

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: February 19, 2026
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-4, Staff Treatment, Compensation and Evaluation

I certify that the following is accurate as of February 19, 2025. The reporting period is from February 13, 2025 through February 19, 2026.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation (EL)

Policy: [EL-4 Staff Treatment, Compensation and Evaluation](#)

“The superintendent shall not fail to ensure that staff is treated with respect and dignity and that the district’s public image or credibility does not fall into disrespect or ill repute due to imprudent employment decisions.”

Last Updated: April 17, 2019

Interpretation of items: None in question

Background information: This report is about Executive Limitation 4 – Staff Treatment, Compensation, and Evaluation (EL-4). It was created in April 2013 by combining three prior ELs: Staff Treatment EL-4, Staff Compensation EL-5 and Staff Evaluation EL-6. The board adopted the revised/combined edition of this EL in April 2013.

Some of the information in this report has not changed from previous reports but provides needed context for each area. EL-4 has five major areas and a response to each of them follows.

- 1. The superintendent shall not fail to take all reasonable and prudent actions with respect to the hiring and continued employment of district employees that are typical for similar and highly effective school districts.**



Each year the district reviews its hiring practices, processes and timelines, making necessary adjustments to recruit the most qualified candidates for each position. While specific requirements vary by position, we generally require an application form, a letter of application, reference letters, confidential reference forms, disclosures, applicable licenses/certificates, and a written response to "The Bellingham Promise." Applicants submit their materials through our web-based application system (HRM+). Annually, the human resources staff provide training on sound and legal hiring practices, particularly for new administrators in the district.

Once a position is posted and advertised, principals or program administrators screen applications electronically to identify the most qualified candidates. These candidates then undergo various processes, including interviews, testing, reference checks, and certification checks, before being recommended for hire. The district also conducts background checks, including fingerprinting and State Patrol/FBI checks, in accordance with the law.

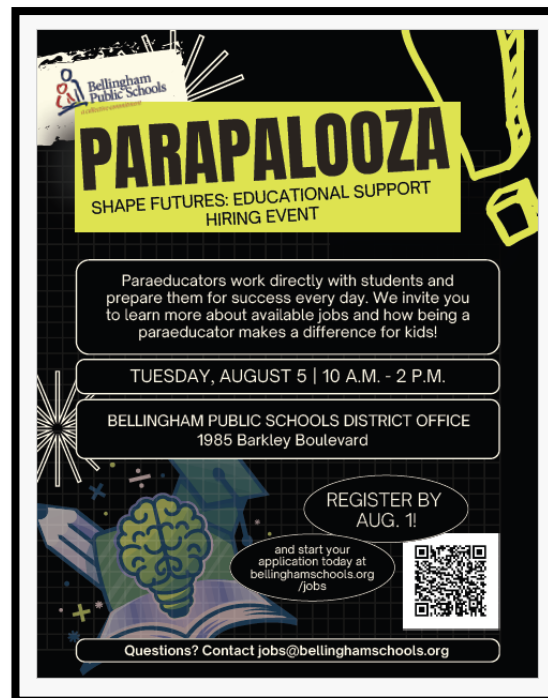
We continue our outreach through job fairs and advertising on various platforms, such as the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), Washington School Personnel Association (WSPA), Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS), National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), Diversitywashington.com, Washington Association of School Business Officials (WSBO), Government Finance Officers Association, NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement, The National Association of Educational Procurement (NAEP), Washington State Paralegal Association (WSPA), LinkedIn, Craigslist, Indeed, WorkSource, and other relevant online sites. We also maintain partnerships with universities for student teaching to attract high-quality staff and increase the diversity of our candidates.

We continued to take steps to enhance our recruitment efforts this year. Our team attended several local job fairs, including Western Washington University's Spring Education Career Fair, where we connected with promising candidates for a wide variety of certificated and classified positions. Additionally, we participated in the local Sikh Temple's Fall Job Fair, which allowed us to meet many potential applicants.

A major highlight of our recruitment efforts was the launch of *Parapalooza*, an innovative paraeducator-focused job fair held in August at the district office. This new event attracted more than 180 job seekers and provided an engaging, streamlined recruitment experience designed to remove barriers and accelerate hiring. Attendees learned about the wide range of paraeducator opportunities

available across the district and received hands-on support with applications, required materials, and next steps in the hiring process.

As the district continues to expand paraeducator staffing to meet the growing and increasingly diverse needs of our students, Parapalooza created a valuable opportunity for candidates to connect directly with school principals and human resources staff in a welcoming environment. The event was intentionally designed to increase the applicant pool for both contracted and substitute paraeducator positions, and it exceeded expectations. As a direct result of Parapalooza, the district successfully hired qualified candidates to fill all contracted paraeducator positions for the 2025–26 school year and experienced a significant increase in substitute paraeducator applicants, strengthening our staffing pipeline moving forward.



To further strengthen our recruitment efforts, we conducted a comprehensive review of job requirements across multiple positions. This review focused on ensuring that qualifications accurately reflect the essential skills, responsibilities, and day-to-day demands of each role. By updating requirements to better align with the actual work being performed, we expanded access for qualified candidates while maintaining high expectations for performance and professionalism. This more inclusive approach allows us to consider a broader, more diverse pool of applicants whose skills and experiences closely match the needs of our schools and students, without compromising the quality or rigor of our hiring standards.

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve access to employment information, **we continue to update and refine the district’s jobs webpage to ensure it remains clear, useful, and accessible to prospective applicants.** Following the successful migration of the jobs webpage to the new district website by the Communications Department, ongoing enhancements have focused on improving navigation and clearly outlining the hiring process. These continuous updates are designed to make key information easier to find, support accessibility, and provide a more user-friendly experience that helps applicants confidently navigate the application process and engage with current employment opportunities.

This year, we continued to support hiring administrators by **providing targeted training for newly hired administrators with a focus on equitable hiring practices.** In addition, Human Resources collaborated with a group of principals to review and update reference forms used during the hiring process. These updates were designed to better align reference questions with job-specific expectations and to create a more efficient, consistent process for recording and documenting references completed by hiring administrators. Together, these efforts support fair, thoughtful hiring practices while improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall hiring process.

Substitutes

Supporting the daily substitute needs of our district is a monumental task that requires continuous coordination and dedication. The human resources department collaborates closely with each school to ensure that vacant positions are filled with qualified substitutes. The chart below highlights the total number of vacancies, combining certificated and classified absences, for the first semester of each year and the corresponding percentage of these vacancies that were successfully filled with substitutes. Our fill rate percentage remained above 90%, however we saw a slight decrease from last year.

Substitute Rates for Semester 1 2021-2026		
School Year (Semester 1 only)	Total Absences/ Vacancies	Percent of Absences/ Vacancies Filled
2021-2022	17,601	90.63%
2022-2023	15,998	86.55%
2023-2024	14,508	89.89%
2024-2025	16,955	93.83%
2025-2026	15,430	91.55%

When absence fill rates are disaggregated by classified and certificated staff, **it is notable that certificated absences are filled at a consistently high rate of more than 97%**, as illustrated in the chart below. In contrast, ongoing staffing dynamics impact classified fill rates, particularly for paraeducator positions. As the district continues to add contracted paraeducator positions to meet student needs, many of these roles are filled by individuals previously serving in the paraeducator substitute pool. While this strengthens our permanent staffing, it also creates a continuous need to replenish the substitute pool through ongoing recruitment and hiring efforts. Our goal continues to focus on the fill rate percentage, specifically for classified positions.

Substitute Fill Rate September 2, 2025 – January 31, 2026						
	Total Absences/ Vacancies	Absences/ Vacancies Needing a Substitute	Absences/ Vacancies Not Needing a Substitute	Unfilled	Filled	Percent of Absences/ Vacancies Filled
Classified	8,608	8,059	549	1,012	7,047	87.44%
Certificated	6,788	5,568	1,220	140	5,428	97.49%

Overall, we are making significant progress in ensuring our schools are adequately staffed with the necessary substitutes each day. We have implemented several systems to enhance the efficiency of our recruitment, interviewing, onboarding and support processes:

- **Creating a Student Support Paraeducator Rover Position:** New this year, the district introduced an innovative *Rover Paraeducator* position to provide flexible, responsive support to schools. Three Rover Paraeducator positions were hired and contracted to work daily. Each morning, Human Resources assigns these staff members to schools experiencing unfilled paraeducator absences, allowing the district to respond quickly to staffing gaps. Feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive, as the Rover Paraeducator model has provided critical, timely support in situations where absences could not be filled through the substitute paraeducator pool.
- **Monthly Job Postings:** For both classified and certificated substitute pools, we have continued the practice of monthly postings. Monthly postings allow us to connect with candidates more promptly and provide our schools with new substitutes on a more regular basis.
- **Weekly Onboarding Schedule:** Our HR team has developed a reliable and efficient system for screening and onboarding new substitutes. By streamlining the interview process, we fill onboarding sessions more effectively and have more substitutes ready to work each week.



- **Partnership with Western Washington University’s Elementary Education Department:** We continue to grow our partnership with WWU to welcome new interns to Bellingham Public Schools. **In 2026 we are expanding our partnership to include secondary interns.** Substituting in our schools provides pre-service teachers with valuable experience while completing their internships. Through this partnership, WWU adjusted class schedules so that interns have one to two days per week without classes or internship responsibilities, allowing them to substitute in our schools. This initiative has increased the number of paraeducator substitutes and strengthened our relationship with university partners.
- **Enhanced Training Opportunities for Paraeducator Substitutes:** This year, we have offered more training opportunities for our paraeducator substitutes. We have several online modules available to all staff, addressing strategies to support students successfully. We offered in-person training opportunity on the September teacher workday. Participants learned behavior management strategies and de-escalation techniques. In addition, the district provided targeted training for substitute staff on using the Skyward platform, equipping them with the foundational skills needed to be successful administrative assistant substitutes.

Employee Recognition

Recognition is an important aspect of recruiting, hiring and retaining qualified staff. The Department of Communications and Community Relations coordinates staff recognition by providing an avenue for staff to celebrate one another. Communications develops criteria and a process for selection of districtwide staff and community partners in our annual awards program; plan and implement staff events; and offer a variety of ways to recognize staff in storytelling and social media. Of note this year, communications added a section to the newly designed website called Our Stories, highlighting in short video reels the perspectives of staff members throughout the district.

Here are examples of this work during this reporting period:

Good Apples: Three times per school year, Good Apples are published. These submissions recognize staff accomplishments, shine a spotlight on the work of colleagues, and extend special thanks and appreciation in a positive way.

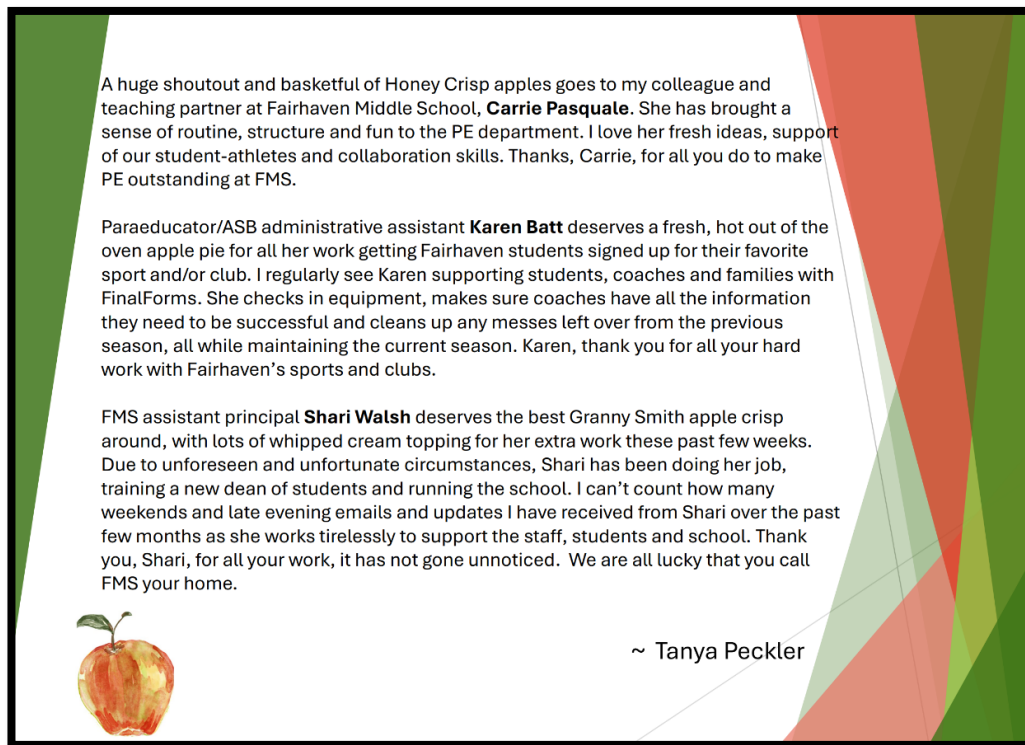


Photo above: A sample slide from the November 2025 edition of Good Apples.

Submissions are collected and edited and ultimately published into a presentation available in both video and PDF formats. Good Apples are generally shared in a message of gratitude from the superintendent. In this reporting period, Good Apples recognition occurred three times: [February 2025](#), [May 2025](#) and [November 2025](#).

Promise Awards, our annual award program: We are committed to recognizing the special achievements and outstanding contributions of staff, volunteers and community partners. The annual awards, which began in 2007-08, provide an opportunity to highlight the exceptional work of select honorees who make a significant difference in our schools and community. In 2013-14 school year, the awards were renamed to the Promise Awards to reflect the district's new strategic plan The Bellingham Promise. Over time, the categories have expanded and shifted to reflect the tenets of The Promise.

Award recipients represent our school system and help increase awareness of the important contributions of our staff, volunteers and community partners. The 2025 Promise Awards included surprise visits and award recipients received engraved trophies. [Read full release here.](#)

Above and Beyond Service Award: Anne Covington, paraeducator at Options High School

Collaboration Award: Sehome High School paraeducator team, Sehome High School

Compassion and Service Award: Joey Robles, football coach at Shuksan Middle School

Great Teaching Award: Steve Settem, social studies teacher at Squalicum High school

One Schoolhouse Award: Elementary multilingual learner specialists and elementary instructional coaches, districtwide

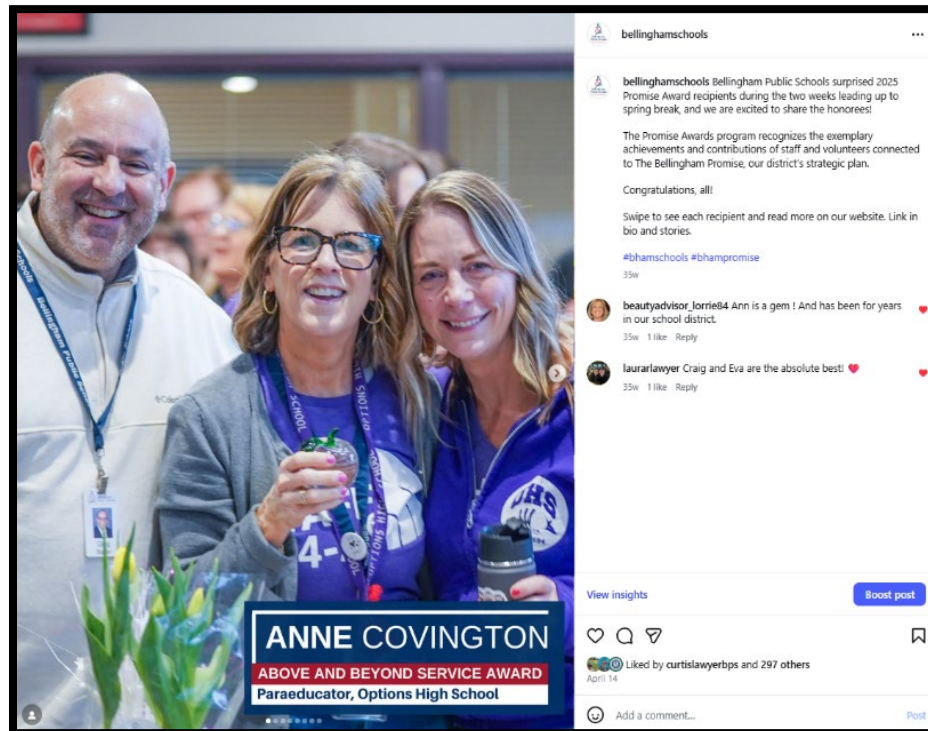
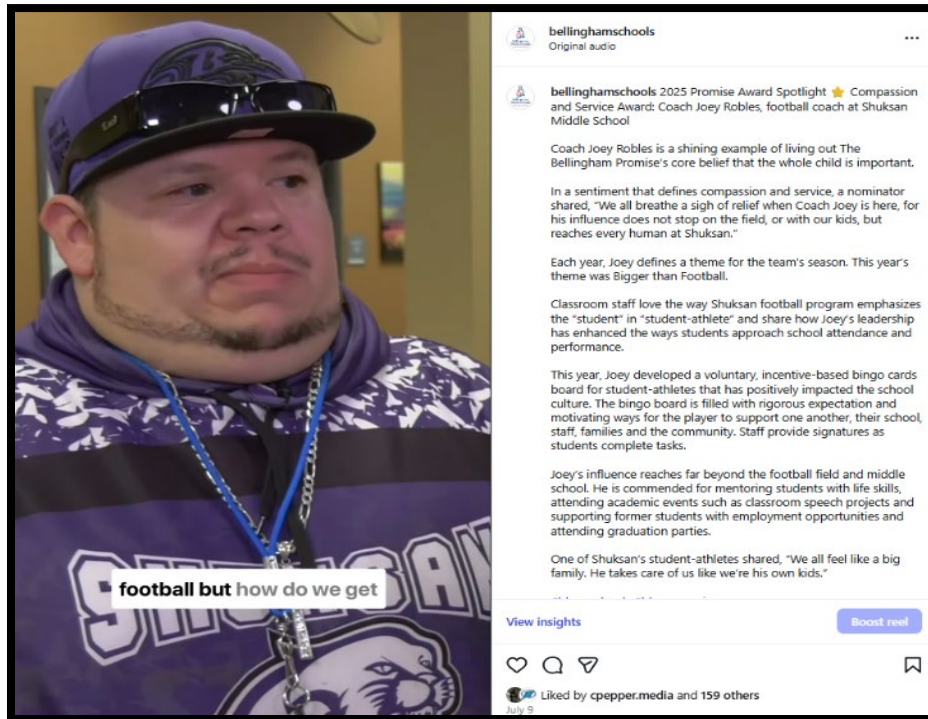
Outstanding Leadership Award: Craig Baldwin and Eva Chazo, leadership team at Cordata Elementary School

Photos from the surprise visits in 2025 are found in a [Flickr album](#).

A compilation video of the [2025 Promise Awards was shared in spring 2025](#).



There were also multiple posts, reels and short videos about the Promise Awards shared on social media throughout the spring and summer.



Photos above: Staff Promise award winners were highlighted on social media in 2025.

Retirements: The Department of Communications and Community Relations hosts an annual dinner to honor retirees in the district. In spring 2025, over 30 invitations were sent out and 24 retirees (including teachers, classified staff, bus drivers, food services staff and administrators) chose to attend the dinner at the Hotel Bellwether on May 29, 2025.

To show appreciation for their years of service, every retiree who attended the dinner received a tribute read aloud during the program, a plated dinner and an engraved vase with flowers. The Bellingham Public Schools Foundation supports the event. [A full album of retirement dinner photos is on Flickr.](#)



Photos above: Retirees Teri Herda, Keith Alex, Cara Forhan and Jean Abbott were among the staff who attended the 2025 retirement dinner.

Staff Kick Off 2025: The All Staff Kick-Off Celebration was held in late August at Sehome High School. This year's August 2025 event was emceed by Kulshan Middle School assistant principal Hazel Clapp and Roosevelt Elementary School principal Aaron Darragh. (photo below)



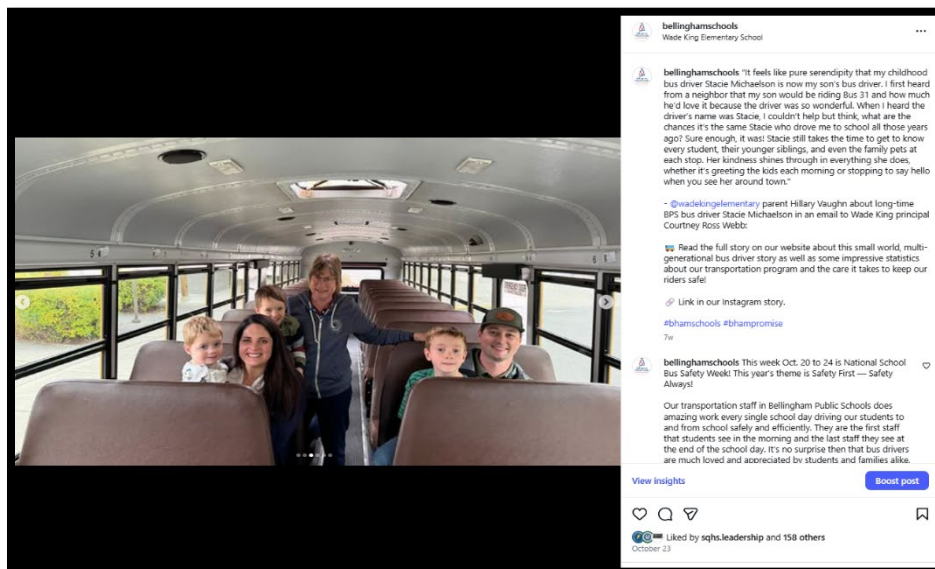
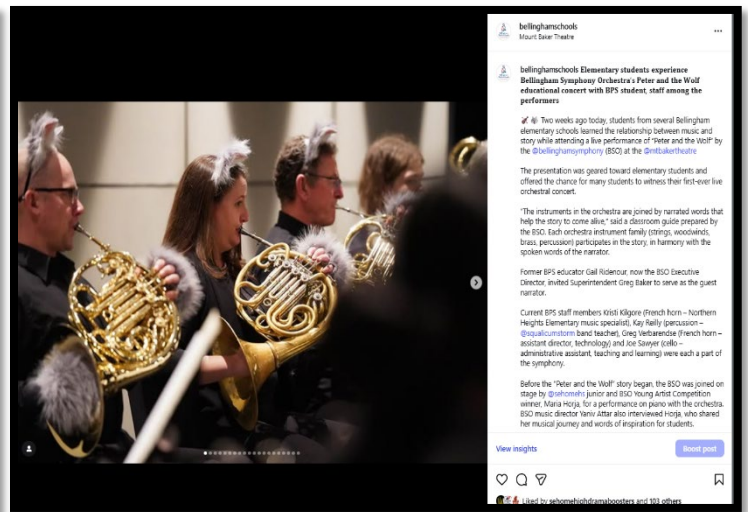
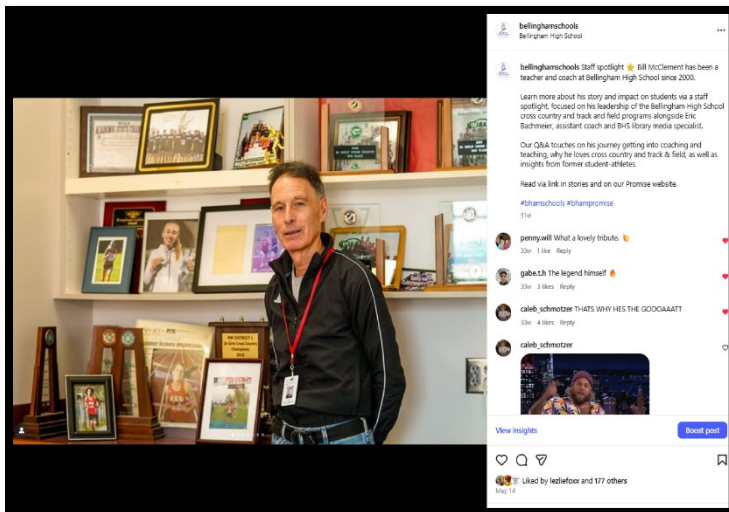
Special appearances were made by high school cheer/dance teams and singers. The annual kick-off brings together all staff the day before students return as an inspirational way to start the school year.



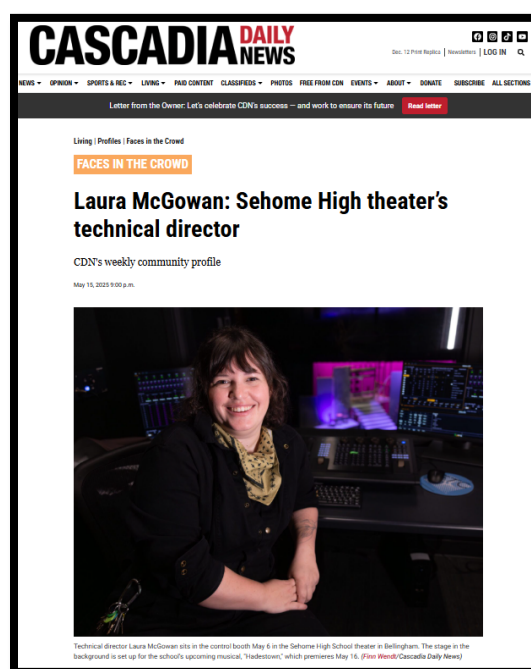
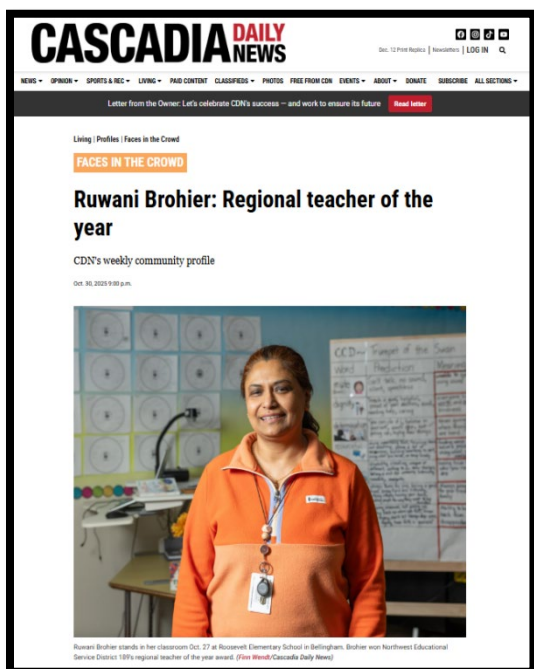
The social media post for this year's staff kickoff event garnered 329 likes on Instagram and 99 likes on Facebook. [Photos from the 2025 Kick Off are available on Flickr.](#)

Social media posts highlighting staff: Between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2025, staff members were highlighted regularly in district social media on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Often the social media shares go out after a Promise story is posted.

Here is a sampling of these posts, captions and photos on BHS teacher and coach Bill McClement, staff musicians playing during a Bellingham Symphony concert, and bus driver Stacie Michaelson's long career in the district.



In this reporting period, local media stories about district staff were also amplified on district social media, including these Faces in the Crowd stories by Cascadia Daily News on [Ruwani Brohier in May 2025](#) and on [Laura McGowan in October of 2025](#):



Additional stories from 2025

[‘Profound’: Mobile audiology van gives Bellingham students access to education](#), The Bellingham Herald, Nov. 11, 2025

[Bellingham students build an electric vehicle in first-of-its-kind class](#), Cascadia Daily, Nov. 3, 2025

[Bellingham teens challenge stereotypes, practice language through German exchange](#), Cascadia Daily, Sept. 18, 2025

[AI has entered the classroom in Bellingham — how are students and teachers using it?](#), Cascadia Daily, Aug. 31, 2025

[Attendance dropped after COVID-19. Bellingham schools got creative to keep kids in class](#), Cascadia Daily, April 6, 2025

[Whatcom County teachers receive educational excellence award, \\$5k prize](#), Bellingham Herald, May 26, 2025

Promise stories with staff focus (specifically Educators in Action) are published online and are often included in our InsideSchools community newsletter three times per year, shared on district social media platforms and emailed in Promise highlights several times a year. In chronological order (January to December):

[Staff spotlight: Bill McClement, longtime BHS teacher and coach](#)

[Centering Black Excellence event, visit by educator Dr. Cherry-Paul highlight Black History Month 2025](#)

[BPS theatre students showcased at Washington State Thespian Festival](#) (drama teacher Kandace McGowan)

[A focus on activist Billy Frank Jr. timed with community display of his statue](#) (instructional coaches)

[Sehome Mariners Take on Ocean Science](#) (science teacher Garrett Knoll)

[Sehome's Colin Cushman honored with prestigious WSSAAA Hall of Fame induction, Squalicum's Patrick Brown named District 1 Athletic Director of the Year](#)

[Squalicum's Riley Liddle recognized with education excellence award and prize](#)

[Cordata's Ruwani Brohier named Regional Teacher of the Year by NWESD](#)

[BPS event showcases Indigenous history, learning and culture](#)

[Sehome art students and teacher upcycle into imaginative pieces](#) (art teacher Randelle Crawford)

[Cordata kids go camping in the classroom!](#) (Teacher Kennedy Garrison at Cordata)

[BPS staff gather together at Sehome High School for All-Staff Kick-Off](#)

[Transporting students across generations, bus driver says "Every week is Bus Safety Week!"](#) (bus driver Stacie Michaelson)

[Sehome teacher earns 2025 State Language Teacher of the Year award](#) (teacher Mary Hooker)

[Tackling safety: One mom at a time](#) (Football coach Brian Young)

[BHS art students inspired to "think big and bold" with their oil pastel birds](#) (art teacher Catherine Gersich)

[Squalicum music teacher celebrated at Foundation Gala with 2025 Promising Futures Award as a teacher who inspires far beyond the classroom](#) (music teacher Kay Reilly)

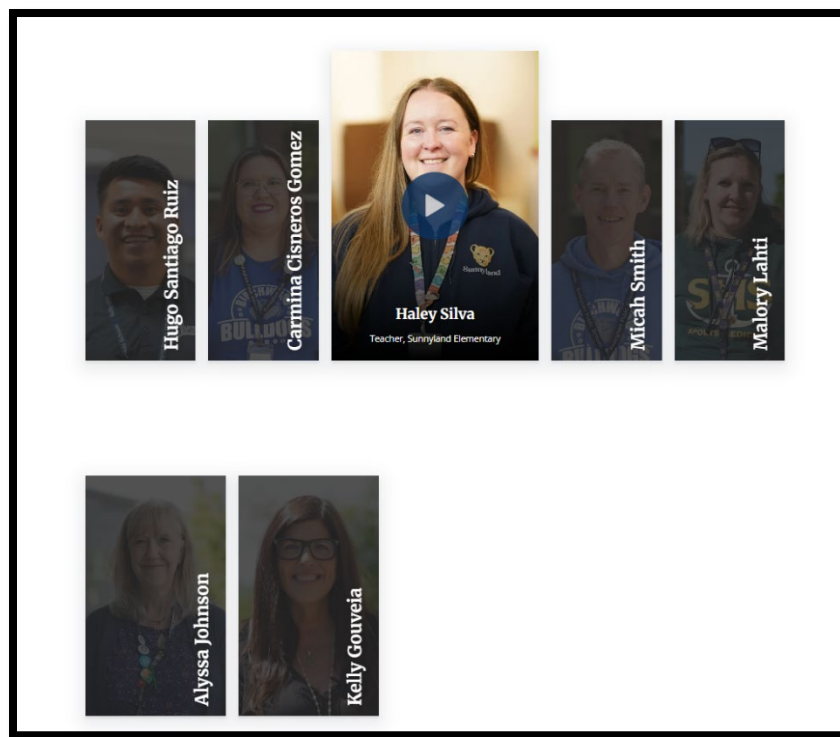
[Pumpkins & Piglets: Farm Day in the Early Learning Center](#)

[Inclusion at Columbia: Changing society one child at a time](#)

[BPS receives Meritorious Budget Award, Navie La Tray named Rising Professional](#)

New in 2025: Our Stories short video

The new website gave the district the opportunity to share reels and videos in a dynamic way. [Our Stories](#) are short video reels in which staff share experiences, memories and passion for education. Since August 2025, we have published videos of the following staff with their reflections in an Our Stories Library: Hugo Santiago Ruiz, Carmen Cisneros Gomez, Haley Silva, Micah Smith, Malory Lahti, Alyssa Johnson and Kelly Gouveia.



Volunteers

The district continues to annually host 5,000 approved volunteers in our schools. More than half of these volunteers are comprised of parents and guardians of BPS students with community members and WWU students providing additional support in our schools. Volunteers are serving our students and teachers in the following capacities:

- AVID and after-school tutors
- after-school enrichment

- athletic support for coaches
- bike safety volunteers
- bilingual tutors for newcomers
- bulletin board builders, materials preparation and a plethora of additional roles as needed
- field trip chaperones
- lunch and recess duty
- reading pals

This year, the volunteer program strengthened engagement and support through consistent communication and targeted training. Electronic newsletters were distributed three times annually, providing updates and resources for volunteers and community partners.

To enhance skills and awareness, several training sessions were offered and focused on **equity, diversity, and inclusion, reading pal strategies**, and **school safety**. For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, **monthly in-person volunteer orientations** resumed, covering essential topics such as effective and appropriate student engagement, building safety protocols, student confidentiality, and school policies and procedures related to volunteering. These efforts reflect our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and well-prepared volunteer community that supports student success.

Community Partner Initiative

The volunteer coordinator collaborated with the Finance procurement specialist to create a transparent process for community organizations to partner with Bellingham Schools. This process features a **“Get Involved”** tab on the district’s new website, where prospective partners can complete an online intake form. After submission, the volunteer coordinator schedules an interview to confirm the partnership aligns with needs identified by building leaders and to ensure compliance with safety protocols. Once Dr. Baker approves and signs the community partner agreement, the organization is listed on the website as a recognized partner.

Community partners continue to meet three times a year with the volunteer coordinator and executive director of family engagement to share successes and challenges to partner in our schools and to connect with other partners.

Block Party

In partnership with the Bellingham Schools Foundation and several community sponsorships, the district held its 5th annual Block Party/school readiness event in 2025. An estimated 1400 students and family members attended the event. Over 150 BPS staff and community volunteers and partners supported the event including fifteen student interpreters. Here is a snapshot of the event's impact:

- **77 onsite sports physicals** provided by six physicians by PeaceHealth and Family Care Network.
- **20+ childhood vaccines** dispensed by Hoagland Pharmacy.
- **600 backpacks & hundreds of free books** by the Assistance League of Bellingham and Bellingham Central Lion's Club.
- **130+ haircuts and braids** completed by Evergreen Beauty College, Northwest Barber Academy and Blessed Hands Braiding Studio.
- **600 otter pops** eaten with 600 smiles to go with them distributed by BHS soccer athletes

In addition to the providers above, thirty-two community partners provided additional resources on early childhood education, after-school care and enrichment, utility bill assistance and multiple health care options. Several new partners were included this year including the Native Student Union, The Imagine Institute and Strengthening Families, who all provided family engagement opportunities and resources.





2. The superintendent shall not fail to:
a. Ensure all staff are qualified and effective.

Ensuring we have qualified and effective staff members is a fundamental task for our district. The human resources processes outlined earlier in this report help us to continue hiring capable and efficient staff. We often begin this relationship with teachers-in-training and are fortunate to host practica and student teaching placements, which help us maintain a pipeline of high-quality candidates. For instance, in 2024-25, our Bellingham teachers hosted 144 student teaching interns from 9 different higher education institutions across our district. We end up hiring many of these candidates.

Once hired, we are committed to ongoing training, professional development, supervision, and evaluation to ensure staff continue to grow professionally, use research-based best practices, and



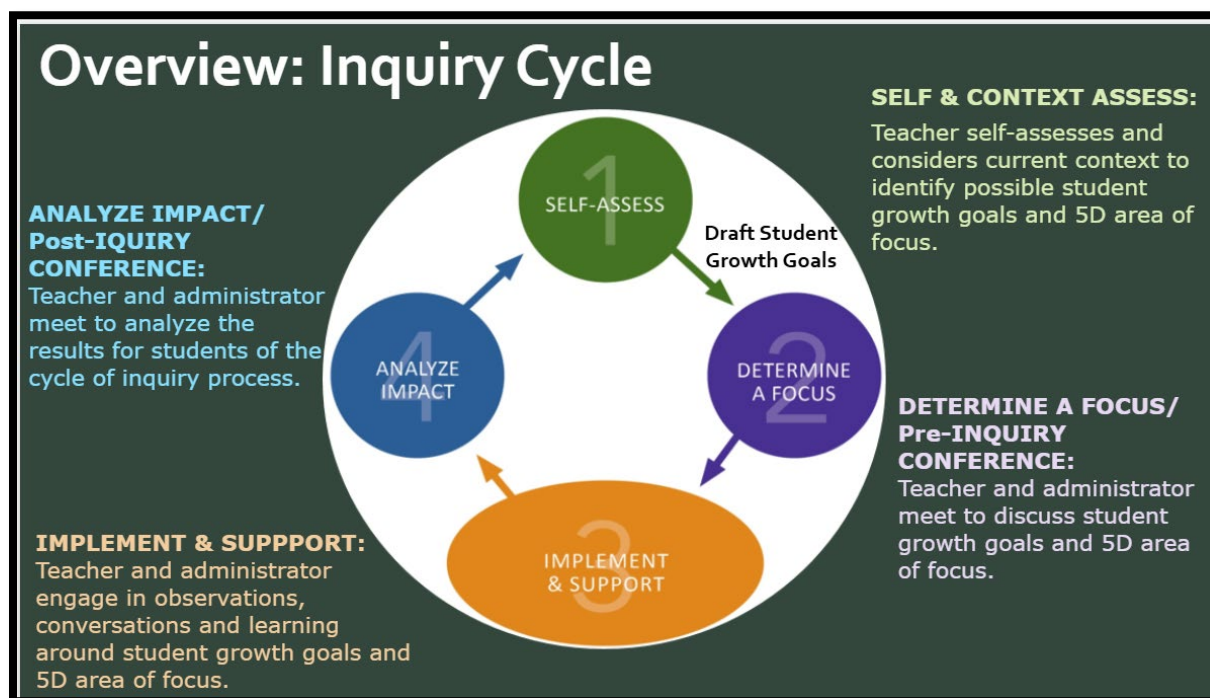
develop effective teaching and learning strategies. Our district's Department of Teaching and Learning, in collaboration with school leaders and labor group leaders, continuously plans and develops professional learning opportunities for staff. Professional learning occurs throughout the entire district, within each school, and in the daily practices of our 1600+ professionals, whether they are classroom teachers, paraeducators, bus drivers, cafeteria or maintenance workers, or in school or district leadership roles. Examples of trainings this year include Part 3 of professional development focused on implementation of the district's bias and hate speech policy, student behavior de-escalation strategies through the Crisis Prevention Institute, and multiple opportunities for training in guided language acquisition design (GLAD) strategies and sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP) strategies to support all learners, and specifically multilingual learners.

Professional learning efforts include districtwide initiatives, school or department-specific efforts, and individual opportunities, all requiring time and intentionality. Our professional learning calendar allocates time for districtwide work, often led by Department of Teaching and Learning directors or teachers-on-special-assignment (TOSAs), as well as for building-based work where principals and school leadership teams direct specific, school-based learning. This time prioritizes collaborative work done in grade-level teams, job-alike groups or between general education and Special Education teachers. The calendar also designates specific time and space for professional learning at each school site, as well as for cross-district professional learning. District wide efforts this year include a focus on reexamination of our approach to literacy instruction in the elementary schools; a task force is meeting repeatedly to help with the redesign of literacy instruction, and recommendations for materials to support literacy learning. In addition, both building-based work and districtwide opportunities to engage in new learning about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the school and classroom are being supported by leaders in the department of teaching and learning.

We have continued the districtwide standing committee focused on supporting the further development of a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) for all students, that focuses on strong Tier 1 instructional practices, and interventions at Tier 2 and Tier 3 for students who need more support for learning. Our districtwide efforts to support ongoing learning and practices with the inclusion of all students, and the brain science undergirding student behavior are part of this overarching MTSS effort. Once again this year, each school identified a group of staff to take on the leadership of planning for professional learning at the school level, and the committee's work has helped to support school improvement plan (SIP) development and implementation for each school. SIP teams from each site met after the school year in June 2025 to help set their focus for the coming year. An August 2025 retreat brought those teams back together to solidify plans for the school year. Plans that schools developed during this year's August retreat carried forward from and built upon the

prior year's work. The MTSS focus on continuing to build out the resources associated with different focus areas now includes [robust resources](#) to help schools with Tier 1, 2 and 3 supports for improving student attendance, students' social emotional learning, and elementary students' foundational skills in literacy learning

The Teacher Principal Evaluation Process (TPEP) continued with a focus on inquiry cycles. Our approach to teacher evaluation remains committed to fostering continuous improvement based on teacher-established goals. School administrators have once again guided their staff through reflection and goal setting using the 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (5D). District trainers keep our school administrators' training up-to-date and provide ongoing professional development opportunities for using the 5D Tools in the TPEP process. Teachers identified areas of focus, often aligning with the schoolwide professional development goals, and set student growth targets to strive for. Throughout the school year, ongoing dialogue between administrators and certificated staff around these goals has supported continuous refinements in teaching and learning. Training and professional learning efforts reinforce the idea of approaching the improvement of instruction as an inquiry process. To illustrate, the graphic below is taken from a fall 2025 training on the TPEP cycle:



Paraeducator Training and Professional Development

As reported previously, the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) requires all Bellingham Public Schools paraeducators and substitute paraeducators to meet minimum employee requirements and provide training on the Fundamental Course of Study. The human resources department monitors and ensures that all employed paraeducators required the ESSA standards are met. Those minimum standards are:

- Be at least eighteen years of age and hold a high school diploma or its equivalent.

In addition, a paraeducator must meet **one** of the following:

- Have received a qualifying score on the Education Testing Service (ETS) paraeducator assessment. The ETS ParaPro test assesses knowledge and skills in reading, writing, math and assisting classroom instruction. Test takers have two and a half hours to finish the assessment, and they must meet or exceed Washington's qualifying score of 455.
- Hold an associate degree or higher from an accredited college or university.
- Have earned 72 quarter credits or 48 semester credits at the 100 level or higher at an accredited college or university.

Once a paraeducator meets the minimum requirements for employment, the Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB) requires the completion of the Fundamental Course of Study (FCS) Program for all K-12 instructional paraeducators. Our district offers these FCS courses and also invites non-instructional paraeducators who provide student supervision to participate in these learning opportunities.

The training includes professional development in the following areas:

- Introduction to cultural identity and diversity
- Methods of educational and instructional support
- Technology basics
- Using and collecting data
- District orientation of roles and responsibilities
- Inclusive and equitable practices
- Behavior management strategies including de-escalation techniques
- Child and adolescent development
- Emergency and health safety
- Positive and safe learning environment
- Communication basics
- Communication challenges

This course work is typically completed during the workday and the paraeducator is released from their daily duties in order to complete the required learning.

The district has a grant through PESB that provides funding toward 28 hours of paraeducator training toward completion of FCS units. Once a paraeducator completes the required 28 FCS hours, the PESB grant provides funding for 14 hours of training towards their General Paraeducator Certificate (GPC), which requires a total of 70 course hours. In many cases, course work through college classes count towards the GPC credits.

The district has developed a [webpage](#) regarding all the necessary information regarding the paraeducator certification program. Our webpage also links to the [Washington State Professional Educator Standards Board](#) for additional information.

Beginning Educator Support

2025-26 is our eleventh year as a Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) grant-funded district. A requirement of the BEST grant is that a representative team guide the work, using the [State Standards for Beginning Educator Induction](#) which includes hiring, orientation, mentoring and professional learning standards.

The BEST grant team continues to study the [State Standards for Beginning Educator Induction](#) as well as use the feedback from new teachers to set focused and specific goals for action.

This year, out of our 18 novice new hires, 11 of them are Special Educators and counselors. Because of this, our goals are more specific to those two groups as we focus on building stronger supports.

Current goals include:

- Developing mentors in our ESA groups (counselors, nurses, SLP, OT, PT, etc.) through Mentoring Academy 101.
- Provide differentiated mentoring for beginning Special Education teachers through a bi-monthly small group professional development series led by our Teacher on Special Assignment and a veteran SPED teacher. SPED teachers identified their monthly topics through a survey. First topics including collecting data, partnering with families, and working with paraeducators.

- Continue developing intentional partnership with WWU to increase the effectiveness of our student-teacher placements, which has a significant impact on the effectiveness of beginning educators.
- Building supports for our beginning educators of color through recruiting mentors of color.

Using a blend of BEST grant and Title IIA funding, we have a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) leading the mentoring of new teachers, alongside other duties. The TOSA coordinates the assignment and support for mentors needed to support our novices. They also provide ongoing professional development for our mentors and communicates with district and building administrators to coordinate support for our novice educators. All new teachers receive support from mentors that can include classroom setup, co-planning, regular classroom observations with feedback, learning focused conversations and guided observations in veteran teachers' classrooms.

The BEST grant has allowed us to build a comprehensive system for new teacher induction that includes ongoing reflection, evaluation and improvement. **We are hopeful of being able to apply and qualify for BEST grant funding for the 2026-27 school year.**

	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Elementary	7	14	9	11	17	26	6	13	8
Middle	11	8	3	8	9	4	4	5	3
High	9	7	7	4	5	7	5	6	7
Total	27	29	19	23	33	37	15	24	18

b. Provide appropriate training for all employee classifications required by law.

Vector Training

We offer trainings in our district to approximately 2,400 staff. In order to effectively train all staff during each school year, as well as minimize the need for substitutes, we use a combination of both in-person and online trainings. Both training methods have inherent benefits.



The district is continuing our **online training program through Vector Training** for all employees. All new employees are assigned Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Prevention (full course) as well as the

following mandated trainings assigned to all staff annually: Child Abuse: Mandatory Reporting, Bullying: Recognition and Response, Health Emergencies: Overview, and Bellingham Public Schools Title IX Training for All District Employees. In addition, a refresher course of the Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Prevention training is assigned each year to all returning staff.

All employees receive the annual mandated training required by law or best practice through Vector Training or staff in-service sessions. These trainings provide legally sound instruction for all employees and many of the online trainings require successful completion of required testing prior to completion of the training. In some cases, such as with our transportation staff, training is conducted as a presentation from staff. Although this is not possible or even preferable for all employees based on time constraints, it does allow for additional discussion and individual questions.

Our online training ensures all employees receive the same consistent training information and employees may access the training content throughout the year. Online training is highly cost-effective and allows us to track compliance and ensure our staff are trained within the required timelines. If staff have additional questions after viewing online trainings, they may consult with their supervisor or a department director to receive further information.

This year, we assigned mandatory trainings on August 25, weeks earlier than prior years and provided a window of time for completions through October 31. This allowed many of our classified staff to complete their trainings the days prior to the start of the school year. **The chart below shows the number of online training completions on an annual basis and year-to-date for 2025-26.** Some years may be higher due to the requirement of non-annual required trainings. For example, in 2021-22 all employees needed to complete the Child Abuse - Mandatory Reporting training which is required every three years. Beginning with the 2022-23 school year, we elected to assign the Child Abuse – Mandatory Reporting training on an annual basis to ensure consistent training for all employees.

Bellingham Public Schools Employee Vector Training Course Completions by School Year (Through January 31 for 2025-26)										
2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
3704	2872	3423	7376	5892	5129	6942	7,482	8,843	11,231	9,997

- i. **Maintain salary schedules for all employee classifications comparing district salary and benefits relative to appropriate comparable districts.**

For the 2025–26 school year, the district implemented compensation adjustments across multiple employee groups. Adjustments for employees covered by collective bargaining agreements were guided by previously negotiated contracts with the Bellingham Association of School Employees (BASE) and Teamsters, as well as a newly ratified collective bargaining agreement with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The Bellingham Education Association (BEA) and the Bellingham Administrators’ Organization (BAO) renegotiated previously agreed-upon agreements, resulting in modified compensation changes. Compensation for non-represented employees, including many district office staff and coaches, was also adjusted. Executive compensation did not increase this year.

In response to ongoing budget constraints, the district took a differentiated approach to cost containment, with reductions applied primarily to the highest-paid employee groups. This included the use of furlough days for select groups: executive staff participated in four furlough days, while non-represented employees participated in one furlough day. In addition, BAO, BEA, and BASE reduced their total number of workdays. These measures were implemented thoughtfully to maintain fiscal responsibility while minimizing impacts to lower-wage employees.

The district continues to review compensation data from comparator districts to inform negotiations and long-term planning. Given state funding formulas, particularly regionalization and experience factors, the district has adjusted its compensation target to aim for the 67th percentile among comparison districts. This adjustment reflects the district’s significantly lower regionalization factor compared to many of our comparator districts and provides a more accurate benchmark for competitiveness within current funding constraints. While this represents a shift from a

previous target of the 75th percentile, this revised goal remains competitive, responsible, and aligned with available state resources.

The chart on the following page shows our bargaining groups, members and current duration of contracts.

Bargaining Group	Positions	Term of Agreement
Teamsters (Local Union 231)	Bus driver, warehouse delivery driver, utility driver, mechanic, dispatcher	2024-2027
SEIU (Service Employees' International Union 925)	Custodial, maintenance, grounds, food services, educational technology	2025-2027
BASE (Bellingham Association of School Employees)	Administrative assistants, paraeducators, business/accounting, educational support, specialists	2024-2026
BAO (Bellingham Administrators' Organization)	Principals, assistant principals, directors	2024-2026
BEA (Bellingham Education Association)	Certificated instructional staff	2023-2027

This spring we will be working with BASE and BAO to negotiate new contracts.

ii. Maintain a system to evaluate all employees, provide written improvement plans and monitor employee improvement.

The human resources department coordinates with the Department of Teaching and Learning, building principals, and clerical staff to maintain a system to track evaluations for all employees. Supervisors receive notification of timelines, forms and requirements for new employee and annual evaluations. The human resources staff track and file all completed evaluations in employee personnel files. Administrators, directors and managers receive ongoing coaching and support from the human resources team when working with employees on written plans of improvement. Employees with performance concerns are provided opportunities for support, training, mentoring and assistance.



Supervisors work closely with the assistant superintendent of human resources to monitor improvement and to determine if continued support is necessary or if improvement goals are met. Union and employee association representatives also provide support to employees experiencing performance difficulties.

For certificated teaching staff, the district has adopted the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership's Instructional Framework, [5-Dimensions of Teaching & Learning](#) (CEL 5D). This state framework provides a common language for discussing effective teaching along with a process that uses cycles of inquiry and growth focused conversations. Each year teaching staff work with their supervisor to select areas of focus from the 5D framework to work on for continuous improvement. The framework is aligned to the state evaluation criteria, and final evaluations reflect both the 5D and the state criteria, commonly referred to as "the state eight". Employees rotate between comprehensive (all areas) and focused (one-two areas) evaluations, having a comprehensive evaluation a minimum of once every six years. Executive team members in teaching and learning and human resources supervise principals and directors following a parallel process using the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) Leadership Framework to guide cycles of inquiry and growth focused conversations. This framework focuses on continuous improvement for principals and leaders in areas that are most likely to result in increased student achievement. The AWSP Leadership Framework is directly aligned with state leadership evaluation criteria, rules and regulations.

In the instructional evaluation model, we also provide continuous training for our teachers and principals/evaluators. Training is provided for all new teachers on the instructional framework and cycle of inquiry process. This takes place in a full day Teacher Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) 5-D Training taught by a State Instructional Framework Specialist. For administrators there are stages of training required, Stage 1 (two days), Stage 2 (four days), as well as Rater Reliability and ongoing training in calibration of the evaluation model. The district provides these training opportunities, taught by a State Instructional Framework Specialist, to all administrators and tracks completion for Stage 1 and Stage 2 training requirements. Administrators track their completion of Rater Reliability and ongoing training, referred to as Stage 3 trainings. The number of teachers and administrators requiring and receiving training is reported to OSPI annually, and the state grants TPEP funds to support the required trainings for new teachers and for Stage 1 and 2 administrator training. Ongoing training provided by the district includes Instructional Rounds for teachers and administrators. Administrator supervisors meet regularly for ongoing collaboration and support around principal supervision.

Human resources continually works with employee groups and associations to review and update evaluation tools as needed. Current evaluation forms are accessible on the intranet for easy access.

iii. Make continuous improvement towards hiring and retention of under-represented minority teachers and support personnel in classrooms and supervisory/administrative positions, to better reflect the ethnic makeup of our district's students.

The human resources department develops and maintains an [Affirmative Action Plan](#) and provides an annual report on progress towards our goals. A new five-year plan was approved by the board in February 2025. This new plan includes updated affirmative action reporting. **Our overall percentage of ethnic minority staff increased by nearly a full percentage point to 15.46%**, continuing a trend of modest growth. Each spring, a progress report is provided to district staff and the board.

Affirmative action applicant information is tracked and maintained separately from other job application materials, based on information voluntarily provided by each applicant. Over the past seven years, we have seen steady growth in attracting applicants of color to Bellingham Public Schools. **In 2018, 12.3% of total applicants identified as applicants of color, compared to 22.6% in 2025.**

Annually, we review applicant data and identify applicant hiring trends. This data suggests that our recruitment efforts continue to yield positive results, even in years with limited overall hiring. While the applicant data shows a slight increase in ethnically diverse candidates, **20% of those selected for open certificated positions identified an ethnic minority.** Although our ability to hire new certificated staff in the fall of 2025 was limited by budgetary constraints, the data highlights our continued efforts to diversify our teachers and administrators. **For classified staff, 20% of new hires identified as ethnic minorities.**

In addition, and as reported in EL-10:

- **The district has implemented training for the leadership team on identifying and rooting out bias in applicant file screening and candidate hiring processes.** Training focused on newly hired administrators, using case examples designed to surface individual screeners' biases and to prompt discussion about ways to ensure that unexamined bias is identified and minimized in hiring processes.
- **The district's human resources team conducted a Parapalooza job fair.** As discussed previously in this report, the Parapalooza event focused on filling paraeducator positions. Advertising for this event followed past practices from prior BIPOC job fair events. This helped publicize the event within the BIPOC community.

- Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) human resources leaders and team members again staffed a table at our opening of school “Block Party” this year, aimed at attracting and recruiting diverse candidates for job openings. This yielded a list of potential applicants who each received a personal contact from our human resources team in follow-up to the event.
- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) continue to grow, fostering social and professional connections based on shared identities. These voluntary, employee-led groups enhance community within the district by improving work relationships and conditions through advocacy, support and professional development aligned with The Bellingham Promise. Key outcomes include:
 - Increased sense of belonging among staff.
 - Strengthened support systems for emotional, cultural and leadership needs.
 - Advocacy and mentorship for scholars with similar identities.
- For the 2025-26 school year, 32 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 as a result of the contractual agreement. **This is a 28% increase from the prior year.**
- **We are actively increasing the number of multilingual front office and staff members** to better reflect our student population's diversity. Out of 23 sites, including the Bellingham Family Partnership (BFPP), 10 now have bilingual front office assistants, including Alderwood, BFPP, Birchwood, Carl Cozier, Cordata, Fairhaven, Geneva, Options, Sehome and Shuksan. Additionally, we have added multilingual office staff support at the district office.

Other specific strategies used to recruit and hire a diverse workforce include:

- Target web-based posting options in venues connected with ethnically diverse candidates, and district and community-based job fairs. Collaboration and participation with other public and community agencies on diversity and affirmative action matters to increase the diversity of the applicant pool.
- **Develop a diverse pool of qualified administrator applicants through our Aspiring Administrators program.**
- Family and community engagement strategies to connect with employable adults in the ethnic minority community.
- Host job fairs that target diverse candidates as well as attending community events to attract diverse candidates. Human resources staff plan and coordinate with other district staff and community partners to provide technical supports, share information about job opportunities, how to apply for positions, and other supports available for interested community members who are pursuing job opportunities with the district.



- Collaboration with WorkSource, Goodwill and DSHS to advertise openings and provide support for applicants to access and complete online applications.
- Banners outside schools and other facilities such as the transportation department, with high community traffic.
- Distribute job recruitment information in schools and the family resource centers.
- Enhance partnership with WWU Woodring interns by hosting orientation, learning sessions, and creating applications.

Statement of Compliance: The superintendent is **in compliance** with EL-4.