



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors  
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent  
DATE: October 6, 2025  
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-10, Race and Equity

I certify that the following is accurate as of October 6, 2025. The reporting period is from the completion date of the last report on this Executive Limitation (October 5, 2024) 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, “The superintendent shall not fail to interrupt factors that perpetuate systemic inequities and/or practices that contribute to over 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.**

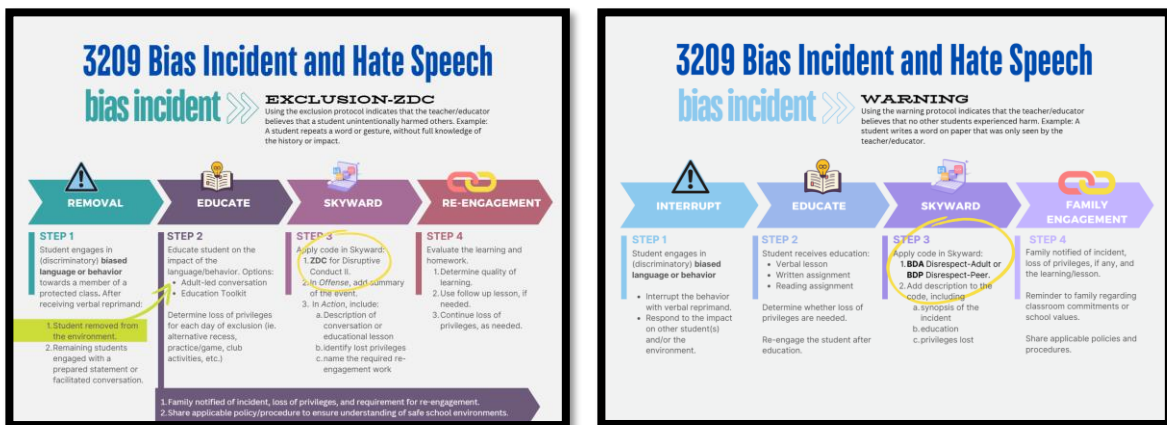
**Interpretation:** Through the direction provided by the superintendent, the administrative team and staff have demonstrated reasonable efforts to implement processes for reporting, processing, tracking and resolving incidents of bias, racism or hate speech of other kinds that occur.

**Evidence of Compliance:**

- **New/Update: Bias Incident and Hate Speech Policy Training** - Trainings on policy/procedure 3209 Bias Incident and Hate Speech continued throughout the year. At each level meeting (elementary, middle and high), principals were guided through a process

of reading and understanding the policy and procedure. This training included time to review scenarios that would meet the definition of a bias incident or hate speech and to discuss appropriate steps to interrupt the behavior. This is ongoing work, and our principals continue to reflect upon the process and the documentation of each incident. Leaders have a clear understanding of the expectation to interpret the behavior and know how to ask for district-level support if needed.

- **New/Update: Clarity of 3209 Protocols-** A goal during the 2024-25 school year was to respond accurately and systematically to incidents of bias and hate speech in all schools. It is important that our students of color know adults in the system will respond appropriately, no matter the location or adults who are intervening. To develop clarity around the process, the team created step-by-step protocol cards to guide building leaders through the process. These cards provided a high degree of support and were received positively by our principals.



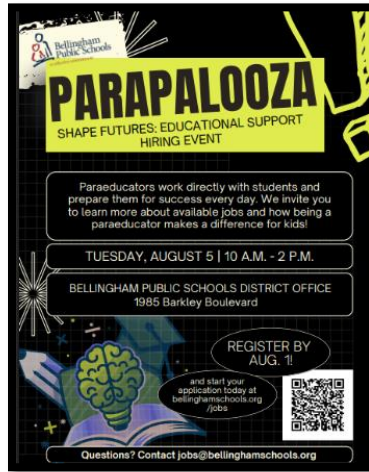
**2a. The superintendent shall not fail to recruit, employ, support, retain and continuously develop a workforce of culturally responsive staff.**

**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: Parapalooza 2025** – Recognizing the district's ongoing need for paraeducators and the challenges of filling vacant positions, the Human Resources department developed a proactive approach to recruitment by hosting the first Parapalooza event in August 2025. This event was open to the community and invited people to learn more about working for Bellingham Public Schools, to get help with the application process, to meet with HR team members and to sign up for interviews. There were over 180 participants, many of whom were interviewed and hired into paraeducator positions for the 2025-26 school year. Of the

individuals who participated in the Parapalooza, 23% identified as mixed race or a race other than white.



- **New/Update: Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)** – This staff resource continues to grow and connect employees socially and professionally based on shared identities. ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that foster community connections within the district. ERGs in Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) serve to improve work relationships and conditions through advocacy, support and professional development in alignment with The Bellingham Promise. There are currently six active Employee Resource Groups:
  - *Staff of Color Coalition*
  - *Jewish Community*
  - *Black Legacy*
  - *Latinx Connection*
  - *LGBTQ+ Employees Alliance*
  - *Multiracial Employees Coalition*

A goal of the Human Resources Department is to increase the number of ERGs available for staff. Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Matt Whitten presented information at each of our principal level meetings, encouraging our leaders to promote ERGs at the building level and to direct interested staff to the website at: [BPS Employee Resource Groups](#).

## **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: Five Year Affirmative Action Report** – The District's affirmative action plan is guided by the five-year affirmative action report. This report was updated in 2024 to articulate areas of focus for the next five years, 2025-2030. Please review the full report here: [Affirmative](#)

[Action Plan, 2025-2030](#). The report uses a utilization percentage to determine whether the district's representation of women and minority employees is aligned with the available workforce in the area. This report celebrates past efforts to diversify staff as evidenced by the percentage of staff of color in many of the employee groups. There is also a renewed commitment to continue working on recruiting and retaining teachers of color in our system. Specifically, the district's goal is to increase its minority utilization by 3% to a total utilization percentage of 12.67% (25 employees) through the following recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies:

- Targeted recruitment efforts, both regionally and nationally.
  - Continue to host job fairs, such as the BIPOC fair, to increase interest from diverse candidates.
  - Partner with Western Washington University (WWU).
  - Continue to analyze hiring processes to ensure the process is bias-free.
  - Train all staff on culturally relevant practices in the workplace to ensure a welcoming environment for staff of color.
- **Update: Bilingual Stipend** - For the 2024-2025 school year, 20 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 because of the contractual agreement. Of these, six employees represent administrative assistant positions, nine serve as paraeducators, three as health services assistants and two employees who work at the district office. Notably, we have several employees who receive this stipend for multiple languages that they use daily in our schools.

**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. The intention of this effort is to create spaces where students feel seen, valued and respected in our school communities.

**Evidence of Compliance**

- **New: Creando Connections** - Birchwood Elementary is working to elevate the voices and pride of our Latino students. This year Dean of Students Rodolfo Rivere started the *Creando Connections* lunch club with twenty-five fourth and fifth grade students. Kids were excited and eager to start building their leadership skills, learn about their culture, and represent their community. He partnered with ML specialist Nelly Reyes to deliver lessons rooted in self-awareness, collaboration, communication, and decision-making, through culturally affirming activities that celebrate Latino identity and promote pride,

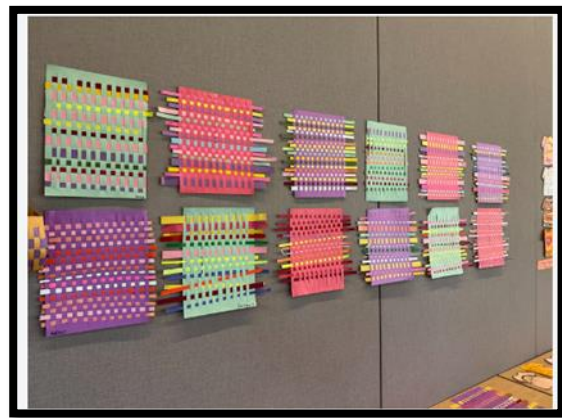
voice, and agency. Students are creating a podcast for their school community that will be shared at assemblies.



- **New: Elementary Black Student Union (BSU)** – Happy Valley Elementary started the first elementary BSU during the 2024-25 school year. This is a student- and parent-led club that meets weekly after school. There were nine students, grades kindergarten through fifth grade, who participated throughout the year. The club is intended to be a joyful space for students to connect and engage in fun activities that center Black joy and excellence. Creating spaces like this helps students and families feel cared for and respected in ways that are also identity-affirming. This year, the club is expected to grow and students/families from other elementary schools will be invited to join.
- **New/Update: High School Leadership Opportunities** - Each of our high schools intentionally creates opportunities to center the voices of students from diverse backgrounds. Examples of this work include a focus on multi-cultural clubs such as the Black Student Union, La Chispa, the Multi-Racial Society Club and the Native American Student Union, as well as school-wide events to educate and celebrate student identity. In each building, students lead events that celebrate specific cultures throughout the year. At Sehome, for example, students hosted the Ebony Gala last February, which was an event that celebrated Black excellence in the school and in the Bellingham community. The night included opportunities to share stories and experiences and to hear from Black leaders in the community. Another example at Bellingham High School is that student groups are leaders in school-wide assemblies that honor and educate others about heritage months.
- **New/Update: Student Advisory Committee (SACs) to the Superintendent.** The superintendent has valued the input from the student advisory committee for many years. In the past, we brought representatives from each of the four high schools together to discuss district-wide issues. During the 2024-25 school year, we tried a new format in which we met with each school separately. The principal facilitated a conversation based on student and school interest. In part, this was done to broaden the number of voices that were invited to meet with the superintendent. Each school determined which students to include and the format for the meeting. For example, at

Squalicum High School, there was a large group of students, representing diverse groups. The topics for discussion included feeling safe in our schools, the political culture and the student experience. Sehome's group was comprised primarily of student leaders who wanted to discuss issues pertinent to the school day experience such as lunch schedules and access to courses. This format provided new perspectives and flexibility of content that was most relevant to the students. The following reflects the schedule during the 2024-25 school year.

- Oct. 15 - Options
  - Nov. 4 - Sehome
  - Dec. 16 - Squalicum
  - Jan. 27 - Bellingham
  - March 31 - Squalicum
- 
- **Update: 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Community Night.**  
The event took place at the District Office with visitors engaging in learning and community throughout the building. Student work from all grade levels was displayed across windows and walls and students of all ages gave presentations based on their studies in the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) curriculum, which is required to be implemented statewide in Washington. The showcase gave examples of students learning about tribal history and sovereignty, as well as about cultural traditions. Students also presented their work to an audience of community members, families and staff. One middle school student shared in her presentation that learning tribal history is an important step toward recognition and reconciliation while other elementary students presented their studies about fishing rights and tribal activist Billy Frank Jr. A Squalicum high school student also shared her experience as a member of the Native American Student Union and how this fellowship inspired her to create schoolwide learning opportunities around Truth and Reconciliation Day, Native American Heritage Month and Treaty Day.



**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: Sports Readiness Program** – The District has implemented a Sports Readiness Program to ensure that all students can participate in school sports, regardless of financial barriers. Many families face challenges in accessing the resources needed for their children to join athletic programs, and this initiative is designed to bridge that gap. Throughout the year, we host events that help families navigate the process of signing up for seasonal sports, including support with Final Forms (an online program) registration. In partnership with PeaceHealth, we also offer free sports physicals to ensure students are ready to play. Additionally, we collaborate with the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation to provide financial assistance for purchasing essential sports equipment that may not be covered by the school. Together, we are working to make sports accessible and inclusive for every student.
- **New: 3rd Annual John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial Community Night** – As previously mentioned, the district hosted another powerful night of celebrating Indigenous culture. A new aspect of the evening included a strong partnership with local Tribes and community organizations. Community partners filled the District Office, sharing information at tables, selling beadwork, jewelry, artwork, clothing, and books. Local Nooksack storytellers and book illustrators shared upcoming projects, and Village Books partnered to feature local Indigenous authors. Artist Jason LaClair was present with some of his artwork. Other community partners such as Bellingham Public Library, Allied Arts, Whatcom CARE, Western Washington University and Children of the Setting Sun Productions were also present. A salmon dinner was provided by a local family and enjoyed by everyone who attended. Finally, West Shore Canoe Family provided a cultural presentation that included the Lummi Nation anthem and a berry season song to honor and open the event. This annual event celebrates collaborative teaching and learning between local tribal nations, Indigenous educators and organizations and all our BPS schools.



- **New/Update: Operation School Bell** – We have an ongoing partnership with Operation School Bell, funded through the Assistance League, which supports families with access to clothing items for students. This year, we were able to give \$100,000 worth of JCPenney gift cards to eight hundred students. Families were invited to the District Office to pick up a gift card for \$125 per child. These funds help ensure students have access to winter coats, shoes and clothing.
- **Update: Fifth Annual Block Party** – In August, the District hosted the fifth annual Block Party at Bellingham High School, with an estimated 1,400 students and family members in attendance. Each school was represented, and students were able to make connections with staff in preparation for the first day of school. Additionally, families received access to resources supported by community organizations. A few examples of our community partnerships include:
  - **PeaceHealth & Family Care Network** – offered seventy-seven onsite sports physicals, provided by six volunteer doctors.
  - **Hoagland Pharmacy** – vaccinated over twenty children.
  - **Bellingham Assistance League & Bellingham Central Lions Club** – gave away six hundred backpacks and hundreds of free books.
  - **Evergreen Beauty College, Northwest Barber Academy and Blessed Hands Braiding Studio** – offered over 130 haircuts and braids completed.
- **Update: ILA Translation Tool** - This year, we extended the ILA to more schools and added AI translator devices. Our staff and students are using small wearable devices for quick communication between students and teachers, in particular new students in the system (kindergarteners and/or new to the country-MLL).

**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: Culinary Arts focused on Culturally Relevant food-** Recognizing the importance of food and culture, Culinary Arts teacher Brian Young intentionally creates opportunities for students to celebrate, share and learn about cuisine from around the world. He has embedded cultural food education in the regular culinary assignment syllabus. For example, students are assigned projects such as TSF foods (Traditional Southern Foods) and Mediterranean Mania, as well as Asian foods exploration. With these assignments, students are exposed to researching the history and cultural relevance of food, traditional means of

preparation and are expected to prepare the meal in ways that best honor the culture and process.

- **New: Dehumanizing lessons-** To support our ongoing work with identifying and interrupting bias and hate speech, there has been a focus on teaching proactive lessons to educate students on dehumanizing language and its impact. This work is happening across our schools. One example to share is from Columbia Elementary School where the principal has created a four-part lesson for third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Each lesson is about 10 minutes long and focuses on developing a stronger understanding of how words and language can dehumanize others in our community. These proactive lessons support students and families in developing a deeper understanding of bias and hate speech. Examples of the lessons include:

- Lesson 1: Humanizing - Identify words/behaviors to create communities of care and respect.
- Lesson 2: Exploring and sharing identity that leads to care and respect.
- Lesson 3: Knowing different parts of identity and ways to avoid dehumanization.
- Lesson 4: Applying our learning through interactive read aloud books.



- **New/Update: Stenbridge Partnership** - Our district has continued the partnership with Dr. Yemi Stenbridge, author of *Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom*. Last year, Dr. Stenbridge provided a two-day residency for twenty teachers from Sehome, Bellingham, Options, Squalicum, and Shuksan. The residency is an extended time of concentrated discussion focusing on issues that live at the intersections of equity and pedagogy. Staff shared that it was the best professional development they had ever had. It made them think about their students and plan for their unique needs and interests.
- **New/Update: Dr. Sonja Cherry Paul, Author/Educator visit** – In partnership with Western Washington University and community organizations, the district welcomed Dr. Sonja Cherry-Paul, author of *Anti-Racist Reading Revolution*, back to Bellingham for a second visit. Dr. Cherry-Paul modeled lessons from her book with fifth grade students at Northern Heights. She also spent time with our principals in an open discussion forum where issues of race, identity and culturally responsive teaching practices were discussed. Our high school students, who are aspiring teachers and part of the Teacher Academy program, also spent time with Dr. Cherry-Paul and asked meaningful questions related to education and race. This partnership is a key element in our literacy work and is foundational to the professional learning of our teachers and leaders.

**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: Elementary Grade Level PLCs** – In partnership with the BEA, we were able to create three opportunities throughout the year to bring grade-level teams together for professional learning. This is a powerful tool to ensure aligned instructional practices. In all three sessions, we focused on aspects of reading instruction, specifically around anti-racist reading practices that center student identity, authorship and provide opportunities for students to see themselves in the books/resources being used in the classroom. A model lesson of an interactive read-aloud was shared with teachers and each teacher received a copy of a high quality, racially diverse text to use in their classroom. The feedback from each session was positive and evidence of teachers using this strategy is clear across our schools. Instructional Coaches continue to support teachers in implementation. This work is ongoing, and the PLCs provided a launch point for continued professional learning.
- **New: Centering Black Excellence Night** – In January, we launched programming for Black History Month and Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action by bringing teachers together to learn about and celebrate blackness. The event highlighted classroom lessons, books and other resources, and included interactive learning opportunities. Lessons focused on empathy were modeled by elementary and secondary teachers and were well attended by educators from across the district. Educators left feeling more prepared to teach about Black History, not just in a specific month, but throughout their instructional practices. The event also coincided with our guest author, Dr. Sonja Cherry-Paul, who led a discussion entitled: *Teaching Justice in A World on Fire: An Intergenerational Dialogue*. This professional learning opportunity and community event was made possible through continued partnership with WWU Woodring College of Education, WWU Center for Equity,

Education, and Diversity (CEED), the WWU Education and Social Justice Minor program, the Compass 2 Campus program, and the WWU Black Student Coalition.

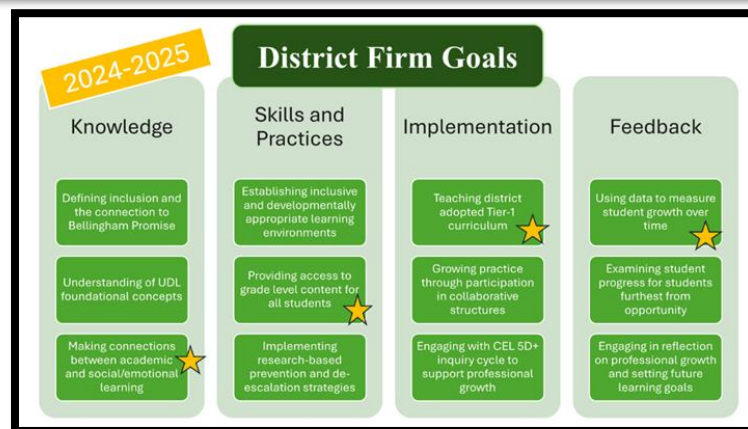


- **New/Update – Firm Goals & MTSS work** – Our focus on multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) was guided by the firm goals articulated at the beginning of the school year. The MTSS committee made progress toward the following goals during the 2024-25 school year:
  - **Making connections between academic and social/emotional learning.**
    - The committee focused on developing resources to support strong attendance in all our schools. This was premised on the understanding that school avoidance often occurs when students are not feeling connected or cared for at school. The MTSS committee developed resources for supporting students and families around attendance and these resources were made available in our Staff Hub.
  - **Providing access to grade level content for all students.**
    - The committee continued to focus on inclusionary practices where all students have access to learning experiences with their peers. This work is ongoing as we continue to coach into the idea of a continuum of services in each of our neighborhood schools.
  - **Teaching district adopted Tier 1 curriculum.**
    - A subcommittee of the larger MTSS committee focused on elementary literacy instruction and articulated the need to develop stronger guidance around Tier 1 literacy instruction at the elementary level. This work began by partnering with WWU Elementary Education instructors to rethink the district’s 2014 Literacy Guide. This work will be ongoing in the 2025-26 school year, with the goal of the committee being the development of an updated Guide for all K-5 teachers.
  - **Using data to measure student growth over time.**
    - The MTSS committee focused on aligning our beliefs and practices around data. Using a variety of resources, the committee developed Data Beliefs that

can be used to guide school leadership teams in decision making processes. These Data Beliefs were shared at the School Leadership Retreat and DTL Staff Video in August 2025 and the MTSS Committee will continue to support school teams in implementing new ways to use data.

**Data guides evidence-based decision-making which leads to purposeful growth.**

1. We center students, families, and their culture.
2. We collaborate to collect data and analyze with curiosity.
3. We use multiple data sources to make informed decisions.
4. We value shared responsibility and actionable dialogue.



- **Update: All Staff Bias and Hate Training** – Over the past few years we have used staff learning time to focus on bias and hate training for all staff. This is a three-part series that builds on previous learning, with the goal of recognizing one’s own socialization, understanding how to interrupt and developing ways to analyze the impact of our collective efforts. Today, all staff in our system have been trained in Part I and II of the series. This year, our focus will continue to ensure our adults engage in Part III, *Accountability Matters*. The following descriptors highlight key learning from each training session.
  - **Bias and hate: Interrupting harm, Part I (60 mins)**
    - Educators use school-based scenarios to practice, increasing skills in recognizing and interrupting bias and hate. These explore the role of socialization and liberatory practices in creating inclusive and respectful school cultures.
  - **Bias and hate: Promoting safety and security, Part II (60 mins)**
    - Builds on Part I by applying policy and procedure to promote proactive safety and cultural responsiveness.

- **Bias and hate: Accountability matters, Part III (90 mins)**
  - Focuses on long-term strategies for sustaining equity and inclusion through personal and collective accountability. Create a collective, district-developed equity audit.
- **Update: Fundamental Course of Study (FCS)-** Each year, our new BASE paraeducators are required to complete 28 hours of learning. These hours can be a combination of online training through the State and district-provided learning opportunities. Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Janis Valesquez Farmer provided five focused training courses centered on concepts of equity and cultural diversity. These sessions were offered as three- or four-hour courses and about seventy-five paraeducators participated. Paraeducators work closely with students and are key communicators in helping a child feel a sense of belonging in our schools. Providing high quality EDI training for this group of employees is essential work.

**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: Book Study: *Solito*** – In August, the district leadership team engaged in a book study, *Solito* by Javier Zamora. This memoir is a firsthand account of the author’s 3,000-mile migration from El Salvador to the United States when he was nine years old. The book recounts a journey that many of our families we serve each day have also endured. It provided the district leadership team an opportunity to learn through the author’s writing and to consider ways in which we support our students and families who have lived through similar experiences. The conversation was powerful and serves as a reminder that we must first connect with families, honor their experiences, and adjust our approach to best support their needs.
- **New: Student Growth Goals** – As part of our teacher evaluation process, teachers are asked to identify student growth goals each year. In the past, these goals focused on whole-group or small-group progress. Last year, the student growth goals were revised and there was a significant shift that asks teachers to consider what the students need rather than what academic measure the teacher wants to focus on. In the new approach, the emphasis is two-fold: (1) teachers spend time getting to know each student as an individual and the class as a whole; and (2) the teacher asks, “what does this group of students need from me this year?” This subtle yet powerful shift in the focus to be student-centered guides the

teacher to consider student growth in a broader context and focus on the funds of knowledge that each student brings to the classroom.

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