

Frequently Asked Questions
ELL Program Review

1. Why are we having an ELL program review in the Bellingham School District?

The district has an investment in ensuring the academic success of all students, including English Language Learners. As part of our effort to provide a high quality, continuously improving ELL program, the district has decided to seek an outside, objective perspective to help examine the instruction and services that ELL students receive in our district.

2. Who is conducting the review?

The district has hired consultants from Education Northwest (formally Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory) to work with a District ELL Program Review Team to conduct a facilitated review. This means that the Education Northwest staff will guide the team in all steps of the review process: review of research and protocols, data collection and analysis, development of recommendations, and communicating results to stakeholders.

3. Who is on the District ELL Program Review Team?

The team will include principals and selected staff at the seven schools involved in the review, the district ELL Program Facilitator, the Categorical Programs Director, Deputy Superintendent and Superintendent. The composition of the team was chosen in order to have representation from staff at the classroom, school, program and district levels.

4. Which schools will be involved?

Seven schools will participate in the ELL program review process in March 2011: Squalicum High School, Shuksan Middle School, Northern Heights, Alderwood, Birchwood, Roosevelt and Sunnyside Elementary Schools. These schools were chosen because they have the highest percentage of ELL students in the district.

5. We have ELL students in every school in the district; why not review the ELL program at every school instead of just seven schools?

We do not currently have the capacity to conduct a review of this depth at every school in the district, but the District ELL Program Review Team participating in the facilitated review will be able to replicate the program review process at other schools in the future.

6. What is the focus of the review?

The team will be collecting data relative to the educational experience of English language learners with a specific focus on the following five elements: (1) identification, assessment, placement and exit, (2) curriculum and instruction, (3) qualified staff for ELLs, (4) program collaboration and support for ELLs, and (5) parent and community involvement in the ELL program. The team will also consider how district and school level leadership, allocation of resources, and expressed vision and expectations impact the experience of English language learners and their families in the district.

7. What data will the review team be gathering and analyzing?

Education Northwest staff will guide the District ELL Program Review Team in collecting information from a variety of sources. Teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents, students and others will be asked to respond to questions through interviews, focus groups and surveys. In addition, the team will conduct classroom observations and review documents, artifacts, achievement data, and language proficiency scores.

8. How much time will it take?

The District ELL Program Review team will participate in a two-day training session with Education Northwest consultants. The team will then gather data during on-site visits over a period of two weeks. Finally, they will review and analyze the data with the guidance of Education Northwest consultants in order to make recommendations for improvements in the focus areas identified above. The entire process will take place during the month of March 2011.

9. What will the results be of the review?

The District ELL Program Review Team, with the guidance of Education Northwest consultants, will make recommendations to inform a district plan of improvement for ELL instruction and services. Results and recommendations will be shared with those who participated in the review process as well as with the broader district community.