



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: April 11, 2022
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-6, Academic Standards and Practices

I certify that the following is accurate as of April 11, 2022. The reporting period is from April 7, 2021 to April 11, 2022.

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. EL reports are annual, they often feature an update on work in progress, as well as an emphasis on “new” work.

- 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:* This year, we have convened a task force to continue our work in exploring options for dual language education. Dual language programs focus on asset-based education that builds strong home-school connections. Washington State funds and awards competitive grants to school districts who are developing dual language programs and our district recently received one of these 2-year grants to support this work. The task force kicked off its work shortly after the first of the calendar year and is underway now.
- *New/Update:* We continue to support efforts in deepening our knowledge and implementation of inclusive instructional practices that support high quality learning environments for all students

including those with special learning needs. Building on Sehome High School's participation as a University of Washington Haring Center demonstration site for their work in inclusive education, Bellingham Public Schools has engaged in a broader district-wide partnership with UW that is helping to provide high quality professional learning experiences that inform our efforts to grow inclusive educational practices across all our school sites.

- *New/Update:* This year we expanded the number of full-time instructional coaches as a resource across our elementary schools to ensure that a full-time instructional coach is part of the staffing model in each elementary school. We continue to work to develop coaches as a crucial part of the school leadership team, and a partner for principals and other leaders in the work of leading professional learning.
- *Update:* The successful return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to be an overarching focus for the school district this year. In moving through and (hopefully) out of the COVID period, we have continued efforts in other crucial program areas of curriculum and instruction including ongoing work on social-emotional learning. Teachers have seen a heightened need to teach into norms and help develop communities of learners as students have returned to school.

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:* The adoption and implementation of our new early literacy curriculum is underway this year. After catching our collective breath from the interruptions caused by the pandemic last year, the urgency to identify a curriculum for implementation in the fall of 2021 re-emerged. *Really Great Reading* rose to the top of the list in the feasibility study and was chosen for adoption and implementation in grades P-2. Classroom implementation of the program involves a brief, daily lesson (15-20 min daily) and professional learning regarding how to teach the new curriculum is embedded through engaging asynchronous videos available throughout the first year of implementation. The resource includes a strong PreK program and there are materials that could help older students in need of additional support with foundational skills that may be considered down the road. Under the leadership of our Assistant Director for Teaching and Learning, Jenny Lawrence, and several teammates, the implementation and professional learning efforts have been well supported this year.
- *New:* In addition, we have implemented our adopted state-approved early literacy dyslexia screener. The *i-Ready Early Literacy Screener* is a one-on-one task-based system to screen for potential risk factors for dyslexia. This approach supports reading intervention for students in the early grades when it is most needed.
- *New/Update:* We continue our system-wide efforts to improve math instruction and learning. This year brought the implementation of our newly adopted *Desmos* math curriculum in the middle grades (6-8) and kept our focus on fidelity of implementation of the *Bridges* and *Number Corner* curricula in the elementary schools.

- *Update:* Mental health and wellness efforts, alongside the teaching of adopted social-emotional curricula, continue to grow. We have added a second mental health specialist to join mental health coordinator, Chris Cochran, who continues to grow our partnerships with community mental health partners and providers including Unity Care Northwest, Compass Health, and SeaMar to bring school-based mental health providers into our schools. With three people now on our district team, each person has primary responsibility for supporting seven or eight schools, and this added support has greatly increased our ability to proactively support kids and families.

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:

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 2.1 reports were shared at school board meetings this year. The Ends 1, 2 and 3 combined report is scheduled for presentation at the May 18, 2022 board meeting. Dates and times for the 2021-22-year follow:

- Ends 2.1, part 1: Feb. 16, 2022
- Ends 2.1, part 2: March 16, 2022.
- Ends 1, 2 and 3 combined report: To be presented May 18, 2022.

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. In person visits resumed this school year after being suspended beginning in March 2020 due to the pandemic. Schools visited since we last reported included:
 - Sehome Oct. 5, 2021
 - Fairhaven Nov. 9, 2021
 - Parkview Nov. 30, 2021(Tour of new school)
 - Sunnyland March 1, 2022 (Tour - school under construction)
 - Happy Valley April 12, 2022
 - Carl Cozier May 3, 2022 (scheduled)
 - Silver Beach June 7, 2022 (scheduled)
- All school board members typically participate in regular school activities and programs at their adopted schools and share their learning publicly at school board meetings; these efforts have been re-emerging with the loosening of restrictions imposed during the pandemic. One student roundtable was held March 30, 2022 at Alderwood Elementary. Other scheduled student roundtables earlier this year were postponed due to county-wide flooding and school closure (Nov. 17, 2021) and challenges with the Omicron-variant spike in pandemic cases (Jan. 26, 2022).

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 various aspects of the district's response to the pandemic addressed this year in meetings:
 - Update on student enrollment related to pandemic (Sept.15, 2021)
 - Update on vaccinations (Oct. 13, 2021, Nov. 10, 2021)
 - Update on staffing/substitute shortages related to pandemic (Sept.15, 2021, Jan. 12, 2022)
- Update on capital projects/bond/facilities planning updates (Oct. 13, 2021, Nov. 10, 2021, Dec. 8, 2021, Jan. 12, 2022)
- Update on high school grading practices (Sept.15, 2021)
- Update on Sehome High School threatening messages/student safety (Dec. 8, 2021)
- Update on flooding in Whatcom County and impact on schools (Dec. 8, 2021)
- Update on Promise K (Jan. 12, 2022)

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:* Growth and expansion in career and technical education (CTE) options continue. As we reported in Ends 2.1 part 2 earlier this year CTE program completion numbers continued to increase, reaching over 800 students who completed a CTE program in 2020-21.
- *New/Update:* Expansion of the *International Baccalaureate* program into a seventh elementary school (Roosevelt), with two others in the exploration stage pre-candidacy (Happy Valley and Lowell).
- *New/Update:* Implementation of new social studies curricula *Since Time Immemorial* continues. This social studies curriculum was created through a partnership between the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Tribal nations in Washington and was endorsed by all 29 federally recognized Tribes in Washington. Here is the link to the curricular resources on the OSPI website: <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/time-immemorial-tribal-sovereignty-washington-state>
- *Update:* Implementation of common high school grading practices. We have begun to implement the recommendations of the high school grading practices task force which recently completed work that brought about changes in our grading policy and procedures. This includes the school board's approval of the updated Policy and Procedure 2420 in October 2021.
- *Update:* The period of the pandemic resulted in increased participation and overall growth in Bellingham Virtual Learning (BVL), both in high school grades 9-12, and in K-8. The BVL Handbook published in March of 2022 provides details on many aspects of our high school program which utilizes the *Edgenuity* course platform. Link to the handbook is here: <https://bellingshamschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/BVL-handbook-updated-March-2022.pdf>

- *Update:* Growth in Bellingham Family Partnership (BFPP), which supports Bellingham's homeschool families. Pre-pandemic numbers of students accessing support and learning through BFPP hovered around 220; that number jumped up to well over 500 at the height of the pandemic and has settled in around 420 this year.
- *Update:* Instructional methods involving the use of Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Seesaw and other technology solutions were the mainstay of our connection with students, families and each other during the pandemic. We are seeing that some of the innovative ways of communicating are carrying over into our practice now. For example, principals' meetings now include a shorter Zoom meeting once a month, as well as a longer in person meeting. There are some efficiencies that were gained in the period of the pandemic, and we are figuring out how to incorporate new technological ways of connecting even as we have gotten back to business as usual.

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)

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:
 - Facilities planning; COVID mitigation (Oct. 14, 2021, via Zoom)
 - Mental health and wellness (Jan. 13, 2022, via Zoom)
 - Curriculum/Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI)/Sexual health (March 17, 2022, via Zoom)
 - April 21, 2022 (TBD)
 - May 19, 2022 (TBD)
- 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 Baker.
 - *2021-22 Meetings*
 - Oct. 18, 2021, District Office
 - Nov. 10, 2021, via Zoom
 - Jan. 12, 2022, via Zoom
 - Feb. 14, 2022, via Zoom
 - March 16, 2022, via Zoom

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- April 20, 2022, TBD
- May 18, 2022, via Zoom
- June 8, 2022, TBD
- 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:
 - Summer 2021: <https://www.flipsnack.com/bellinghamschools/insideschools-summer-2021/full-view.html>
 - Fall 2021: <https://www.flipsnack.com/bellinghamschools/insideschools-fall-21/full-view.html>
 - Winter 2022: (to be posted soon)
- 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 2021-22 edition is linked below
 - Priorities for Progress 2021-22:
<https://www.flipsnack.com/bellinghamschools/priorities-for-progress-2021-22.html>

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