



MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Directors

From: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

Date: April 20, 2022

Subject: **Monitoring Report for EL-8, District Calendar**

I certify that the following is accurate as of April 20, 2022. The reporting period is from April 15, 2021 through April 20, 2022.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation

Policy: [EL-8 District Calendar](#)

“The Superintendent, in preparing the district calendar, shall not fail to appropriately involve stakeholder groups and timely communicate the calendar and any changes.”

Adopted: September 10, 2009

Reviewed/Revised: January 10, 2013; April 21, 2016, April 20, 2017

Interpretation of Items: None in question.

Background Information: This report is about Executive Limitation 8 – District Calendar (EL-8). It was formerly known as EL-16 District Calendar. Information indicating compliance for each of the areas is presented below.

*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.*

Prepare a district calendar that optimizes teaching and learning throughout the year, supports whole child learning and considers typical family constraints.

The school calendar is a subject of bargaining and was a significant part of our discussion during our last negotiations with the Bellingham Education Association (BEA) in 2020. Those negotiations with the BEA resulted in a new three-year contract and calendars for the years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. In addition to those negotiations, the district meets with other union leaders that are most affected by the school calendar, such as our paraeducators and administrative assistants who work the school calendar schedule.

As shared in last year's report, the common components of these calendars that are included in contract language with BEA are:

- Parameters for school start date, winter and spring breaks.
- Two staff learning days (purple days) prior to the first day of school.
- Staff learning days embedded into the calendar. One in each month of September, October, November and March.
- Semester break day in January to allow staff to finalize grading and prepare for second semester.
- Eight all district early dismissal days including the day before Thanksgiving and the last day of school.
- Specific time for conferencing and family engagement in November.
- Built-in designated snow make-up day in May.

On March 31 of this year, our annual calendar committee met to discuss the 2023-24 calendar. Our goal was to determine key dates such as the first day of school, winter and spring breaks and a tentative last day of school. The committee has just completed their work and sent our recommendations to the superintendent and BEA president. Once finalized, we will post these key dates so families and staff will be able to best plan their schedules.

The 2022-23 school year will be the final year of our BEA contract, so next winter/spring we will be entering into negotiations. Many of the other calendar components such as the number of and specific dates for staff learning days (purple days) and early releases will be determined. Staff learning days and districtwide early release days continue to provide valuable time for staff professional development to improve teaching and learning and engage with families.

As reported last year, one new calendar component for the 2021-22 calendar was the addition of snow make-up days in March and May. Our contract language with BEA states that if needed due to inclement weather, the May date would be the first make-up day used followed by the conversion of the March staff learning day into a school day. The purpose of “building in” snow make-up days is to allow the last day of school to be more consistent instead of adding days to the last projected day of the year. **This year, due to flooding and snow, we will convert two of these days to student school days. The district applied to the state to waive one of the three inclement weather days. The waiver has recently been granted and therefore the last student day will be Friday, June 17, 2022, as previously planned. The district will be working with school year staff to make up the work time for the waived student day.**

The [2021-22](#) and [2022-23](#) calendars have been communicated to staff and families and can be viewed on our [calendars webpage on our website](#).

Prepare a district calendar that provides adequate collaborative and professional development time for staff in the pursuit of effective instruction.

We recognized that as students came back to school this past fall, teachers needed as much time and support as possible to ensure they could meet each student where they were and move them forward with their learning. In addition, the pandemic put an acute level of pressure on our ability to cover staff absences and as such we became creative with deploying instructional coaches and district office personnel into our schools for support. As the year ramped up, our department of teaching and learning team recognized some adjustments were needed to support teachers in their additional focus on students. Efforts to prioritize this need included letting go of some planned additional professional learning and curriculum work, or putting plans otherwise intended for this school year on pause. **Examples include:**

- Moving our curriculum work in elementary science to next year, and not starting this additional curriculum development effort.
- Turning over scheduled time for districtwide professional development back to teachers for their own individual planning and family engagement time.
- Deploying instructional coaches in the schools to serve as substitute teachers on days when we need to support a high number of absences.
- Deploying members of the department of teaching and learning team to provide additional supports in schools on days with high absences; team members have stepped in all year to substitute for absent teachers, principals and classified staff members on days when absences would have otherwise overwhelmed schools.

Even though our professional development plans were revised as shared above, there were many professional development opportunities that were shared in [EL-4](#), including **an added emphasis**

of equity, diversity and inclusion that has been woven through our professional learning plans and practices.

Additionally, below is an artifact from job-alike professional development opportunities this past fall.

**Elementary Job-Alike, September 30 & October 28
(Elementary Early Dismissal Days)**

Group	Content 9/30	Content 10/28
PreK & K	WaKIDS time (i-ready training on 1/6 ER)	Really Great Reading Module 3
Grades 1-2	I-Ready training	i-Ready training on Data Use
Grades 3-5	Inquiry and Equity led by Instructional Coaches	Inquiry, Social Studies, STI led by Instructional Coaches
LMS	I-Ready Training	Book study on Developing Digital Detectives
Music	Content area collaboration	Content area collaboration
PE	Align practices with Bellingham Promise, WA PE Standards, and program district wide	Align practices with Bellingham Promise, WA PE Standards, and program district wide
BRIDGES & Life Skills & AIMS	i-Ready training	With grades 1 & 2 Teacher for i-Ready data use training, or Teaming/working on Individual Student Plans
Resource	i-Ready training	i-Ready training on Data Use
Elem SLP, OT, PT, Psychs	i-Ready training	i-Ready training on Data Use
Counselors	Mental and behavioral health topics	Suicide prevention protocols Tier 2 behavioral supports
Multilingual Learner Specialists	i-Ready training	WIDA assessment purpose, intention, and training
Math Specialists	Foundational Mathematics	Foundational math skills/Intervention
Literacy Specialists	i-Ready Training	i-Ready Training on Data use

Secondary Job Alike, October 15 (Staff Learning “Purple” Day)

Job alike group	DTL Lead	Facilitator(s)	October 15 content
MS ELA/SS	Charisse and Jenny	Yana Mansfield	Paul V. Regelbrugge Holocaust Center for Humanity; Classroom based Assessment questions and alignment
MS Health/PE	Trina/Laurel	Carrie Pasquale	Round Table - Issues in MS PE - with Westerns' Secondary Ed PE professor, Dr. Nick Washburn
MS Math & MS Resource T's	Charisse	Tyler Dockins	Desmos implementation support
MS CTE	Jeff	Heather Steele	CPR – 1 st Aide, Precision Exams – You Science, Procurement
MS Science	Bill	Lynnelle Larson	Review curriculum modifications, common assessment planning, and ambitious science teaching / modeling resources.
MS/HS Music	Mike C.	Kirstin Doud & Jenny Rothnie	Music teachers will begin together, then MS will break off to a separate location.
Drama	Mike C.		Invited to join music; some drama teachers teach both English and Drama; others teach Music and Drama
6-12 Art	Mike C.	Magon Hamilton Cathy Gersich	Art teacher meeting
MS Counselors	Keith/Chris	Kevin Terpstra	Collaboration on relevant agenda items generated by team
MS World Lang	Amy	With HS	In process
High School Resource, 9-12	Bethany Verner	Mary Lippiatt	Description in Pro Dev course; Math, Rdg, Writing, EDI
Secondary Bridges Staff	Bethany Verner	Ryan Leckie	Program professional development inclusion process, Online Data Tracker PD, Peer EBD review
HS Resource	Bethany Verner	Mary Lippiatt	Look at new math curriculum, ELA, and EDI
Secondary Life Skills Teachers	Bethany Verner		Understanding of extended school year, special education manual, assistive technology, and use of paras
Multilingual Learner Specialists, 6-12	Amy C.	Becky Donnino Erin Sebbby	Review first 30 days expectations. Next steps with student portraits and ELD professional learning plans.
CTE 9-12	Jeff	Heather Steele	CPR – 1 st Aide; Precision Exams – You Science; Procurement
English 9-12	Jenny/Jay	Chimere Hackney Katie Jones	Grading Practices/strategies for facilitating difficult topics/organizing systems for course collaboration
Health/PE 9-12	Trina/Laurel	Darin Nolan	Cross district collaboration and sharing
Math 9-12	Charisse	Rey Ramos	HS course alignment and materials next steps. Equitable Teaching Practices
Science 9-12	Bill	Joe Balsiger	OpenSciEd Review: Share field testing resources with HS science teachers.
Social Studies 9-12	Charisse		Paul V. Regelbrugge, Holocaust Center for Humanity; Course alike collaboration. Civics CBA; New courses?
World Languages 6-12	Amy	Mary Hooker	Options: problems of practice, book discussion, curriculum work common assessments, SBG, Comprehensible Input Techniques, Vertical Alignment of Cultural Themes (i.e., AP themes)
Counselors (9-12)	Keith/Chris C.	Aramis Johnson	Agenda of relevant topics being developed
6-12 LMS	Bill	Eric Bachmeier	Library program, change in data base review
HS Ethnic Studies	Janis		Ethnic studies pedagogies

▪ **Reduce time that teachers are out of the classroom for professional development**

A goal when our calendar was created several years ago with embedded staff learning days was to significantly reduce the time that teachers are out of the classroom for professional development. Our goal was a 50 percent reduction of absences related to professional development. Based on the final data for 2018-19 and the data prior to school closure in March of 2020, it shows an overall decrease of 43 to 49 percent. As you can see in the chart below, absences for professional development purposes have continued to reduce each year. This data does not take into account that the number of certificated staff has continued to increase significantly over the same time period. Based on our current schedules, remote learning and other factors, we were not able to further compute data that is consistent with previous years. **In this past year, school districts have been greatly challenged to cover all staffing needs, especially with substitute teachers and paraeducators. In addition, staff absenteeism has been higher than normal. For this reason, we have only allowed professional development during a school day to occur on very rare occasions.**

Certificated Staff Absences by Year for Professional Development							
	2013-14 Baseline Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 Prior to School Closure
Total No. of Certificated Absences	4,958	4,495	3,799	3,287	3060	2818	1650
Percent of Decrease from Baseline Year		9.3%	23.4%	34%	38%	43%	49%

▪ **Develop intentional time for student and family engagement**

The pandemic brought with it many new challenges not faced before in our district. As the virus has waned and a semblance of normalcy is beginning to return to our schools, we reflected on both the challenges of this past year as well as the accomplishments. **Efforts of our family engagement team have been crucial to supporting families, community, students and staff through this period, moving well beyond the constraints of our typical calendared “workdays” to include weekend and evening efforts to keep families and students safe. A few examples follow of the work from this past year:**

- We worked within our system and with community partners to promote and execute vaccinations for staff and students. Our efforts included educating families on the power of vaccines and working to include as many families as possible in the effort. Members of the family engagement team created videos about the benefits of the vaccine, and promoted and supported many vaccine clinics in our area.
- Our district also hosted vaccine clinics in our schools, and our efforts resulted in clinics with some of the highest attendance numbers in the county. This was a result of the effort and commitment of many of our staff. This school year we have coordinated eighteen clinics in schools, and provided 1,958 doses, including 860 doses for kids 5-11 years old. This brings the total COVID vaccine doses we coordinated to 4,428 (this includes appointments at the PeaceHealth clinic, clinics for staff, and clinics in high schools). Additionally, we have provided information to families and staff on how to access vaccines beyond our clinics (e.g., at local pharmacies).
- Our Family Resource Center (FRC) became a COVID testing center as did many of our schools. At certain points, the FRC reported numbers between 80 and 100 tests in one day. Having testing at the FRC and schools was an invaluable support to our families who were unable to get an appointment at regular testing centers or labs. This was critical as well for some of our families who had barriers or had a high degree of fear to venture out into the community at large. The FRC is a trusted site with language, cultural, technology and other supports making it possible for us to take down barriers. We are confident that during this challenging time we further strengthened our trust and communication with our families.
- There have been so many positive interactions and supports that have taken place this year even with its challenges. Our family and homeless liaisons were once again able to visit families in their homes or shelters, remove barriers and continue to build and nurture trusting relationships – we tried to do this as much as possible on the phone, but nothing takes the place of meeting with a family in person where they live! We have worked side by side with World Relief and welcomed our first refugee families to our district. Our team and the school staff where the children enrolled have done an outstanding job to support these new refugee families.
- We opened a new and improved FRC at Carl Cozier which becomes more active daily – and this has occurred even before our announcements and promotion of our new site, which is coming soon. This FRC will serve an even greater community in this area and we are very excited about its potential! We have also opened a storage portable next to the FRC at Shuksan Middle School where families can pick up larger items such as beds. The storage portable has also made it possible to receive and store large quantities of personal care items such as coats, beds, etc. which allows us to provide support for a family more quickly. Our shelves are now never empty, and we are serving hundreds of families every month. We continue to grow our partnerships with the community at large which has allowed us to extend our support of other needs to our students and their families.

- The pandemic has deeply affected our communities of color and our Latinx community was in need of additional support. For that reason, Isabel Meaker and members of the family engagement team started Conexiones Latinx (Latinx Connections). This group of twenty-five to thirty-five parents got together via Zoom to talk about self-care, mental health, depression, and suicide prevention.
- This work has provided a powerful conversation with our Latinx community. The parent leaders from last year's Parent Academy decided it was a good idea to hear from as many parents as possible – from this group and their work, Nuestras Voces (Our Voices) was born. The family engagement team has supported groups in person, via Zoom, phone and through a Qualtrics survey. It has been great hearing from so many families! It is our hope to share our findings with the district, our schools and the board as soon as information is gathered.

Timely communication of calendar and calendar changes to all stakeholders and the board.

We work diligently to share calendar updates as quickly as possible with the board, staff, students and other stakeholders.

Our school year calendar and daily schedule were significantly impacted throughout the pandemic. During this reporting period, we transitioned in April 2021 from a hybrid schedule for grades 4-12 to a schedule with more in-person days [and sent communications](#) in a variety of ways to staff and families, including email, text messages and phone calls, which are translated into multiple languages. It was also posted to our website and social media. Our principals and staff also helped share this news with staff and families in their school-based communications, such as e-newsletters and Seesaw, which is consistent with our practice of sending calendar and schedule shifts through a variety of media and notification platforms.

Our typical communications protocol is to send reminders about planned days off via email and social media, such as this [announcement](#). We continued that practice throughout this reporting period.

Below: Instagram post ahead of the planned day off on May 21, 2021. Instagram engages our students more than Facebook.



The first day of school and back-to-school events and orientations are sent in a multitude of ways, with [reminders in messaging](#), including [email](#), text, school-based communication and within the annual [Family Handbook](#), which is mailed to all families. The handbook includes both a long form calendar and the “[bubble calendar](#).” We update and maintain our [calendar webpage](#) regularly.

Below: Sample of a calendar page from the Family Handbook and the one-page “bubble calendar.”



■ Inclement weather impact on calendar

We cancelled school two days in November due to flooding and poor road conditions, and we sent [messages](#) to staff, families, media and our community list the night before to put them on alert to monitor email, phones, our website, media and social media for information in the morning.

Below: Two weather-related social media posts from mid-November 2021.

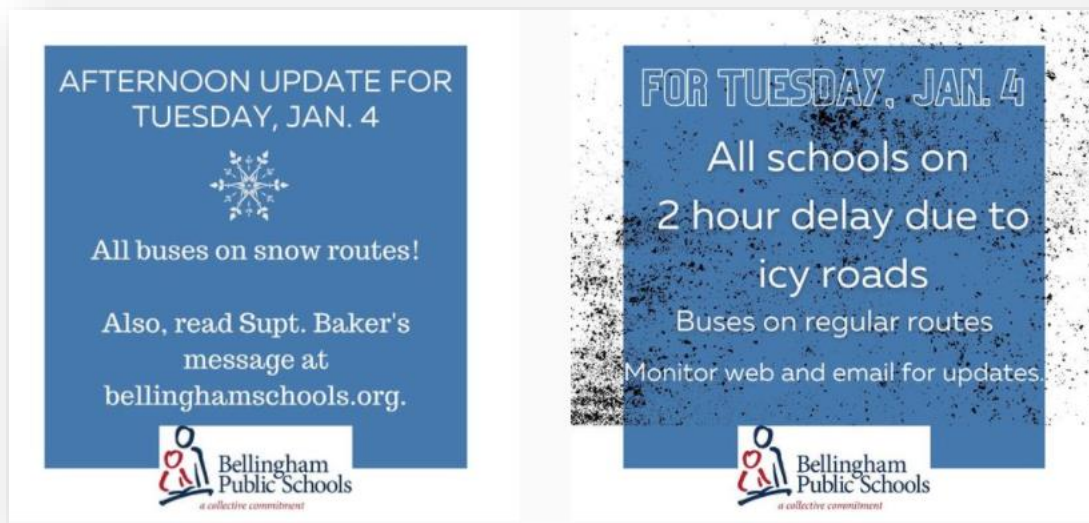


When we close school, Dr. Baker often sends out a [follow up message with reflections and context](#) to acknowledge the inconvenience of closing as well as the importance of keeping our staff, students and families safe.

Later in November, we sent out our weather protocols and [reminders to staff and families](#), which mostly focuses on expectations around snow-related delays, snow bus routes and closures.

In early January, we were on a [delayed schedule](#) due to snow for multiple days in a row [and closed school for one day during that snow storm](#). We have not called a two-hour delay in many years (even pre-pandemic), but it was particularly handy during this weather system because the extra two hours meant warmer temperatures and improved conditions. The additional time also allows staff to prepare school sites, including sidewalks, entrances and parking lots. Running school on a delayed schedule (as opposed to cancelling) means fewer make up days for staff and students.

Below: Sample social media posts in January 2022 about icy conditions impacting buses and school start times.



We followed up with our community in early February to announce that the [built-in snow days were transitioning to regular school days](#).

We shared a [calendar update in March](#) with **finalized graduation dates and confirmation that the last day of school** wasn't changing based on the state approving our request to waive one student day.

The transportation director, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning, assistant superintendent of human resources, executive director of operations, the superintendent, and executive director of communications and community relations work closely to ensure staff, students, families and community members are notified of any changes to bus routes or the school closure in a timely manner in a variety of ways (in both English and Spanish). Families and staff may opt to receive early morning text and email messages regarding emergency information. This information is shared via our district message line in English and four other languages through the multi-language message line, broadcasted by local media, posted on our website and posted on social media.

Statement of compliance:

The superintendent is **in compliance** with EL-8 District Calendar.