



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: October 5, 2023
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-10, Race and Equity

I certify that the following is accurate as of October 4, 2023. The reporting period is from the completion date of the last report on this Executive Limitation (October 5, 2022) to the present. The report includes updates on work instituted prior to the reporting period to provide evidence of ongoing progress on work in this area, as well as priority areas for our work for the reporting period and beyond.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation
Policy: EL-10 Race and Equity (copy attached)
Adopted: August 14, 2019

Background Information: This report is about Executive Limitation (EL)-10 Race and Equity. EL-10 states that, “The superintendent shall not fail to interrupt factors that perpetuate systemic inequities and/or practices that contribute to over and under representation of any student group compared to peers. The superintendent shall confront the institutional bias that results in predictability of student success or lack thereof, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, language and culture.”

1. The superintendent shall not fail to take all reasonable and prudent actions with respect to reporting, processing and tracking incidents of bias 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 processes for reporting, processing, tracking and resolving incidents of bias, racism or hate speech of other kinds that occur.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* Through school board action in July 2023, Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) adopted Policy 3209 focused on protecting students from bias and hate speech. The policy reads, in part, BPS

“...believes in protecting the right of every student to be free from bias- and hate-motivated speech and behavior in our educational environments. Hate speech and behaviors have lasting and harmful impacts on our community; therefore, we will vigorously seek to heal and educate to strengthen and diversify our next generation of leaders.” The policy and its accompanying procedure work in concert with other policies concerning harassment, intimidation, bullying, student discipline and discrimination (Policy 3205, 3207, 3210, 3211 and 3241).

- *Update:* In the feedback on the EL-10 report last year, the board asked for more specific information about how we track and respond to bias and hate incidents. The district’s Student Services Team supports responses to issues of bias and hate speech at all levels. Responses include resource finding, working directly with students to support healing and learning and support for administrators facilitating challenging conversations with students and their families. The team monitors tip line reports (see below) and alerts administrators in the building, receives reports from staff members or community members looking for support with an incident. As reports are received, the team works with administrators to determine the needs and navigates individual incidents in person or behind the scenes. For example, a racially motivated bullying incident was recently reported. The school administrator called a member of the student services team, who used Policy 3209 to determine hate speech, 3210 and 3207 to determine discriminatory harassment and 3241 to support next steps. The team was consulted, and a plan was devised to send one member to the school to use the investigation details to file a harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) report. The team member provided in-person and behind-the-scenes support by meeting with the specific student, obtaining additional student witness reports, gathering police report information and bus footage and connecting with the administrators to share all final details.
- *Update:* The district safety [tipline](#) continues to be a useful tool for ensuring confidentiality in reporting incidents of safety (including bias, bullying, intimidation, hate speech and/or racism). Student data on the question of “Do you know how to access the tipline?” shows improvement in students’ knowledge. In 2018, 53 percent of students indicated that they “did not know about the tipline.” That percentage decreased to 23 percent in 2022-23. There is still work to do to make sure all students know how to access this, but overall steady improvement in the trend.

2a. The superintendent shall not fail to recruit, employ, support, retain and continuously develop a workforce of culturally responsive staff.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to continuously work to diversify the district’s staff through recruitment, support and retention strategies.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* Targeted and specific “choice” courses will be offered on October 13 and March 15 professional development days that will again center around the core focus topics of inclusionary instructional practices and student behavior and regulation strategies. These classes are developed and taught by our own staff members. Both certificated and classified staff are invited to sign up and attend. Efforts such as these will help ensure all staff are provided with opportunities to meet the state requirements for EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) professional development.
- *New:* The recently ratified 2023-2026 Bellingham Education Association (teacher) contract includes a newly bargained section focused on a commitment to equity in recruiting and retaining a diverse teacher workforce. That language reads, *“The District and BEA will collaborate to support educators of color in our ongoing efforts to promote equity for marginalized communities.*

Together we will consider a) the barriers that exist in recruiting and retaining educators of color, b) district and school-based supports that create conditions for belonging and success, c) professional development with a focus on culturally responsive instructional practices and building safe, healthy and inclusive school environments, and d) promoting student-centered equity efforts (pg. 6)."

- *New:* BPS Human Resources leaders and team members staffed a table at our opening of school "Block Party" this year, aimed at attracting and recruiting diverse candidates for job openings.
- *New/Update:* We continue to develop our systemwide professional learning efforts in equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), this year specifically focusing on inclusionary instructional strategies, social-emotional learning and behavior regulation strategies. On August 10-11, 2023, school leadership teams from all 23 sites met in a retreat to develop their professional learning plans for the 2023-24 school year centered around the areas of inclusionary instructional practices and behavior regulation.
- *New/Update:* As a part of Policy 3209 implementation, we have engaged in in-depth staff training for Title IX coordinators, investigators and decisionmakers who oversee various parts of the administrative procedures associated with the policy.
- *New/Update:* BPS is continuing with the Leaders in Education Advancing Diversity, Equity and Racial justice (LEADER) initiative funded by the Washington State Professional Standards Board and begun in 2021. The effort aims to elevate community-driven efforts to increase and sustain diversity in Washington's educator workforce.

2b. The superintendent shall not fail to increase workforce diversity reflective of our students.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to continuously work to diversify the district's workforce in ways that more robustly reflect the diversity of our student population.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New/Update:* Front office team members are often the first people to greet families and students as they come to our schools. We intentionally continue to work to increase the number of schools' front office and other staff members who are multilingual. This is part of our ongoing effort to diversify the district's workforce in ways that more robustly reflect the diversity of our student population. Out of 23 sites, including the Bellingham Family Partnership (BFPP), eight now have bilingual front office assistants in place. These include Alderwood, BFPP, Birchwood, Carl Cozier, Lowell, Options, Roosevelt and Sehome.
- *Update:* For the 22-23 school year, 15 BASE employees' multilingual skills were assessed through a skills assessment, qualifying them for an increased per hour wage premium for all hours worked for the school year as a result of the contractual agreement reported in last year's report.
- *Update:* Our Human Resources department tracks applications of ethnic minority candidates annually. There were 174 applicants who identified as non-white that applied June-August 2023. Of those, 10 were offered contracts. This data does not include coaches or substitutes. Moreover, it is important to consider that, while our district had a greater number of non-white applicants overall, we were limited in the number of positions to hire given our budget reduction efforts this past hiring season. Thankfully, we were able to bring back many of the employees that had been non-renewed at the conclusion of the school year due to budget cuts. We had 42 provisional teachers who were initially non-renewed due to budgetary reductions; 27 of those were rehired and of those five identified as non-white.

2c. The superintendent shall not fail to seek out and incorporate student voice in order to develop and maintain a safe and inclusive environment for each and every student.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to continuously work to engage student voices, and in particular the voices of students who reflect the diversity of our community.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* An invited panel of multilingual students who presented to the Department of Teaching and Learning team in the spring of 2022 helped bring a greater understanding of the issues that multilingual learners face in Bellingham.
- *Update:* Bilingual Teacher Academies at Sehome, Bellingham and Squallicum High Schools continue to support bilingual students interested in exploring and pursuing an education career. As a critical part of their experience in the program, students gain experience working in elementary school classrooms alongside of our BPS classroom teachers who agree to participate as mentors.
- *Update:* The superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, which includes two representatives from each of our four high schools, continues to meet monthly with the superintendent to discuss issues and provide feedback. Meetings for the 2023-24 school year began on October 9, 2023.

2d. The superintendent shall not fail to engage families and community partners in culturally appropriate ways to ensure multiple cultural perspectives are elevated and valued.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to continuously work to engage families and community partners who represent the diversity of our students in culturally appropriate and relevant ways.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* New this year is Café con Pan (Coffee and Bread) with the principal at every elementary school. This is a scheduled conversation between the school principal and Spanish speaking families in the school. Our district's Executive Director for Family Engagement and the Family Engagement Team are there to support and guide the conversation, and they bring coffee and bread.
- *New:* Conexiones Latinas is a new effort led by the Family Engagement team that focus specifically on Preschool to K transition, fifth to sixth grade transition and eighth to ninth grade transition and helping students and families navigate these transition years in our school district. The effort also includes helping high school juniors and seniors who are getting ready to graduate with their transition post-high school.
- *New:* Latinos in Action (LIA) is being offered as a new course at SqHS. Taught locally by teacher Hugo Santiago, LIA is a national program designed to provide students with the following three components: College/Career Readiness, Leadership Experiences/ Development and Community Service via Tutoring. Throughout this year-long course, students are immersed in a culturally relevant curriculum that closes the opportunity gap for Latino youth. Students are given the opportunity to serve their community by providing literacy tutoring to elementary students. SqHS LIA students have been focused on celebrating and empowering our Latino community through three Hispanic Heritage Month assemblies at all three comprehensive high schools and a Hispanic

Heritage Night celebration. In addition to these events, the group has been focused on leadership within the building and making SqHS a more welcoming environment for all students.

- *New/Update:* The districtwide back-to-school “Block Party” event brought together an estimated 2000 students and family members in August of 2023. Held at Bellingham High, this event, sponsored and organized by our Volunteer Coordinator and Family Engagement team, brought together school representatives, central office department representatives and dozens of representatives from community agencies, the medical community and community service providers to support students and families in getting ready for the new school year. In addition to a wealth of information and contacts, students and families were able to access sports physicals, haircuts and vaccinations.
- *New/Update:* Padres Unidos de las Escuelas de Bellingham is a Facebook page specifically for Spanish-speaking families in the Bellingham school community. The BPS Family Engagement team communicates frequently through this Facebook site which includes close to 500 subscribers.
- *Update:* The number of students who are new to the country attending school in Bellingham more than doubled last year to nearly 240 students. The use of Parent Square as a tool for communication is helping our refugee families who are new to the country and do not speak any English. Parent Square is particularly helpful for these families because it translates into various languages other than English.
- *Update:* Our Family Engagement Team continues to offer basic computer classes for families. Classes teach the use of Skyward, Parent Square and basic skills in some of the Microsoft tools. Parents who participate are awarded with a recycled school district laptop to use at the end of the class.
- *Update:* The superintendent continues to communicate regularly and directly with parents and community members about our district’s work on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion.
- *Update:* Monthly dialogues with the Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS) continued this past year. Topics included:
 - Programmatic updates, including the district’s work on Dual Language education, comprehensive sexual health education and Since Time Immemorial curriculum.
 - A visit to the newly opened Sunnyland Elementary School.
 - School district budget and levies.

2e. The superintendent shall not fail to provide an environment that supports the creation and implementation of culturally responsive instructional practices and curriculum.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to continuously work to seek out, identify, adopt and develop culturally responsive curricula and instructional practices.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* BPS hired an inclusive practices “teacher on special assignment” whose role is in part to help lead the development of inclusive instructional practices. We also were able to hire a .167 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) teacher leader to help support our EDI work overall.
- *New/Update:* Last year, with the advent of yearlong Promise Kindergarten, the four-year-old students who had previously been served in a special education developmental preschool program were served in Promise Kindergarten. These students are identified for additional support through an Individualized Education Program in special education. That initial group has rolled up into

kindergarten this year and teachers from across the district report how this transition has been smooth for students who received the yearlong Promise K experience last year.

- *New:* As a part of our work on inclusion, we are committed to reducing out of neighborhood placements for students receiving Special Education services. With this year's group of kindergarteners (so far) we have had zero out of neighborhood placements. This is a significant change from past practice.
- *New:* Our district hosted Dr. Yemi Stenbridge, author of *Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom*, who spent two, two-day in-service residencies with over 20 teachers at Shuksan Middle School last year. Focusing on high leverage moves in unit planning, Dr. 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.

2f. The superintendent shall not fail to provide professional development, training and engagement opportunities to inform and practice cultural competence and increase awareness of personal bias and inequities in leading, teaching, counseling, advising and coaching practices.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to continuously work to increase the awareness of personal bias and inequities, including the continuation of ongoing efforts to inform and practice cultural competence among our system's leaders, teachers, counselors, teacher leaders, and classified staff members.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* To help guide our systemwide work on inclusion, the Inclusionary Instructional Practices Standing Committee was formed last spring. Work completed by this group includes a districtwide shared definition of inclusion which was presented in multiple ways to staff during the opening days of the school year. That definition reads:
"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."
- *New:* The Inclusionary Instructional Practices committee has also been involved in developing and leading all staff learning and training around inclusion; this is a main intention around our staff learning days (purple Fridays) in October and March this year.
- *New:* A team from Bellingham made a visit in spring of 2023 to Ruby Bridges Elementary School in the Northshore School District to understand their building wide systems to support inclusive practices. Team members returned to share their learning with the Inclusionary Instructional Practices Standing Committee.
- *New:* Happy Valley elementary continues to be a leader in our district with implementation of the Since Time Immemorial (STI) curricular resources. The school hosted an STI family night and has engaged in ongoing STI training of staff over this past year. They continue to appreciate the partnership of Lummi Nation artist Jason LaClair whose work adorns the halls of the school and connects directly to student learning.

- *New/Update:* All elementary administrators received a Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) strategies refresher this summer. GLAD strategies encourage teachers to use many visual representations and anchor charts students can access. Many visuals have pictures, colors and text descriptions. The instructional approach was designed to support multilingual learners and is helpful for all children who are learning languages. New staff were treated to a three-day GLAD training that included these targeted instructional strategies this summer as well.
- *New/Update:* School leadership teams again engaged in professional development planning at the beginning of August. Teams from all 23 sites including principals, instructional coaches and other key leaders came together at Bellingham High School for a session led by the Department of Teaching and Learning. Focus for the year includes deepening instructional practices focused on universal design for learning and specifically our work on inclusive instructional practices across the system.

2g. The superintendent shall not fail to recognize and value the funds of knowledge that students and families bring to each classroom, school and our system as a whole.

Interpretation: Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to continuously work to celebrate and highlight the value of diverse perspectives and the funds of knowledge that students with diverse backgrounds bring to our schools every day.

Evidence of Compliance:

- *New:* The BEA contract just ratified for school years 2023-2026 includes an intentional shift away from designated student “conferencing days” toward a broader and more inclusive approach in our family engagement model. Teachers are encouraged to connect with families using the multiple means available now, which continue to include in-person conferencing, phone calls, zoom calls, emails, Parent Square or See Saw messages. We know for many families, coming to a face-to-face conference during school hours is prohibitive due to work responsibilities, childcare and other constraints. The new language encourages teachers to reach out through multiple means and connect with families to share information and to listen and understand families’ hopes and expectations for their students.
- *Update:* In our work with identification of students who are highly capable, we have worked over several years to broaden our approach to assessment and ensure that students from groups who have been historically marginalized and underrepresented are considered. We track the demographics of students identified for highly capable services to ensure that we are identifying students in a representative manner.
- *Ongoing:* As noted earlier, collaboration continues with Lummi Nation (and Western Washington University) partners to increase our knowledge and implementation of Since Time Immemorial curriculum and to value the funds of knowledge inherent in that work and to implement more culturally responsive practices with particular attention to our Native students. Our Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is our primary contact for this work with the tribe.
- *Ongoing:* Our Communications office shares a monthly listing of major religious holidays via email to all district staff to improve awareness and sensitivity. This information is also published on the EDI webpages.

Statement of Compliance: The superintendent is **in compliance** with EL-10 Race and Equity.