



Elementary Literacy Task Force Meeting Notes

December 2, 2025

Location: District Office for Bellingham Public Schools, 1985 Barkley Blvd.

Time: 3:15-4:45 p.m.

Presenters: Pam Pottle, principal of Northern Heights Elementary School (task force co-chair); Jessica Wallace, teacher on special assignment; Andrea Quigley, teacher on special assignment; and Rayna Brandon, highly capable learners liaison.

Connection:

Jessica welcomed the group and introduced a connection activity: *In groups, share the most memorable piece of writing you have created and what made it special to you. Can you find any connections between your memories?* Groups identified commonalities such as emotions, vulnerability, self-chosen topics, purpose, and authenticity.

Review of Previous and Future Work

Andrea explained that the process is not a straight arrow, from point A to point B. In the last meeting, we calibrated on foundational documents. In the grade level meetings held on November 4 and 5, we identified and synthesized grade level themes. Today's meeting will focus on essential practices in literacy. In grade level meetings scheduled for January 13 and 14, we will have an experiential process where we look at a unit and determine what it really takes to build out integrated literacy. In our final group meeting on February 17, we will focus on developing an integrated literacy architecture framework.

Major Themes Identified from PK-5 grade level meetings

In the November grade level meetings groups discussed the instructional implications in three different areas: the active view of reading, anti-racist reading framework, and grade level standards. From this work, major themes were identified:

- Integrated reading and writing across content areas.
- Student identity and authentic engagement.
- Oral language as the foundation.
- Play, Process, and Purposeful learning.
- Writing (narrative, informational, persuasive) moving towards composing a variety of genres.

Reflection

All grade levels reviewed the standards and agreed that they reflect what we aspire to do. However, we need to acknowledge the tension between our aspirational literacy goals and the reality of the structures currently in place. They also questioned how all of this could be achieved without dedicated collaboration time, sustained support, and a clear entry plan.

Groups discussed which theme resonated most strongly with their current experiences or challenges, and why that theme felt particularly relevant to their context. Groups also discussed the following questions: *Looking at these themes, where do you see the biggest gap between our current practice and our aspirations? What would need to shift—in terms of structures, support, or mindset—to move closer to our vision?*

Today's Focus: Essential Instructional Practices in Literacy

Groups were reorganized to include a mix of schools, grade levels, and roles, and asked to share insights on two topics: (1) highlights from the ten practices found in the PK, K-3, 4-5 *Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy* grounding document they read and (2) how these essential practices in literacy support our identified themes.

Pam emphasized the need to define the desired end state for literacy instruction, even as some foundational research remains valid. The task force will leverage its expertise to shape this vision, aiming for a literacy guide that embeds approaches, strategies, and structures within instructional units. A key question posed was how to apply these elements effectively when integrating reading and writing through an inquiry stance.

Digging into Writing and Comprehension/Vocabulary – Work session

Groups were asked to focus their work time on either Writing or Comprehension/Vocabulary—themes that emerged from previous meetings—by moving from a broad theme to considering what it would look like in Tier 1 core instruction. They reviewed the corresponding *PK–5 Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy* grounding document (the “*what*”) and were asked to concentrate on the “*how*.” Specifically, groups provided feedback on what writing or comprehension/vocabulary approaches, strategies, and structures would look like in the classroom.

Closing Thoughts

The Literacy Task Force team will review all notes from the work session to guide the grade-level work scheduled for January 13 and 14. We may ask you to continue unpacking what writing and comprehension/vocabulary look like, as well as what reading begins to look like in practice. This work may lead to identifying specific practices and strategies we’ve previously discussed. There is also additional work ahead, including developing implementation plans and professional development strategies.

Next meetings:

- All task force: 3:15 – 4:45 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 17
- Grade Level meetings:
 - Grades PK, K, 1, 2: 11:15 a.m. – 3 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 13
 - Grades 3, 4, 5: 11:15 a.m. – 3 p.m., Wednesday, Jan 14