

Elementary Literacy Task Force Meeting Notes

February 17, 2026

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); Tom Gresham, Director, Teaching and Learning; Jessica Wallace, teacher on special assignment; Andrea Quigley, teacher on special assignment; and Rayna Brandon, highly capable learners liaison.

Meeting Goals

Pam opened the meeting by welcoming the group and outlining the goals for the meeting, which included prioritizing essential Tier 1 literacy strategies in writing, comprehension, and vocabulary, as well as providing feedback on the draft literacy strategy one-pagers and accompanying support documents. She also revisited the foundational sources guiding the development of the district's literacy framework, including *The Active View of Reading* by Duke and Cartwright, *The Anti-Racist Reading Revolution* by Cherry-Paul, Michigan's 10 Essential Literacy Practices, and Washington's new state literacy standards.

Review of Grade-Level Work

Tom reviewed the work completed during the January half-day grade-level sessions, where teams integrated literacy practices into existing OpenSciEd units, explored how science content can meaningfully support rich literacy instruction, and used a process grid to map literacy standards and identify the instructional structures needed to support them. Together, this work demonstrated that OpenSciEd provides a strong foundation for building content-rich, inquiry-aligned integrated literacy instruction.

Literacy One-Pagers

Andrea explained that although essential literacy practices provide valuable guidance, they do not clearly define how teachers should implement them, underscoring the need for practical instructional tools. To address this, each Literacy Strategy One-Pager will outline the strategy, describe implementation steps before, during, and after instruction, offer formative assessment ideas, and include a "Going Deeper" section for extension. Each one-pager will also be paired with a Support Page containing research sources, demonstration videos, speaking and listening connections, scaffolds and differentiation options, assessment tools, and grade-level student samples. Together, these resources aim to give both new and experienced teachers a shared, clearly articulated understanding of expectations for Tier 1 literacy instruction.

Prioritizing the Essential Strategies

Jessica distributed packets listing potential writing, comprehension, and vocabulary strategies, and table groups worked collaboratively to identify the ten most essential strategies every teacher should know, note any strategies that appeared missing or unclear, and raise questions about distinctions between teacher practices and student strategies, as well as about fluency, structure, and organization. Their discussions raised broader considerations, including whether certain items functioned as strategies, routines, or larger instructional structures; how related strategies might be clustered for clarity; and how the literacy one-pagers could be formatted to best support both new and experienced teachers.

Deep Dive: Reviewing One-Pagers

The groups were reorganized, and members rotated through stations to review draft reading-strategy one-pagers, offering feedback on what worked well, what was missing, and what additional resources—such as rubrics, videos, scaffolds, or mentor texts—teachers might need to implement the strategies effectively. Participants were asked to consider the perspectives of both new teachers using the strategies for the first time and veteran teachers seeking deeper research or advanced supports. Jessica explained that insights from these discussions will inform refinement of the district’s essential literacy strategies, as well as improvements to the content and format of the one-pagers and support pages, with ongoing work aimed at strengthening clarity and usefulness across grade levels and instructional contexts.

Closing

Pam thanked everyone for their work and emphasized how valuable their feedback is. She reminded the group that although one more meeting remains in March, the work does not end there. This is only the beginning, and additional grade-level collaboration will be needed to further develop the nuances between strategies and practices.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 10, 3:15 – 4:45 p.m. (Room 202/203)