



## District Strategic Plan 2005-2010

*The mission of the Bellingham School District, in partnership with the community, is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and qualities to be successful in our changing, diverse world.*

*Our vision is that education in Bellingham is a shared, lifelong experience in which the diverse needs of all individuals are met. This experience, provided in a safe, supportive environment, will ensure success in our changing world.*

## The History of Strategic Planning in the Bellingham School District

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In 1994, following a process of community input, the Board of Directors adopted the first Bellingham School District strategic plan. Since then, the district has made significant gains in student achievement by using district and school strategic plans as roadmaps to set priorities, allocate resources and manage work.

The strategic plan was updated in 1998 by a team of community members, families of students in the Bellingham schools, students and staff members. They created “Pathway for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” with a focus on literacy, personalization and connecting with families.

In 2000, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recognized the Bellingham School District as a model of achievement and awarded the district a \$4.49 million grant to be used over a five-year period to accelerate the work of reaching the following three goals:

1. Having 90 percent of students meeting literacy standards by 2005;
2. Creating personal, individualized support for all students; and
3. Using technology to enhance parent-teacher communication and collaboration.

Through the leadership of the Board of Directors and administration, the dedicated work of staff and continued support from the community, Bellingham was recently selected as one of the 10 highest performing districts in the state. The successes that helped the district earn that recognition include:

- Significant gains in student achievement, including two elementary schools that have met the 90 percent target of students meeting state standards in reading. Many other schools are closing in on that target;
- Extensive professional development with a focus on instructional coaching and the development of Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning (see Addendum), leadership development and organization alignment; and
- Implementation of school strategic plans that target specific ways to improve student learning.

While we have made substantial gains as a result of the two previous strategic plans, we now face new challenges. We must answer the following questions:

- How do we support *all* students in achieving state standards in reading, writing, math and science by 2014, as federally mandated?
- How do we ensure that *all* students in the class of 2008 and beyond earn a Certificate of Academic Achievement, indicating their proficiency on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)?
- How do we effectively support *all* students in preparing for and meeting their graduation requirements, including completion of a high-quality culminating project that reflects their passions, stretches their learning and benefits the community?

Answering these questions requires reshaping “Pathway for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” into a new strategic plan. In the new plan, we progress from a school system in which many students are successful to a school system that supports *all* students achieving at high levels so that they are well prepared for college, career and citizenship. This new strategic plan is designed to support, honor and guide the school strategic plans, and to provide alignment for all of the Bellingham School District’s work in the next five years.

## 2005-2010 Strategic Plan – The Development Process

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This 2005-2010 Bellingham School District strategic plan was developed in several stages during the 2004-05 school year.

Superintendent Dale E. Kinsley, with input from all of the school principals, organized a Steering Committee of parents, community members, board members, principals, teachers, union representatives, staff members and the superintendent. He gave them a two-fold task:

1. Guide the development of a plan that builds on previous successes of the district; and
2. Ensure that the new plan moves the district to an even higher level of performance.

School administrators gathered more than 200 staff, family and community members in January 2005 to attend informational sessions, where they learned about the district's progress during the last several years and had an opportunity to ask questions. The participants then attended 13 focus group sessions to provide input to shape this plan. During the focus group sessions, participants generated 8,554 comments, sharing their perspectives on the district's strengths and challenges in the following areas:

- ➔ Supporting students to meet state standards in reading, writing, math and science;
- ➔ Personalizing the learning environment at all instructional levels;
- ➔ Preparing students for life beyond high school; and
- ➔ Engaging families and community members in student learning.

All comments were read, analyzed and compiled into a summary document.\*

The Steering Committee and a subcommittee of a Writing Team used an analysis of the focus group comments to guide the development of the expected outcome, goals and target objectives in this 2005-2010 strategic plan. It is important to note that the focus group comments will be consulted as specific action plans are established to implement the plan.

During May 2005, the draft plan was shared publicly in numerous ways, including on the district's Web site, in staff newsletters and during a community event. The Steering Committee asked for input on the plan from community members, families, students and staff through an online survey. This input was used to revise the draft.

The Board of Directors reviewed this document in June 2005 and adopted the strategic plan in August 2005.

Staff will develop specific action plans to carry out the work outlined in the plan's goals and target objectives. These work priorities will be submitted to the Board of Directors annually each fall. Progress will be monitored and measured according to the Measures of Progress on page five of this document. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee will reconvene annually to review progress on implementation of this strategic plan.

\* The document summarizing comments from the focus groups is available upon request.

## Our Foundation for a Successful Strategic Plan

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### As part of this strategic planning process, we:

- Developed the plan;
- Communicated the plan; and we will
- Implement and continuously assess the plan.

### The values that serve as our foundation are:

- All students are worthy of a quality education;
- Learning is essential for success in today's world;
- All adults and students in our district can succeed as learners;
- The district is continuously improving as a system;
- Relationships are based on respect for self and for one another;
- Partnerships among the district, families of students and the community members of Bellingham are essential; and
- Diversity is celebrated and supported.

### When we act on the values listed above, we:

- Apply the Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning (see Addendum);
- Align curriculum standards and assessments, and expect joint accountability for student success in all classrooms, schools and the district;
- Sustain instructional coaching and collaborative professional development focused on student and adult learning in all schools and at the district level;
- Improve professional practice focused on high achievement for *all* students;
- Develop authentic partnerships focused on student success with community members and *all* families of the students in our schools; and
- Practice ongoing two-way communication, joint problem-solving and systemic alignment throughout the district.

## Measures of Progress

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The Bellingham School District has used previous strategic plans to guide its work to improve student learning in all schools. The new strategic plan will be used in the same way.

Staff members will engage in a systematic and continuous process of assessment. A variety of measures will be used at regular intervals during the next five years to provide feedback and promote accountability. These measures will include:

### **Student Achievement Data:**

- Continuous assessment of student performance in the classroom;
- Assessment data\* reported to families;
- Student academic portfolios maintained in the district's data warehouse;
- District reading assessment (Developmental Reading Assessment [DRA] and Degrees of Reading Power [DRP]);
- District writing assessment (Six Trait);
- District math assessment (Measures of Academic Progress [MAP]);
- Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL);
- Participation rates and levels of achievement in summer school;
- Levels of achievement from additional support, according to Progress and Promotion;
- Participation rates and levels of achievement in college-preparatory courses;
- SAT and ACT scores by number tested, ethnicity and socio-economic indicators; and
- State community college report on students taking remedial courses.

\*Assessments may be added or dropped based upon federal and state mandates, the need for data and effective use of that information.

### **Organizational Achievement Data:**

- Engagement in professional development and instructional coaching;
- National Board Teacher Certification numbers;
- High school graduation rates;
- District and school performance on Adequate Yearly Progress;
- Attendance and discipline rates;
- District technology assessments;
- Awards and recognition of performance; and
- Balanced budget and alignment of resources.

### **Family Engagement and Perception Data:**

- Engagement of families and students in opportunities to improve learning;
- Family surveys and feedback;
- Student surveys, including exit interviews of seniors;
- Staff surveys and feedback;
- Community surveys and feedback; and
- Bond and levy support.

## The Structure of Our Strategic Plan

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The following pages outline three goals that will help the Bellingham School District meet an expected outcome of high levels of achievement with *all* students prepared for college, career and citizenship.

Each of the three goals contains target objectives that are designed to move us closer to this expected outcome. Strategic actions will be developed to reach these targets and accomplish our goals as we prioritize our work.

*Ready for College, Career, Citizenship*



GOAL 1

**Learn**

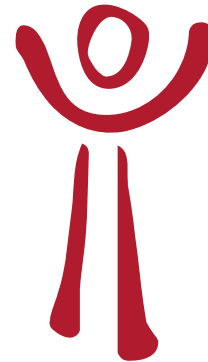
Focus on powerful teaching and learning strategies in all classrooms.



GOAL 2

**Personalize**

Personalize learning in the school setting.



GOAL 3

**Engage**

Engage families and community in student learning.

Bellingham  
Public Schools  
... where *every* student learns

**Expected Outcome: This plan will result in high levels of achievement with *all* students prepared for college, career and citizenship.**

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*The following goal and target objectives support this outcome. Strategic actions will be developed to help meet these target objectives, accomplish the goal and achieve the expected outcome.*

**Goal 1: Focus on powerful teaching and learning strategies in all classrooms.**

***Vision of Success:*** The Bellingham School District actively engages adults and students in the use of the Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning to support lifelong learning and the highest possible achievement for every student. All learning environments include creativity, risk-taking, acceptance, collaboration and feedback, while focusing on continuous growth of students and adults.

**Target Objective 1:** Continue to improve instruction by utilizing the Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning in all content areas at all instructional levels.

**Target Objective 2:** Align the written, taught and tested curriculum across elementary, middle and high schools to create consistency, common language, procedures and standards for all students as they move from one instructional level to another.

**Target Objective 3:** Design and implement the coordination and collaboration of general education and specialized programs (e.g. Highly Capable Learners, English Language Learners, Special Education).

**Target Objective 4:** Provide professional development that is based on assessed needs and schools' goals/focus areas through whole group and small group formats, and one-on-one instructional coaching.

**Target Objective 5:** Develop a sequence of experiences that provides all students with opportunities to connect their learning in their school environment to responsible citizenship.

**Expected Outcome: This plan will result in high levels of achievement with *all* students prepared for college, career and citizenship.**

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*The following goal and target objectives support this outcome. Strategic actions will be developed to help meet these target objectives, accomplish the goal and achieve the expected outcome.*

**Goal 2: Personalize learning in the school setting.**

***Vision of Success:*** Small learning environments result in meaningful, caring relationships between students and staff members at all instructional levels. Staff members have high expectations for each student and they help that student meet those expectations by providing a personalized and continuous learning path with interventions as needed.

**Target Objective 1:** Design smaller learning environments that provide optimum learning opportunities for each student at all instructional levels.

**Target Objective 2:** Develop an academic portfolio of student progress that moves with each student from grade to grade and school to school. This portfolio is a source of information about each student's needs, strengths and interests as a learner. It is designed to assist teachers in collaborating with students and families to plan personalized instruction for each student.

**Target Objective 3:** Provide personalized interventions for each student who is not yet at standard.

**Target Objective 4:** Provide rigorous learning opportunities for all students and further challenge students who are meeting or exceeding state standards.

**Target Objective 5:** Provide an equitable, sustainable and balanced program of required academic subjects and elective offerings.

**Expected Outcome: This plan will result in high levels of achievement with *all* students prepared for college, career and citizenship.**

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*The following goal and target objectives support this outcome. Strategic actions will be developed to help meet these target objectives, accomplish the goal and achieve the expected outcome.*

**Goal 3: Engage families and community in student learning.**

*Vision of Success:* The Bellingham School District collaborates with community members and *all* families to build mutually supportive home and school cultures that enhance each student’s achievement.

**Target Objective 1:** Develop strategies for authentic family engagement and joint accountability that result in successful and complementary learning at home and at school.

**Target Objective 2:** Keep parents/guardians continuously engaged so each student experiences a successful transition from elementary to middle to high school and beyond.

**Target Objective 3:** Create structures to support families and students whose primary language is not English.

**Target Objective 4:** Provide a variety of opportunities for every family to access and use current and accurate student data.

**Target Objective 5:** Build community partnerships to raise adequate resources to support high achievement of all students.

**Target Objective 6:** Create partnerships with community members to support students in meeting the graduation requirement of completing a culminating project.

## **Addendum: Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning**

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Bellingham School District teachers and administrators have identified a commonly held set of classroom instructional strategies for powerful teaching and learning that engages all students to achieve at higher levels.

### ***Statement 1***

Teachers continuously assess and monitor student learning.

### ***Statement 2***

Teachers give students continuous, relevant feedback based on assessment data.

### ***Statement 3***

Teachers provide a classroom environment that actively engages all students in learning.

### ***Statement 4***

Teachers differentiate by using a variety of instructional strategies based on the assessed strengths, needs and interests of their students.

### ***Statement 5***

Teachers implement whole group, small group and individual instruction that provides for independent application and practice.

### ***Statement 6***

Teachers utilize a continuum of support leading to responsible, independent learners.

### ***Statement 7***

Teachers identify and articulate clear learning objectives based on grade-level expectations and assessment of students' needs.

The Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning represent a shared understanding among staff and administrators of what is meant by “best practices” in the Bellingham School District. The Bellingham Education Association (BEA) collaborated in structuring the process to identify and describe the strategies. In addition, the district and BEA have jointly supported the implementation of these essential strategies in all K-12 classrooms. The Essential Strategies document is available upon request.