for the year to implement with their building staff centered around a set of identified firm district goals that have guided our work in inclusion, instructional strategies and student conduct. District wide goals are included below.

	Knowledge	Skills and Practices	Implementation	Impact
Firm Goals	I understand and can explain: 1. BPS's definition of inclusion and how it connects to the Bellingham Promise. 2. The foundational concepts of UDL and how they apply to inclusive practices. 3. The connection between academic and social emotional instruction when focusing on inclusive practices.	I apply my knowledge of inclusion and UDL to: 1. Establish an inclusive and developmentally appropriate learning environment. 2. Plan instruction that provides all students with access to grade level content. 3. Implement research-based prevention and de-escalation strategies.	I use my skills and knowledge of inclusion and UDL to: 1. Teach district-adopted tier-1 curriculum, with fidelity. 2. Grow my practice through participation in collaborative structures. 3. Engage with the CEL 5D+ Inquiry Cycle to support professional growth and student outcomes.	I can identify positive impact for students and adults by: 1. Using existing data points to measure growth over time. 2. Examining individual student progress for students furthest from opportunity. 3. Engage in reflection on professional growth and set future learning goals.

- Consistent with these district-wide goals, we created opportunities for ongoing professional learning for staff throughout the school year. District sponsored/district-led opportunities included a robust menu of 25 different choice courses held on October 13, 2023, connected to one or more of the goals noted above. In addition, we are offering a series of choice courses this spring, again connected to goals, which will run throughout the months of April and May 2024.
- Work continued for the district committee on inclusive instructional practices that began meeting in March 2023. Subcommittees within that group are working to develop shifts in practice focusing on collaborative structures, co-teaching, and a main emphasis is on highlighting and sharing best instructional practices in inclusive classrooms within our district.
- A team from our district visited the Edwin Pratt Learning Center in Shoreline School District, which is one of the University of Washington Haring Center demonstration sites for inclusive practices to observe their work firsthand and engage teachers and leaders with

questions. Another team visit is planned for McMicken Elementary in the Highline School District on June 5; McMicken is another Haring Center demonstration site.

- *New:* Regulation strategies district-wide professional development. Beginning in August 2023, we have implemented a two-phase professional learning effort focused on building the capacity of our teaching staff to support students who experience behavioral dysregulation. Led by Shuksan principal Alli Chryst and teacher Carrie Swackhammer, Phase I began with a district-wide “train the trainer” approach in late August. Representatives from each school attended a professional development session that prepared them to return to their schools and teach the Phase I regulation strategies lesson. Phase II was completed in the early part of winter with a similar approach.
- *New:* Professional development on artificial intelligence (AI). Director Bill Palmer has been leading work with secondary instructional coaches on better understanding available AI tools for teachers. Initial focus is on teacher tools to support efficiency, with plans to talk next about student facing tools and ethical considerations. Tasks explored with coaches included modifying text for different reading levels, generating student facing resources based on specific standards/topics and creating success criteria and assignment rubrics using three different AI tools (*Bing Chat*, *Chat GPT* and *magicschool.ai*). Dr. Palmer also led professional learning for the entire leadership team on this subject in early winter.
- *New:* Roosevelt Elementary World Language pilot. Roosevelt elementary pilot incorporates lessons in Spanish into the newly developed units of inquiry. This work has been developed by multi-lingual learner specialist, Carmen Avila Cervera, working in collaboration with grade level teacher teams at Roosevelt and is providing a real-time example of a different approach to world language instruction that we are assessing for possible implementation in other locations.
- *New:* Implementation of optional collaboration sessions for teachers of Promise K students, to align practices and share resources across our 18 Promise K classrooms. These sessions have been well attended and welcomed by teachers.

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

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

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* Math instruction. This year we have expanded the availability of *iReady* math instruction, including the self-directed *My Path* toolkit, to the middle level. In addition, Director Tom Gresham has done a comprehensive inquiry into mathematics instruction at elementary schools, interviewing teachers and principals and observing math instruction across this level. Findings from the work will be essential for development of a five-to-seven-year plan for math learning in our elementary schools.

- *New:* Math curriculum materials for special education support. In fall 2023, elementary special education teachers began implementing *Connecting Math Concepts*, a print and digital curriculum resource designed to support students in building procedural and conceptual understanding in mathematics. After review, this curriculum was selected for its explicit instructional strategies, clear organizational structure and the ability to connect math concept development with our previously adopted *Bridges in Mathematics* curriculum. All elementary special education teams received teacher materials and student workbooks for use with four levels of instruction, aligning to Common Core State Standards in kindergarten through fourth grade. Elementary special education teachers report that the materials are effective in supporting student growth in mathematics and appreciate this additional instructional tool as they prepare specially designed instruction for students who receive special education services in math.
- *New:* Development of outdoor learning experiences. Much work is happening to enhance outdoor learning experiences for students in elementary schools. For example, recent efforts to develop mini-lessons and professional development to integrate the salmon release experience with expanding outdoor learning, *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS) and *Since Time Immemorial* (STI) standards was supported with a \$36,000 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) outdoor learning grant.
- *Update:* Mountain School/Camp Kirby outdoor learning experiences. Mountain school for fifth graders conducted in partnership with North Cascades Institute (NCI) was truncated this year due to the impacts of a wildfire closure in the fall of 2023. NCI was able to accommodate seven of our elementary schools with a three-day, two-night experience this spring. To provide an outdoor experience for the other seven schools, we added a three-day, two-night trip to Camp Kirby, located on Samish Island. This experience is of high value and offers a meaningful outdoor experience in addition to NCI. The focus for the Camp Kirby experience centers on marine wildlife and beach habitat.
- *New/Update:* Implementation of *i-Ready* assessments have been expanded to K-8 with the *My Path* component for literacy and math. It provides consistent data for our K-8 system and will enable a new way for us to assess growth in student learning in these core content areas over time.
- *New/Update:* Mental health. Mental health support in Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) continues to expand with our district mental health staff and community partners, providing both school-based and community-based support for students and families. We hired a new director of mental health, Dr. Laura Cardinal, and through grant funding have been able to continue to add mental health specialists to our district group. Partnerships with community providers continue.
- *New/Update:* Child Study Team (CST) process. Last year, we began implementing a new child study team process for elementary schools intended to bring consistency in practices around supporting students' needs in the instructional program. This new approach was introduced to middle school principals for implementation as a part of our work this year. High school administrators have also been introduced to this CST process as a means for them to compare/contrast with their current "students of concern" process.
- *Update:* Early grades literacy curriculum implementation. We continued the implementation of *Really Great Reading* as our K-2 adoption and added an additional literacy component, *Morpheme Magic*, to support foundational skills in grades 3-5.

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

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

Evidence of Compliance:

- *Update:* In reporting on our identified district outcomes, we continue to seek out evidence that sheds light on our work in new and more informative ways. Ends reports were shared at school board meetings this year. Dates and times for the 2022-23 school year follow:
 - Ends 2.1, part 1: February 22, 2024
 - Ends 2.1, part 2: March 14, 2024.
 - Ends 1, 2 and 3 combined report: To be presented May 16, 2024.
- *Update:* In addition, we have included the following opportunities for the board to hear from schools and community groups:
 - Monthly visits by school board members to schools to learn about the work in our schools consistent with the Ends outlined in The Bellingham Promise. Schools visited since we last reported included:

Roosevelt	June 6, 2023
Shuksan	October 3, 2023
Geneva	October 31, 2023
Bellingham	November 28, 2023
Northern Heights	January 9, 2024
Kulshan	February 6, 2024
Lowell	March 5, 2024
Squalicum	April 16, 2024 (Scheduled)
 - Periodic opportunities for the school board's deeper study of topics, linkages with specific groups in the community and student roundtables included:
 - Student Roundtable: New School, Sunnyland ES (May 31, 2023)
 - Student Roundtable: QSA Club, Whatcom MS (February 27, 2024)
 - Linkage: Career & Technical Education (March 26, 2024)
 - Study Session: Safety & Security (April 18, 2024, scheduled)
- *Update:* The superintendent offers a report at regular public school board meetings on topics directly regarding the instructional program to keep the school board apprised of initiatives underway in the district that serve to promote the improvement of teaching and learning. Examples of reports since the last writing of this report include:
 - Update on summer professional learning (September 14, 2023)
 - Update on theater productions occurring in the high schools (November 9, 2023)
 - Update on district observance and instructional materials regarding Treaty Day (December 14, 2023)

- Update on the plans for Carl Cozier Elementary and Civic Complex (February 22, 2024)

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

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

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New/Update:* Sustainability, science and *Since Time Immemorial* (STI) instructional resources: As noted above, as a district, we are continuing to use outdoor learning grant funding from OSPI to develop innovative curriculum resources and professional learning. Working with 1st grade teachers, Lummi and Nooksack storytellers joined with RE Sources staff in creating a unit that includes the STI Storytelling pathway, Salmon in the Classroom connections and opportunities for local stream stewardship. All elementary schools and Bellingham Family Partnership Program were able to participate in raising and releasing 350 chum salmon.
- *New:* Common units of inquiry work in elementary schools. Instructional coaches working in collaboration led the development of new units of inquiry at various grade levels in the elementary program this year. Examples include:
 - *STI and Treaty Day (4th Grade):* Unit goals call for students to be able to define tribal sovereignty and describe why we commemorate Treaty Day, including learning about the significance of treaties in our communities and their importance today.
 - *Our Skin - Race and Anti-Racism (Kindergarten):* Unit goals celebrate student identities and the diversity in our communities and the world. Kindergarten students will be learning about skin tone, melanin, genetics and heritage. This lesson also supports common core curriculum standards such as “comparing and contrasting the experiences of characters” and “talking about myself and some of my identities.”
- *New/Update:* Expansion of the *International Baccalaureate* (IB) program is an ongoing process in our district. Happy Valley and Lowell elementary schools are in candidate phase, meaning they are preparing to become approved as IB sites. Happy Valley Elementary focused their work in IB unit development on antiracism and identity. These are the eighth and ninth of our elementary schools to embrace the work of IB. Silver Beach Elementary will be filing for candidacy this spring, with others expressing interest and likely to follow.
- *New/Update:* School-based health center. We are continuing the plans for a school-based health center that will be housed at Options High School. Through the sustained work of our grant writers, we obtained two years of grant funds from the Washington State Department of Health to support this effort. While the inclusion of the health center work may seem out of place for a category on instructional innovation, we believe this effort will serve students’ learning in multiple important ways and serves as an example of the innovative practices and approaches to serving the whole child that we continue to develop in our district.

2d. The superintendent shall not fail to provide an affirmative (or negative) statement the following actions have been taken: (i) involve stakeholder groups in substantive academic standards and practice decisions; (ii) provide access and utilization of electronically delivered

curriculum, materials and instruction; and a periodic systematic review of academic content, standards, curriculum, materials, and (iii) instruction, involving stakeholders, has taken place to ensure continuous improvement and adherence to best practices.

Interpretation: None in question.

Evidence of Compliance: (Affirmative Statements)

- *Update:* The district's Instructional Materials Committee (IMC) continues to meet regularly, typically quarterly, and review core and supplemental curricular resources. The committee includes administrators, teachers and community members.
- *Update:* Efforts to continue to seek advice from our community members in the various stakeholder groups are well-established. These include formal (ongoing) structures for stakeholder feedback, as well as informal structures that invite feedback from our various community members. Formal structures include:
 - The Bellingham Public Schools Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS) focused on engaging parent representatives from each of the district's schools in review of curricular and programmatic directions underway in the district has continued to meet regularly under the leadership of parent co-chairs. At each meeting, the superintendent's report focuses on providing information and soliciting feedback on various aspects of the ongoing work of the district. Meeting dates and topics this year included:
 - Group Planning for the Year (October 12, 2023)
 - Overview of School Finance/Levies/Bond (November 9, 2023)
 - Safety and Emergency Response (December 14, 2023)
 - Fundraising in BPS (February 22, 2024)
 - Elementary Enrichment Programming (March 14, 2024)
 - TBD - New District Office Tour (April 25, 2024-scheduled)
 - TBD (May 16, 2024-scheduled)
 - The Bellingham Public Schools Student Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (SACS) focused on engaging student representatives from each of the district's four high schools in review of programmatic directions underway in the district has continued to meet monthly under the leadership of Superintendent Greg Baker. 2023-24 meeting schedule follows:
 - October 9, 2023 (11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.), District Office
 - November 8, 2023 (11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.), Squalicum High School
 - December 13, 2023 (8-9:15 a.m.), Zoom.
 - February 12, 2024 (11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.), Bellingham High School
 - March 13, 2024 (8-9:15 a.m.), via Zoom
 - April 17, 2024 (11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.), Options High School (scheduled)
 - May 15, 2024 (11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.), District Office (schedule)
 - Frequent communications about the instructional program to families also occur through various means including the publication of *Inside Schools*. Below are links to two recent editions:
 - Winter 2024: <https://www.flipsnack.com/bellinghamschools/insideschools-winter-2024/full-view.html>

Fall 2023: <https://www.flipsnack.com/bellinghamschools/insideschools-fall-2023/full-view.html>

- The annual publication of the district's *Priorities for Progress* highlights aspects of our instructional program work in progress, addresses work in all strategic areas of *The Bellingham Promise* and invites community input on our work. The 2023-24 edition is linked below:

Priorities for Progress 2023-24: <https://bellinghamschools.org/priorities-for-progress/>

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