



# Student and Family Handbook

2017-18

## **Introduction**

Welcome to our community of online learners! Our goal is to help you be successful in your online courses so we developed this guide to help you get started as a BVL student. Below are some common questions that will help you and your family determine if taking an online course is right for you.

**What is BVL?** Bellingham Virtual Learning is a web-based educational program of Bellingham Public Schools that provides instructor-led online courses to high school students. Students can take courses that are not available at their high school as part of their regular schedule. Students can also complete additional courses on a fee-based system. BVL can be an ideal environment for a self-motivated, independent learner who seeks on-line coursework that runs parallel with Bellingham Public Schools curriculum. Some online courses are taught by Spokane teachers as part of an agreement with Spokane Public Schools and Spokane Virtual Learning (SVL), while others are taught by Bellingham teachers through Spokane online curriculum or other supported online curriculum, such as Moodle.

**How is an online class/course similar and different from a brick and mortar class?** Unlike a brick and mortar class, online courses rarely ever meet with an instructor. All communication and learning is done electronically through texts, emails, blogs, etc. Similar to a brick and mortar class, there is a state-approved curriculum that the instructor guides students through during the course of a semester. Students are expected to maintain adequate progress. It's important to note that online courses are not for everyone. Students have to schedule time to work on their courses in order to be successful. Students should expect to put in an average of five hours weekly to maintain adequate progress in an online course.

**Is there a “profile” of what makes a student successful with on an online class?** Yes. Students who do well taking online courses typically possess the following:

- Good study habits
- Independent learning skills
- Enjoy reading and writing
- Ability to problem-solve and work through frustrations
- Solid organizational skills
- Intrinsic motivation

In addition, successful students commit to completing at least one assignment per week, spend approximately five hours a week on each course, and maintain weekly contact with their instructor. Taking an online course is not necessarily easier than taking a brick and mortar class.

### **Are there State Laws that govern online courses?**

Yes- there are many state laws that govern online learning under the umbrella of Alternative Learning Education (ALE). Most significantly, Washington state law requires students to make adequate progress in their online courses in a timely manner (WAC 392-121-182).

Students enrolled in online courses are required to have weekly personal contact with their instructors. Contact is for instruction, review of assignments, testing, reporting of student progress or other learning activities.

Here are some examples:

- An assignment/test/activity posted to Blackboard that an instructor grades and/or provides feedback on
- Email exchange with instructor
- Phone call with instructor
- Electronic exchange with instructor, discussion board, blog, Blackboard Instant Message

**What does adequate progress mean?** Adequate progress in an online course consists of two important components for students:

1. students taking online courses are required to have weekly contact with their online instructor.
2. students must maintain adequate progress that will be evaluated against progress benchmarks which are clearly defined in the course for each month.

At a minimum, students must turn in at least one assignment per week to maintain a status of “making monthly progress,” but will need to complete ALL the assignments the instructor requires for each week in order to complete the course on time. Completing only one assignment per week will not be enough to finish the course in a semester. Please note: Bellingham Public Schools recommends students complete three to five assignments per week.

### **What if I am not making adequate progress in my online course?**

If your progress is evaluated as non-satisfactory (for the previous month), your BVL instructor will create and implement a student success plan (or intervention plan) that you must acknowledge in order to remain enrolled in your BVL class. Students will have approximately until the next month's grading period to show adequate progress.

- Students who receive two Student Success Plans and do not show adequate progress may be dropped from their course by their home high school. Barring a special circumstance, such as a medical emergency, any student placed a third student success plan will be removed from the course and will not be able to enroll in a future BVL course.

### **How is my progress monitored?**

Progress in online courses is monitored weekly and monthly.

- Weekly: You and your parent/guardians will receive a progress report electronically from the online instructor every Friday, based on benchmarks specific to the course.
- Monthly: Students' progress is also evaluated at the end of each month to determine satisfactory vs. non-satisfactory for the month as a whole, based on benchmarks specific to the course. Students, parent/guardians and counselors will receive this monthly progress report at the end of every month. If you are behind in your course, increasing the amount of time/effort put into coursework and communicating your plans with your instructor is recommended.

### **What is the role of my high school's counselor and student success**

**coordinator?** High school counselors are responsible for ensuring students' online courses meet requirements for high school diploma. The student success coordinator at each high school will help students get set up with your online course and orient you to Blackboard, etc.

### **Do I need my own personal computer to take an online course?**

Students are not required to have their own personal device to take an online course. However, students are signing up for an online course and need access to technology in order to be successful. It is the students' responsibility to access a

device. Students can use any of the following resources to stay on task in coursework:

- Computer at your home school
- Computer at the public library
- Computer at a friend or relative's house

### **What courses are offered?**

Spokane Virtual Learning (SVL) offers hundreds of courses. To view the curriculum, go to: [www.spokanvirtual.com](http://www.spokanvirtual.com).

Bellingham Public Schools reserves the right to limit courses to students. Generally, students can take courses online that are not available at their high school as a part of their regular schedule. See your high school counselor for more information about these limitations.

### **How do I sign up?**

If you are interested in taking a BVL course, meet with your high school counselor.

### **How can parents support students in online classes?**

- Ensure your student has a device that will enable access to the internet
- Set up a Parent Observer Account and learn how to monitor your student's online progress, check grades, etc.
- Ensure your student is making adequate progress each week
- Assist in creating a daily routine and organization system for your student

**What is the BVL Student Communication Contract?** This BVL contract is an agreement giving online instructors and students the understanding that they will be communicating using electronic devices for the educational purposes of the program. The parent/student contract is located on last page of this document.

## **Bellingham Virtual Learning Student Communication Agreement**

All direct communication between Bellingham Virtual Learning staff/instructors and students shall be for educational purposes of the program. BVL staff and instructors may initiate communication to student cell phones with the permission of the student's parent/guardian.

Your signature below authorizes BVL staff and instructors to communicate directly with your student at the number provided via text, voice call and email. Your signature also acknowledges any charges incurred as a result of the above communication on your student's cell phone are not the responsibility of BVL or Bellingham Public Schools.

The duration of the agreement is for the 2017-18 school year of the signature date through August 2018.

### **Approval of Consent**

- I give permission for my son/daughter to receive direct communication from BVL staff and instructors.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Cell/Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle Student's Home High School:      BHS      SHS      SQHS      OHS

### **Academic Honesty:**

Academic integrity and honesty are paramount to online courses just as they are to brick and mortar classes. Students enrolled in a BVL online course will be expected to comply with Spokane Public Schools Policy of Academic Honesty.

The policy can be found on the SVL website here at:

<http://www2.spokaneschools.org/onlinelearning/policies.php>

**BVL Parent Observer Account Sign Up:** (Revised 9/7/17)

Once a student is enrolled in a BVL class, parents can view their student's progress in their courses. Please complete the form below, detach it from the handbook and give it to the Student Success Coordinator at your student's home high school. It will take a few days to set up this account for you.

Your user name is your email address

Your password is "observer"

Please print neatly

Parent Name	
Parent Email	
Parent Phone	
Student Name	

Circle Home High School: BHS SHS SQHS OHS

Other: