



MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: April 23, 2026
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report for EL-8, District Calendar

I certify that the following is accurate as of April 23, 2026. The reporting period is from April 18, 2025 through April 23, 2026.

Policy Type: Executive Limitation (EL)
Policy: [EL-8, District Calendar](#)
Last Updated: April 20, 2017

Interpretation of items: None in question.

Background Information: This report is about Executive Limitation 8 – District Calendar (EL-8). It was formerly known as EL-16 District Calendar. Information indicating compliance for each of the areas is presented below.

Some of the information in this report has not changed from previous reports but provides needed context for each area.

Prepare a district calendar that optimizes teaching and learning throughout the year, supports whole child learning and considers typical family constraints.

The school calendar is a subject of bargaining and was a significant part of our discussions during our most recent negotiations with the Bellingham Education Association (BEA) in 2025. Those negotiations resulted in a two-year extension of the previous agreement, now in effect through the 2026–27 school year. The agreement continues to include 179 student days and four staff learning days, representing a reduction in staff learning days from prior years. This reduction decreases district costs because it lowers the number of paid workdays for teaching staff. In addition to bargaining with the BEA, the district consults with leaders from other unions whose members are directly affected by the school calendar, including paraeducators and administrative assistants who work the school-year schedule. On January 27 of this year, our annual calendar committee met to begin developing the 2027–28 school calendar. The committee’s primary goal was to recommend key dates such as the first day of school,

winter and spring breaks, and a tentative last day of school. The group also worked through detailed calendar components, including staff learning days (“purple days”), early release days, and designated snow make-up days. Because staff learning days are negotiated with the BEA, the committee used the current number established in the collective bargaining agreement. With the upcoming high school schedule changes, the district anticipates an increase in districtwide early release days; negotiations with the BEA on this topic are still underway. Both staff learning days and early release days continue to serve important purposes by providing educators time for professional learning, collaboration, and engaging with families.

The committee is recommending a first student day of September 1 and a last student day of June 13 for the 2027–28 school year. Snow make-up days are scheduled for May 19, June 14, and June 15. Once the committee finalizes its recommendations for the 2027–28 calendar, the proposed calendar will be submitted to the superintendent and the BEA president for review and approval. After approval, the district will communicate the finalized calendars to staff and families, and they will be posted on the calendars page of our district website.

As shared in last year’s report, several standard components of the school calendar are defined in contract language with the BEA. While many of these elements remain unchanged, a few adjustments were made through the most recent agreement.

The components in the BEA contract are:

- Parameters for the school start date, winter break, and spring break.
- Three staff learning days (“purple days”) prior to the first day of school.
- One staff learning day scheduled within the month of September.
- A semester break day in January to allow staff to finalize grading and prepare for second semester.
- Designated holidays, including Treaty Day.
- Anticipated weekly districtwide early dismissal days, including early dismissal before Thanksgiving and on the last day of school (an increase from the previous 17 early release days).
- Built-in snow make-up days in May and June, with the option to convert the March staff learning day into a snow make-up day if needed.

Prepare a district calendar that provides adequate collaborative and professional development time for staff in the pursuit of effective instruction.

Common District Goals, Systemwide Work and School Team Planning

Our system’s work in creating time and focus for the promotion of professional learning and growth for staff is grounded in a framework of firm goals. We continued our focus on common districtwide goals

for improving inclusive educational strategies and supporting positive student conduct through a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS). MTSS encompasses three tiers of instructional activity:

Tier 1: Whole class, universal, core instruction that provides scaffolds and differentiated support for all learners. These are supports available to all students through a general education program.

Tier 2: Whole class core instruction plus additional targeted instruction aligned to tier 1, often in small groups within tier 1 settings. These supports include additional opportunities to practice the skills necessary for core instruction or strategies for enrichment. Tier 2 is supplemental and does not replace tier 1.

Tier 3: Whole class instruction plus intensive targeted intervention and provides more individualized support. These are often explicit, focused interventions that occur individually or in very small groups. Tier 3 increases the frequency, intensity and duration of small groups.

Firm goals established back in August of 2022 continue to guide our district's work in four categories for professional learning. While these firm goals are reviewed and adjusted slightly each year (see Figure A below) they have continued in the same basic direction as our school district's focus for ongoing work into the 2025-26 school year. Our overarching theme for the year focused on the phrase from the mission statement of the Bellingham Promise that says "we collectively commit that our students are cared for and respected..."

MTSS Districtwide Standing Committee

The MTSS Standing Committee continued to meet and develop our work in multi-tiered systems of support. As noted last year, this group is charged with investigating, reviewing and recommending professional learning experiences, as well as instructional strategies and techniques to support our work in increasing inclusive educational opportunities across PK-12. Work coming out of this committee now includes menus of tiered intervention supports organized on the staff hub in various content areas ([social emotional learning](#), [literacy foundation skills](#), [attendance](#), [hearing and vision supports](#), etc.) that can be used by school teams in their collaboration time, in Child Study Team meetings, in Attendance Team meetings, and other planning settings that are part of the regular work to support student learning needs in schools. As this group continues to work, we expect similarly organized menus to be created in other areas of math, reading comprehension, and writing that will add value for teachers and other staff in planning and delivering high quality instruction across Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3.

Figure A. Firm Goals for BPS Professional Learning 2025-26



A subset of four specific goals (identified with a star in Figure A) form our focus for the work in 2025-26:

- (1) *Knowledge*: Understanding of strategies to ensure all students feel safe, cared for and respected;
- (2) *Skills and Practices*: Providing access to grade level content for all students through a strong MTSS framework;
- (3) *Implementation*: Teaching district adopted curricular resources; and,
- (4) *Feedback*: Using data beliefs to guide evidence based decision making.

Professional Learning for Effective Instruction

Figuring out how to ensure adequate time for the learning to occur includes multiple approaches and structures. Embedded calendar time for collaboration as a part of the early release Thursday schedule continued this year. The time is written into the teacher contract and earmarked for staff to work together in content area groups, in grade level teams, in co-teaching arrangements, and other collaborative groupings to plan for effective instruction. The embedded nature of this time allows for collaboration both within one school site, as well as across school sites with content-alike groups. For example, elementary music teachers use this time for regular cross district learning and planning, drawing together with job-alike colleagues from across all the elementary schools. These

collaboration blocks also provide dedicated time for teachers to communicate and engage with families.

In addition, the Thursday early release schedule includes embedded time for building-based professional learning, and much of this work has focused on the school improvement plans that all schools developed in two sessions held last summer. In June of 2025, all schools brought a team to a districtwide meeting where they had an opportunity to examine data related to various aspects of student progress and growth, and to develop initial thinking around plans for the 2025-26 school year. Teams solidified these plans with a second day of planning in late August. During building based time scheduled throughout the year, these plans helped define direction and shaped professional learning opportunities.

In addition to the Thursday collaboration and building-based professional development time, the Department of Teaching and Learning runs robust professional learning opportunities for staff during the course of the school year. These opportunities are run either afterschool for clock hour credit, or during the workday and supported with substitutes to free up participants. These professional learning opportunities are directly tied to the firm goals established above. Classes offered this year included:

- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies (multiple offerings)
- Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) strategies (multiple offerings)
- Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) Day 1 and multiple day trainings
- Right Response re-certification
- General AI Training modules
- Interactive Read Alouds (elementary literacy strategy)
- Morpheme Magic (elementary literacy program)

Reduce Time That Teachers are Out of the Classroom for Professional Development

When our calendar with embedded staff learning days was first introduced, one of our primary goals was to significantly reduce the amount of time teachers spent out of the classroom for professional development. We have continued to uphold this commitment by intentionally limiting certificated staff absences related to professional learning.

In recent years, the number of non-student staff learning days built into the calendar has decreased substantially. Despite this reduction, certificated absences for professional development have remained relatively low, reflecting both thoughtful scheduling and our emphasis on minimizing disruption to classroom instruction.

The chart below displays the total number of certificated absences for professional development along with the percentage decrease from the 2013–14 baseline. Although our ability to secure qualified substitutes has improved considerably, we remain committed to further reducing

professional-development-related absences. Our priority continues to be minimizing the instructional impact students experience when their teacher is away from the classroom.

Certificated Staff Absences by Year for Professional Development and Collaboration		
School Year	No. of Certificated Absences	Percent Decrease from Baseline Year
2013-14 Baseline Year	4,958	
2014-15	4,495	9%
2015-16	3,799	23%
2016-17	3,287	34%
2017-18	3,060	38%
2018-19	2,818	43%
2019-20 Prior to Covid Closure in March	1,650	49%
2020-21 Covid School Closure		
2021-22	1,211	76%
2022-23	2,104	58%
2023-24	2,550	49%
2024-25	2,370	52%

Engaging All Families with Calendar Changes

Weather and other unplanned events can unexpectedly change the school calendar, and the district works diligently to ensure all families are informed promptly. We understand the importance of timely communication and strive to keep everyone updated with the latest information.

At the end of November, family liaisons connect with families experiencing homelessness to ensure they know how to access information about inclement weather, school closures, late starts and specialized transportation.

In the event of a school closure due to inclement weather, the district uses ParentSquare to notify families. This system ensures that all families receive timely updates. Additionally, the Translated Weather Line (360-647-6815) provides updates in Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Punjabi and English, ensuring language barriers or internet connectivity do not prevent families from staying informed.

To further support families who speak languages other than English, we update the Family Resource Center line, provide separate special notifications to families experiencing homelessness, and post updates on the Padres Unidos de las Escuelas de Bellingham Facebook page for Spanish-speaking parents. These efforts are part of our commitment to ensuring that all families, regardless of their primary language, have access to important information.

When the district makes any planned changes to the calendar, such as making up snow days, the family engagement team creates special messages for families who may not be reached by the regular messages sent by our communications department. This includes targeted translated messages, posts on our Family Resource Centers, Facebook posts and individual phone calls.

When a new immigrant family enrolls their students we provide a family handbook, taking extra time to go over the school calendar, making sure they know and understand bell times, early dismissal times, vacations and holidays, the A/B calendar for the secondary level, Purple Fridays, and built-in weather make-up days.

The family engagement team attends events like the Block Party and all open houses in the fall, with resources in different languages, including ParentSquare, Skyward, SeeSaw, and extra calendars and family handbooks for easy access to the families.

We recognize that not all families are the same, and we need to approach communication differently to ensure everyone feels included and informed. Our Family Resource Centers receive over three hundred visitors every month, and each visit is an opportunity for families to share their experiences and opinions and for us to provide information. We are committed to engaging every family and that engagement goes beyond mere communication. It involves listening to families, understanding their needs and providing the support they require.

We also encourage families to provide feedback on our communication efforts. This feedback helps us understand what is working and where we can improve. Our commitment to engaging all families with calendar changes is unwavering. By utilizing multiple communication channels, providing information in various languages and continuously seeking feedback we strive to create a community where all families feel valued, informed and engaged.



Above: Members of the family engagement team attend the 2024 Back to School Block Party

Timely communication of calendar and calendar changes to all stakeholders and the board.

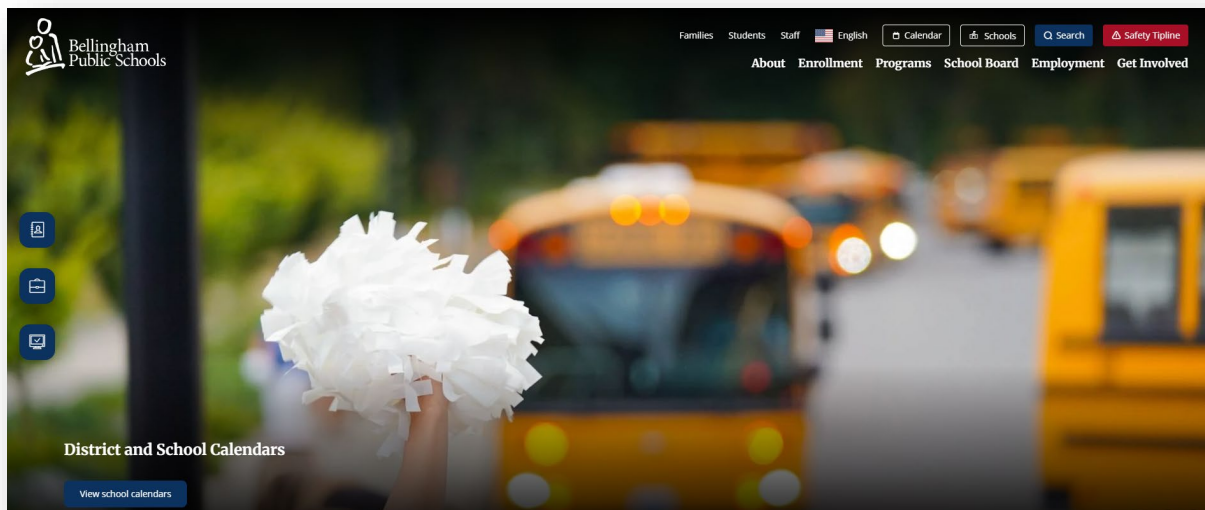
We work diligently to share calendar updates as quickly as possible with the board, staff, students and other stakeholders.

During this reporting period, we utilized our regular communications channels about our calendar.

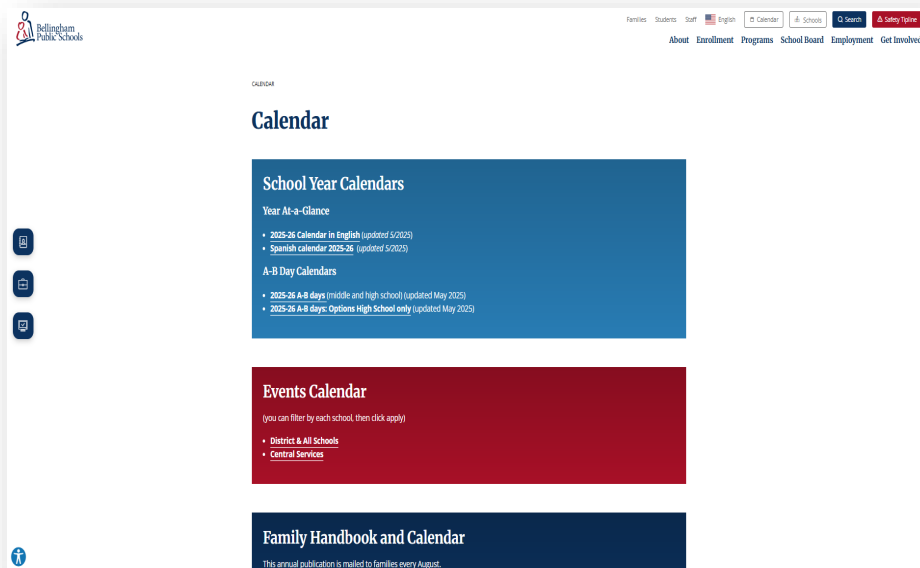
Our typical communications protocol is to send reminders about planned days off and early dismissals via email, website and often principals include reminders in newsletters. We continue this practice throughout the school year and reporting period.

When ready, key dates for upcoming school years are shared with families and the community and posted on our website. [A communication about key dates was sent March 23 for the 2027-28 school year.](#)

Below: Sample web slider. The new website displays a calendar web slider for quick access to district calendars. In addition, the upper menu on the district homepage includes a direct quick link to the same page.



Below: The newly revamped calendar webpage includes school year calendars, A-B Day calendars for secondary schools, links to events calendars filtered by school, links to the annual Family Handbook and Calendar, school start and end times, key dates for upcoming school years, and links to the district cultural calendar. Website URL to calendar: <https://www.bellinghamschools.org/calendar>



The first day of school, back-to-school events and orientations are sent in many ways, including email, text, school-based communication and within the annual Family Handbook and Calendar, mailed to all families.

The handbook includes both a long form calendar and the one-page “bubble calendar.” We update and maintain our calendar webpage regularly.

Below: Sample of a calendar page from the [2025-26 Family Handbook and Calendar](#) and the one-page [2025-26 year-at-a-glance calendar](#).

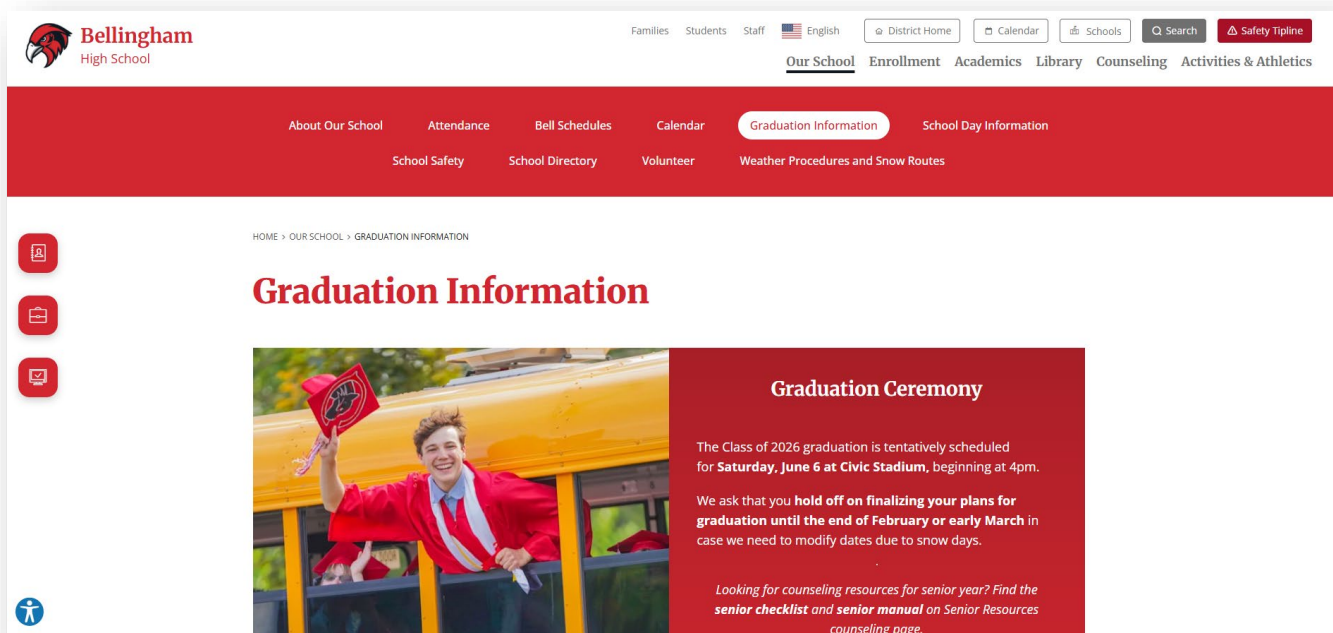


Graduations

Critical communication about graduations are important to our grade 12 families. We generally send an [initial graduation-related calendar message](#) to grade 12 level students and families in September giving the tentative graduation dates, with the clause that dates will be finalized at the end of winter season (generally early March) to see if there has been any weather or emergency closures. In this reporting period, the finalized [Class of 2026 graduation dates communication](#) was sent on March 2.

We also update these dates on our district and school websites as soon as they are finalized.

Below: Example of a high school web presence about graduation ceremonies.



Reader boards

Eight schools currently have reader boards: Alderwood, Cordata, Parkview, Silver Beach and Sunnyland elementary schools, Shuksan Middle School and Bellingham and Squalicum high schools. These digital boards remind families of districtwide calendar dates and school-related events and announcements.

Below: Example of a calendar reminder at one of our elementary schools on a reader board and the use of reader board by one of our secondary schools.



Important calendar notes during this reporting period

- In this reporting period, we reduced the 2025-26 school year by one day as a cost-saving measure due to budget challenges. The [calendar update sent to staff and families on May 12](#) was part of a multi-pronged approach to the district's budget shortfall.
- The changes to the calendar included updating the first and last of school and reducing the number of days for staff professional development. We were able to accomplish these changes and savings by partnering with our labor partners and through a state waiver.

Inclement Weather Impact on Calendar

When our schedule is impacted or buses are delayed, we utilize a checklist that includes multiple communication methods, including our website; media outlets; direct texts and emails to staff,

students and families via the district's notification tool ParentSquare; reception voicemail and multi-language phone line, which provides information in four languages.

- There were no weather-related closures during this reporting period. However, there was a one-day emergency school closure due to a power outage in the Geneva area. [Geneva Elementary School was closed on Dec. 15.](#)

Our templates and plans are developed and utilized by communications and family engagement; our updates are accessible, thorough and timely. Important announcements regarding our schedule are also shared on social media and reader boards.

For context, inclement weather decisions are made in collaboration with the transportation director, chief of operations, superintendent and executive director of communications and community relations.

Statement of compliance: The superintendent is **in compliance** with EL-8 District Calendar.