

Some of the information in this report has not changed from previous reports but provides needed context for each area. **Bolded words** or phrases within the text of this report have been used to signal new initiatives, strategies and work.

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 discussion during our last negotiations with the Bellingham Education Association (BEA) in 2023.

Those negotiations with the BEA resulted in a three-year contract and calendars for the years 2023-2024, 2024-2025 and 2025-2026. The district also meets with other union leaders representing those that are most affected by the school calendar, such as our paraeducators and administrative assistants who work the school calendar schedule.

As shared in last year's report, there are common components of these calendars that are included in contract language with BEA. Many remained the same, but there were some changes. Most notably, the addition of Treaty Day. Treaty Day in our region marks the anniversary of the signing of the [Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855](#). The treaty enacted a government-to-government relationship between the United States government and many Coast Salish and Indigenous nations, including the Lummi Nation in the Pacific Northwest.



Above: Fourth grade students at Happy Valley get an up close look at the text on the Treaty of Point Elliott board.

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

Built in Collaboration Time

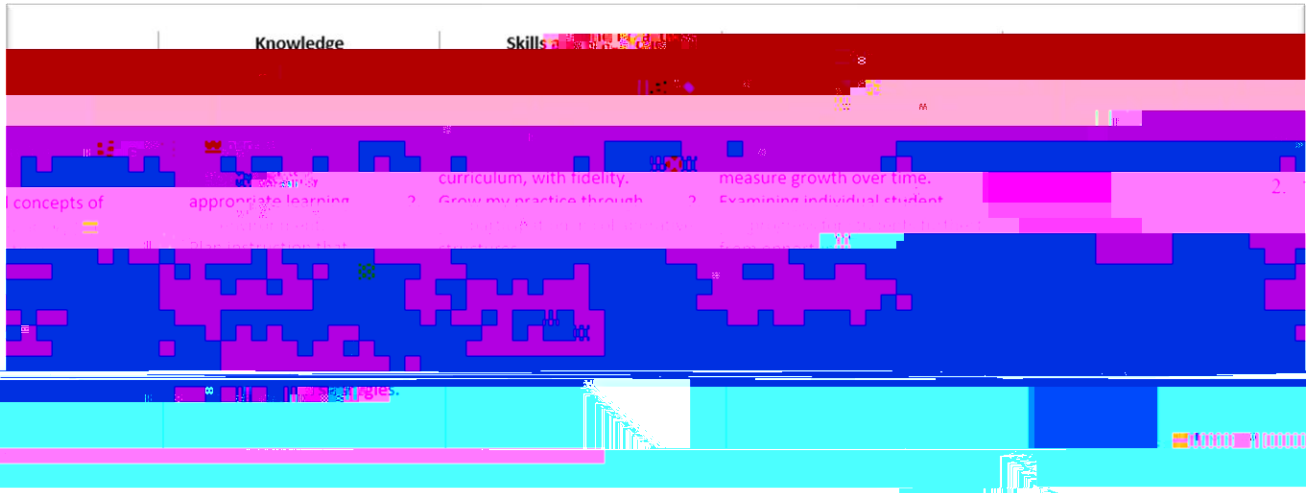
The work year calendar for school districts is a subject of collective bargaining with teachers' unions in Washington State and is negotiated locally in collaboration with the BEA. **This year the calendar includes a new focus on embedding time specifically for collaboration in service of professional learning.** The specific reference in the BEA contract from Article VIII, Section L, page 50 reads:

Collaboration Time. Time scheduled on the work year calendar for collaboration shall be used for:

1. Collaboration time for grade level teams, departments, building, job alike and/or content area work groups, and job embedded staff development initiated and planned by employees.
2. Collaboration and planning related to support services provided by specialists and special education teachers for the purpose of addressing student needs, e.g., collaborative work related to IEPs, 504s, health plans, meeting and communicating with families, etc.
- 3.

year at the August 10-11, 2023 leadership team retreat. Firm goals in four categories for professional learning were identified consistent with the work from 2022-23. These firm goals (see Figure A below) became the focus for ongoing work into the 2023-24 school year.

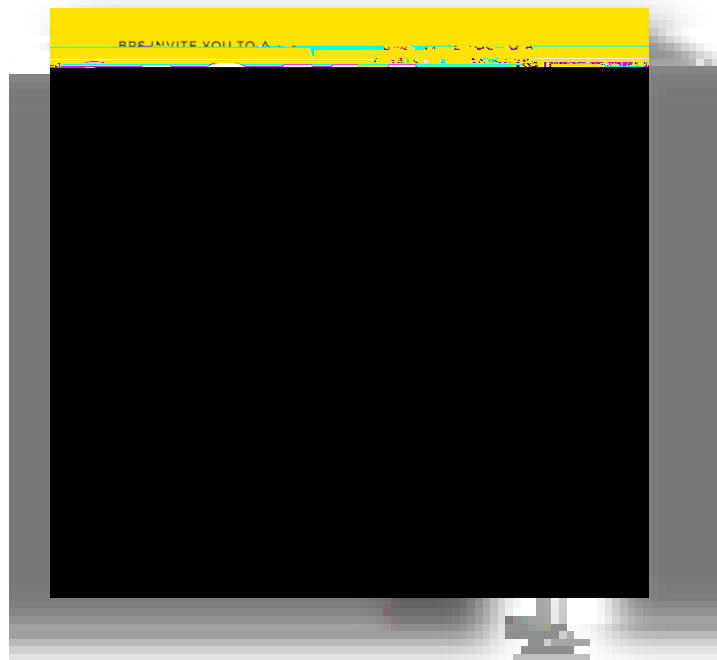
Figure A. Firm Goals for BPS Professional Learning 2023-24



Leadership teams from each school came together for a day and one-half retreat in early August that centered on our professional learning work around inclusive instructional strategies and student conduct. As teams worked, they came to agreement on goals for professional learning connected to the districtwide goals above.

“Train the Trainer” Professional Development on Regulation Strategies

This year’s districtwide professional learning on issues related to student conduct featured a series focused on regulation strategies including positive discipline and right response methods planned and delivered by Shuksan principal Alli Chryst and teacher Carrie Swackhamer. Trainers worked with representatives from each school site to prepare them to deliver training back with each of their respective school staff. The opening session took place on August 25, 2023 (see promotional poster below).



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These trainers followed up with a second training “Phase II” delivered in early winter first in secondary schools, then in elementary schools. Below are example handouts from the Phase II secondary grade levels’ training. Training specifically addressed skills/strategies needed to lead a dysregulated student through body-based regulation.

Choice Courses

We built in addition professional development opportunities offered for clock hour credit both on the [October 13 professional development day](#) that included a catalog of 25 courses offered across elementary, middle school and high school, as well as an [after-hours series planned for April](#).

Certificated Staff Absences by Year for Professional Development and Collaboration

2013-14
Baseline Year

Develop Intentional Time for Student and Family Engagement

The family engagement team has a strong commitment to connecting with all families. By actively removing barriers, they create an environment where communication can thrive. Historically marginalized groups, including our BIPOC families and those who speak languages other than English, have faced unique challenges. However, Bellingham Public Schools is determined to ensure that these families are not left behind.

An example of this commitment is the additional steps we have taken to communicate with McKinney Vento (MV-experiencing homelessness) and multilingual families regarding transportation changes during inclement weather. We use ParentSquare to provide reminders about bus times and stop changes, with special attention to those receiving out-of-district transportation. Countless personal phone calls and ParentSquare messages are also used to connect with families about district and schoolwide events.

Our Family Liaisons work closely with families experiencing homelessness and families with students in foster care, conducting frequent check-ins and maintaining detailed notes for follow-ups. They also collaborate with multilingual specialists to improve the experience of families new to the country, starting with the registration process and ensuring everyone feels welcomed, informed and empowered from day one.

World Language Interpreters: Bridging the Gap

As the number of languages spoken within the district grows, so does the need for effective communication. The addition of World Language interpreters is a crucial step. These interpreters serve as bridges, allowing families to seamlessly engage with schools and district staff. Whether it's a parent-teacher conference or discussing academic progress, interpreters ensure that language differences do not hinder meaningful conversations.

Conexiones Latinx: A Vibrant Community

The inception of Conexiones Latinx (Latinx Connections) a few years ago has been transformative. These Zoom sessions regularly bring together parents. The topics covered are diverse, ranging from practical matters like returning to school to critical issues such as mental

health, substance abuse prevention, and suicide prevention. Parents have found a safe space through these sessions to express their opinions and concerns.

The unprecedented level of engagement achieved through Conexiones Latinx has amplified the voices of Latinx families. Their insights, experiences, and perspectives are invaluable. By actively listening to their feedback, the district gains a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by these families. This, in turn, informs policies, programs and initiatives that better serve the entire community.

Family Resource Centers: A Hub of Support

The Family Resource Centers (FRC) at Carl Cozier and Shuksan play a pivotal role. Open to the public Monday through Friday, these centers provide a range of support services. Families can seek assistance from basic needs (such as food and clothing) to navigating complex educational processes. The FRCs foster a sense of belonging and ensure families feel seen, heard and valued.

The Multi-Language Message Line: A Lifeline

Imagine being able to call a dedicated line in any language and receive timely assistance. The Multi-Language Message Line (360-647-6816) does just that. This service provides families with another avenue to connect. Whether it's clarifying a school policy or seeking guidance, families know they have a lifeline they can rely on.

A Holistic Approach

Bellingham Public Schools' commitment to family engagement extends beyond mere communication. It's about creating a holistic system where families are partners in their children's education. By actively involving families, the district ensures that every voice matters, every concern is addressed, and every barrier is dismantled. Together, we build a stronger, more inclusive educational community.

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 changed the first day of school for the 2023-24 school year. Our school year calendar and schedule were impacted by weather in January 2024. Make up days were/will be used in January, March and May.

Our typical communications protocol is to send reminders about planned days off and early dismissals via email and social media, such as [this announcement](#). We continue this practice throughout the school year and reporting period.

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

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- We shared a [calendar update in March 2024](#) with finalized graduation dates, including Community Transitions program graduation, the last day of school for seniors and the last day of school for all other students.

Inclement Weather Impact on Calendar

We experienced a significant snowstorm in January 2024, which caused school to be closed January 17, 18 and 19.

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,

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reminders via email, reader boards and social media. Family engagement sent additional messaging to those who speak languages other than English.

Below: Weather-related closures and/or snow routes were posted on social media in this reporting period on Jan. 17, 18 and 19 and on March 4.