



Elementary Literacy Task Force Meeting Notes

October 21, 2025

3:15–4:45 p.m.

Pam Pottle welcomed everyone, thanked members for being part of the Literacy Task Force, and introduced the Literacy Task Force Committee: Ari Feeney, Pam Pottle, Tom Gresham, Jessica Wallace, Andrea Quigley, and Rayna Brandon.

Vision for Task Force Work

Pam reviewed the charter of the Elementary Literacy Task Force, which aims to:

1. Develop a literacy guide for teachers that supports the implementation and sustainability of evidence-based literacy instruction across all 14 Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) elementary schools.
2. Curate a list of resources for teachers to support literacy planning.
3. Align the updated literacy guide with a strong MTSS model of tiered, evidence-based instruction.

Pam shared a chart (Slide 6) showing student assessment data. Green represents students currently meeting proficiency in phonemic awareness and phonics, yellow indicates students ready for grade-level standards, and red shows those needing additional support. Of 4,126 students assessed, 900 across 14 schools fell in the red range.

Previous discussions have centered on Tier 2 and Tier 3 literacy interventions and progress monitoring of foundational skills. While the district has addressed tools, instruction, and learner needs, a key piece of the literacy puzzle remains missing.

The group watched two excerpts from a [literacy development webinar](#) featuring Harvard researchers Pamela Mason, James Kim and Bill Capen, and discussed it in small groups.

Integration

Tom emphasized the importance of integrating reading instruction within subjects such as science and social studies to strengthen language comprehension, background knowledge, and vocabulary. Integration also involves connecting vocabulary and comprehension with writing, as combining encoding with reading fosters deeper learning and more comprehensive literacy development.

Standards

Jessica reviewed highlights of the [new ELA standards released by OSPI](#). Implementation will begin in Fall 2026, meaning BPS is ahead of schedule. These standards will guide the task force's grade-level work groups. Members reviewed key shifts to identify connections with the webinar content, the Active View of Reading, foundational skills, and language comprehension. Jessica noted that these shifts represent a move away from the Common Core standards adopted in 2011.

Grounding Documents

Andrea introduced four grounding documents to establish a shared foundation for the task force's work (Slide 13). Small groups discussed the following:

- **Active View of Reading Chart:** A reader model acknowledging that reading is influenced by text, task, and sociocultural context.
- **Anti-Racist Reading Framework:** Identifies elements missing from the Active View model.
- **Essential Instructional Practices:** Details effective instructional practices by grade band (PK, K–2, 3–5).
- **Continuum of Supports:** Outlines tiered instruction and available resources within an MTSS framework, including common assessments and progress monitoring.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Before the next meeting, members should review *The Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy*.

Upcoming Meetings:

- **All Task Force:** Tuesday, December 2, 3:15–4:45 p.m.
- **Grade-Level Work:**
 - Tuesday, November 4, 11:15 a.m.–3 p.m. (Grades PK–2)
 - Wednesday, November 5, 11:15 a.m.–3 p.m. (Grades 3–5)