



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: Nov. 3, 2021
SUBJECT: **Monitoring Report for EL-5, Communication and Counsel to the Board**

I certify that the following is accurate as of Oct. 4, 2021. The reporting period is from Oct. 4, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation

Policy: [EL-5 Communication and Counsel to the Board](#)

Adopted: Sept. 10, 2009; revised Feb. 10, 2011; Sept. 11, 2014; Jan. 12, 2017

Interpretation of items: None in question.

Background Information: This report is about Executive Limitation 5 – Communication and Counsel to the Board (EL-5). Information indicating compliance for each of the areas is presented below.

The superintendent shall not fail through action or inaction to provide the necessary information to the board to make informed decisions in a timely manner.

1. The superintendent shall not fail to take all reasonable and prudent actions with respect to board communications and counsel that are typical for similar and highly effective organizations.

The policy governance model itself provides direction regarding communications and counsel to the board through the structure of board meetings, linkages, study sessions, school visits, monitoring and ends reports. Our staff seeks best practices nationally, regionally and locally for similar and highly effective organizations. Please see the EL-1 report for more information.

2. The superintendent shall not fail to:

- a. timely inform the board of circumstances of interest, which includes items that will reasonably be reported to the press or of a concern to a majority of the community;

- b. timely inform the board of material changes in district management and oversight;
- c. timely respond to reasonable information requests from board members; and
- d. assure an effective system is in place for board communications and business, including:
 - i. opportunities for participation or attendance at district and school-related events;
 - ii. relevant community, professional, or educational board development events in support of a well-informed board; and
 - iii. an avenue to receive communications from the community.

Description of Evidence of Compliance:

School Board Study Sessions, Oct. 4, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021 (evidence for 2 a,b,c):

The purpose of study sessions for the board is to have the opportunity to more deeply study, discuss and review a topic.

Hybrid Learning	April 14, 2021
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Superintendent Updates at Board Meetings (evidence for 2 a,b,c,d):

At each board meeting, I provide in-depth updates on topics of interest. This sometimes involves inviting school and district leaders and other staff members to engage with the board directly and to discuss ongoing projects and initiatives.

Committee/Task Force Updates (evidence for 2 a,b):

I communicate with the board about many issues and use best practices by erring on the side of sharing any timely information that possibly could be of concern to the community or involve significant change in practice. I keep the board informed throughout our work involving change processes.

Examples from the last reporting period include the regular updates that I provided to the board on the work on our committees and groups:

Facilities

- Alderwood Educational Specifications/Design Advisory Committee
- Bellingham High School Turf Fields Phase 2 Committee
- District Office Design Advisory Committee
- Facilities Planning Task Force
- Parkview Educational Specifications/Design Advisory Committee
- Sunnyland Educational Specifications/Design Advisory Committee
- Squalicum High School Turf Fields Phase 2 Planning Committee

Parent Advisory Committees

- Highly Capable Learning Parent Advisory Committee
- Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent
- Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

Teaching and Learning

- Attendance Areas PreK-12 Standing Committee
- CTE General Advisory Council
- Foundational Literacy Skills Curriculum Committee
- GRADS Advisory Group
- Instructional Materials Committee
- High School Grading Task Force, Phase Two
- Playground Standards Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee
- Joint District- BEA Professional Development Study Committee

Superintendent

- Student Advisory Committee to the Superintendent

Other

- Occupational Health & Safety Committee
- Promise Awards Advisory Group
- Reopening Schools Advisory Committee

Board Updates (evidence for 2 a,b,c,d):

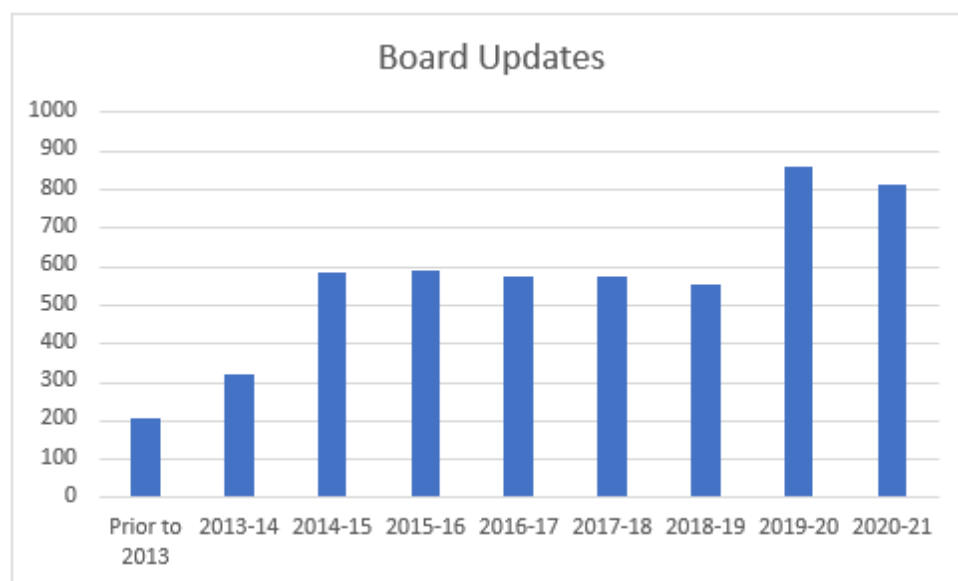
Many methods are used to keep the board informed, including regular Board Updates. In these communications, I share wide-ranging information including my schedule, issues pertaining to specific schools, districtwide issues, state and federal issues impacting education and potential legal issues. I also inform the board immediately of any event that could generate high levels of parent/community concerns or significant media coverage, and I share advance copies of communications.

From October 1, 2020 – Sept. 30, 2021, the lion's share of media coverage was focused on the direct and ripple effects of COVID-19 on education and our community, as well as near-daily coverage of our COVID-19 district dashboard updates. A more inclusive list of media coverage of our district includes: sexual health education and Referendum 90 on the Nov. 2020 ballot; our Reconnect plan and its various stages of returning to in-person learning; multiple outlets' coverage of the Bellingham High School mascot change task force, including collegiate, local professional and Seattle news; the expanded role of school nurses due to COVID-19; food distribution; district partner Common Threads; implementation of 2021 and 2022 attendance area changes; district resource officer; vaccination rollout; staff immunization rates; outdoor education; a notable BHS alumnus; COVID-19 and mental health resources; edTPA and WWU education students; multiple inquiries from local and national outlets re: "I Am Jazz" readaloud and our school board; American Rescue Plan funding; Alderwood, Parkview and Sunnyland rebuilds; homeschool (FPP) enrollment during COVID-19; reopening of schools for fall 2021; school bus driver shortages; KOMO news back to school; district office new construction; repeated inquiries about whether COVID-19 may cause cancelled athletics; fire at Shuksan Middle School; mask mandates and other COVID risk mitigation; mental health-related issues among students; athletics returning to play with spectators; COVID-19 and children in partnership with the Health Department and the hospital; Gov. Inslee's vaccination mandate and our staff vaccination rates.

One advanced reporting class at WWU chose to make K-12 education the focus of their winter quarter class. Although their articles were not published on a public-facing platform, from January – March 2021 we made special effort to fulfill their requests for extensive, research-based articles regarding: special education; police in schools/DRO/student services/counseling; seismic readiness; availability of all-gender or gender-neutral facilities; English Language Learner program. Each of these requests involved providing technical records and coordination of multiple interviews.

From Oct. 4, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021, I provided 812 electronic updates to the board regarding various issues. The board and I attended two retreats during this reporting period.

I also meet with the board individually or in pairs monthly to share information and address questions. When board members email me with questions, I make responding to those a priority. If one board member emails a question to me, I reply and copy the entire board for inclusive communications. I regularly consult legal counsel and work with the board to ensure we are in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA).



During this reporting period, I kept the board fully informed of our major change initiatives, including:

- Implementing our Reconnect plan to reopen schools in the 2020-21 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included sharing information on safety protocols with staff, students and families. These updates included attestations, contact tracing and capacity rules; implementing remote learning schedules; planning for and kicking off over 20 different start dates for specific in-person grade bands and groups (e.g. middle school BRIDGES, first grade); organizing COVID-19 vaccine clinics for staff and students in winter and spring 2021; and hosting and planning in-person graduation events at Civic Field.
- Capital projects, including Alderwood, Parkview and Sunnyside elementary schools, “phase two” of fields at Squalicum and Bellingham high schools, the new District Office and auxiliary gym at Shuksan Middle School;
- Bellingham High School’s new mascot;

- Early planning for a possible bond to voters in early 2022;
- Budget and collective bargaining efforts with our employee groups;
- Responding to questions and inquiries related to equity, diversity and inclusion efforts in our schools and district;
- Preparing for and implementing attendance areas changes to our middle schools in fall 2021;
- Opening school in fall 2021 with revised guidance to bring back students full-time while still utilizing mitigation factors; and
- Adhering to new vaccination mandates for all staff.

Opportunities for Participation or Attendance at Events (evidence for 2di):

I informed the board of opportunities for participation or attendance at district and school-related events during this reporting period through the board calendar that is maintained by the superintendent's office. Our office emailed the board reminders of events; board members also received district/school emails; I provided reminders of major events at board meetings; and board members accessed the [districtwide calendar](#).

Opportunities for Board Development (evidence for 2dii):

I informed the board of relevant community, professional or educational board development events in support of a well-informed board during this reporting period by helping the board identify some study session topics that are professional development in nature. The board subscribes to the WSSDA list serve for professional development opportunities and had the option of attending the National School Board Association annual conference.

An Avenue to Receive Communications from the Community (evidence for 2diii):

In addition to the public comment time during board meetings, we provide the following avenues for communication to the school board in the context of a policy governance model:

- [Board linkages](#), which included a purposeful effort to meet and hear from students at student round tables.
- [Listening Post](#)
- [Meet the Board webpage](#) with phone and group email contact information
- Board articles in Inside Schools community newsletter that promote what the board does; also featured on Promise site [here](#) and [here](#).
- Board section on website
- Videos including an [explanation of policy governance and what the board does](#) and [how to attend a board meeting](#)
- Board school adoption program

During this reporting period, our district transitioned from remote to limited in-person offerings to a full-time school schedule, which impacted the school board's ability to visit schools and attend events, especially during remote and limited in-person. Two school board members toured the new Parkview Elementary School after the August retreat. Our schools and staff look forward to hosting school board events and visits in the coming year.

These are just some of the examples of practicing timely and informative board communications.

Statement of Compliance: The superintendent is **in compliance** with EL-5.