



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: October 6, 2021
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-10, Race and Equity

I certify that the following is accurate as of October 6, 2021. The reporting period is from the completion date of the last report on this Executive Limitation (January 7, 2021) to 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:** Under the direction of the Department of Teaching and Learning, the district has developed a response system to record, track, and analyze patterns of incidents based on bias and hate, as well

as provide support for targets of such incidents. Schools will be engaged in training and implementation of the bias program to ensure a safe and supportive process. Quarterly reports based on evidence, data, and patterns will highlight the ways in which incidents of hate speech or bias regarding race, religious belief, sexual orientation or other forms of discrimination occur in our schools and how they are resolved. Additional training that addresses the patterns will be offered following the quarterly reports.

- *Update:* District response team efforts to support staff, students, and families when incidents of bias, racism, anti-LGBTQ, or anti-Semitic actions occur continue in conjunction with the response system noted above.

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:* As a part of our continuing engagement with consultant, Malcolm Oliver, working in collaboration with our human resources staff, we have developed recruitment fairs within our local Russian and Punjabi communities. Over ten new staff members were added to the district as a direct result of these fairs.
- *New:* Establishment of employee resource groups (ERS), a district retention and support program for employees who elect into identity groups, is in development. Employee resource groups connect staff based on specified identity groups, allowing for community, connection, and trust-building within work environments. This effort builds on an organized affinity group for our staff members of color that has been underway since spring of 2020 and referenced in a prior report.
- *New/Update:* Under the direction of Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Janis Velasquez-Farmer, we continue to develop our professional learning efforts in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), including multiple new professional development courses for staff members in jobs that vary from teachers to administrators to paraeducators. The list of recent courses offered can be found [here](#).
- *Update:* Our Human Resources department tracks applications of ethnic minority candidates annually, and the most recent data shows that of the applicants who identified themselves in one of the federal racial categories, more than 20 percent were non-white for the hiring year just concluded (end of September 2021) which is an increase in year-over-year comparisons.
- *Update:* District Mental Health Coordinator, Chris Cochran, continues to provide oversight and coordination support with our various community mental health partners. In addition, we have recently added a second school-based mental health specialist to our student services team.

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:* As noted above, the district has added multiple staff members who grow our diversity as a direct result of job fairs conducted within the Russian and Punjabi communities. Our Human Resources department's continual work is to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce.
- *New:* Our EDI team utilized intern support from one WWU sociology and communications student during the last school year.
- *Update:* Continuing into its fifth year, our high school Teacher Academy program is working hard to prepare our future teachers. The teacher team leading that effort includes Lori French at Bellingham High School (BHS), Mary Hooker at Sehome High School (SHS), and Angelica Garcia at Squalicum High School (SQHS). The team is continuing to broaden recruiting efforts with teaching colleagues to expand placements for students to gain the valuable experience of working directly with a classroom teacher and students.

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:* The catalyst for change in the Bellingham High School mascot was a meeting with students in September of 2020. Many students involved in that original meeting served on the task force that was formed and led by Bellingham High School principal, Dr. Wise-Miller, and Dr. Velasquez-Farmer and who met over this past spring of 2021. The work of that task force resulted in the adoption of a new mascot for the school—The Bayhawk.
- *Update:* The importance of seeking out opportunities to hear from and support the full range of students and families in our community has continued to have added significance during the COVID-19 crisis. The work of the Family Engagement team, under the direction of Executive Director Isabel Meaker, continued seeking out and supporting families with limited or zero technology access available in their homes through last spring and into the summer. Executive Director Kurt Gazow and the technology department team worked tirelessly to support this work, resulting in 100 percent connection with computer devices, the internet and hot spots.
- *Update:* The superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, which includes two representatives from each of our four high schools, has continued to meet monthly with the superintendent to discuss issues and provide feedback.
- *New:* Our Prevention-Intervention Specialists facilitate Peer-centered Outreach (PCO) and Peer-centered Support (PCS) groups at our high schools, while also providing individual support for students in need throughout the school day. PCO groups provide students with opportunities to identify issues that are important to them and their peers, and then determine the best ways to meet those needs. Student voices are central, both in the group process and in the outreach and support they provide for their peers. This past year these groups formed in our high schools via student leadership and connection.

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:* The @bellingshamschoolsedi Instagram account provides culturally relevant information and supplements resources available on the EDI webpage. The Instagram account highlights celebrations and observances while providing teaching and learning opportunities centered on diverse communities.
- *New:* Frequent district communication and engagement on educational topics related to equity, diversity and inclusion is now occurring on the EDI blogpost located [here](#).
- *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. Frequent communication occurs through various methods such as email exchanges, phone calls, and video chats. Communication revolves around engaging with parents or community members who may agree or disagree with something they have read or heard related to our district's work in EDI, or who have questions about our work in this area.
- *Update:* Monthly dialogues with the Parent Advisory Committee continued this past year, and two agendas from those meetings focused specifically on EDI-related issues. The January 14, 2021, meeting, for example, highlighted recent revisions to our strategic plan to include EDI as a key strategy and the school board's executive limitation (EL)-10. In addition, team members shared information about the ethnic studies class being offered in our high schools and our district's overall approach to EDI and what it means for our students and community in teaching and learning. Dr. Velasquez-Farmer shared monthly newsletters to staff and families, which include information about holidays, heritage months and resources.
- *Update:* The Family Engagement team and the technology team provided support and connected teachers, staff and students district-wide during this past school year (2020-21) when students began one hundred percent online and continued to be partially online for the remainder of the year. Two potential barriers were successfully navigated, including the provision of support for families whose home language is not English and support for families who were unfamiliar with available technology. No known need went unaddressed through the collaborative efforts of our Family Engagement and technology teams.
- *Update:* By adding resources to the Family Engagement team, we have supported a great increase in the translation and interpretation of messages in all main languages to families and the community.

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:* A cross-organization workgroup connecting Bellingham Public Schools (BPS), Lummi Nation, and Nooksack Tribe continues to meet to finalize a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in direct support of the implementation of Since Time Immemorial (STI) curriculum in all schools. Focused on building relationships first, multiple iterations of the MOU have been explored to align all parties with common goals, leading towards a district-wide implementation of the STI curriculum.
- *New:* Attendance area changes in the middle schools have resulted in a distribution of students that more accurately represents the diversity of the school district within each school.
- *New:* Department of Teaching and Learning leaders are working on improving clear ongoing communication about what is taught in our schools that is easily accessible via the district website.
- *Ongoing:* The course in ethnic studies continues to be taught in our high schools, following a successful inaugural launch last year. During the 2020-21 school year, 179 students across BHS, SHS and SQHS participated in the course. In the first semester of the current school year another 81 students are enrolled. Options High School is in the process of getting a staff member trained and able to offer this course in the future.
- *Ongoing:* Leaders and teachers in special education continue to work to improve programs and practices that foster inclusion of all students across our schools. Examples include the co-teaching work at Sehome High School which was featured as a demonstration site by the Haring Center at the University of Washington. The co-teaching model integrates students with disabilities into general education core classes and enrichment classes. Teachers in a high functioning co-teaching arrangement share the instructional responsibilities equally, and both are understood as teachers for all students in the class.
- *Ongoing:* We have continued our focus on equity and culturally responsive instructional practices in the ongoing work on curricular alignment in grades 3-8.

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:* The EDI team provided multiple learning opportunities for the district, some in collaboration with educational partners, to address equity and bias, including:
 - Speakers on race, inclusion, and diversity
 - Panels for heritage and history observances
 - Events to support teaching and learning about equity and diversity
 - Fundamental Course of Studies (FCS) training for paraeducators
 - Racial battle fatigue training for leadership team
 - Monthly newsletters to increase awareness of cultural observances, events, and teaching and learning support

- *New:* School leadership teams engaged in professional development planning through a day and one-half opportunity prior to the start of the school year (August 11 & 12, 2021). Teams included the principal, instructional coach, and other key leaders from each site. Focus for the year included planning for ongoing, site-based work in equity, diversity and inclusion.
- *Ongoing:* The Parent Leadership Academy, developed by the family engagement team, focused on helping parents learn technology skills continues. Last year, Cohort 1 was an incredible success with 100 percent attendance at every meeting. The Family Engagement team has recruited and trained a second cohort since we last reported.

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/Ongoing:* Our ongoing professional learning continues with Lummi Nation (and Western Washington University) partners to increase our knowledge and implementation of STI and to value the funds of knowledge inherent in that work and implement more culturally responsive practices with particular attention to our Native students. While there are STI lessons available, our goal is not to treat STI as a “check the box” requirement. We are working on improving our relationships with Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe to be better neighbors and to better support our Native students through instructional practices and with more diverse curricular materials.
- *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.