



Student and Family Handbook

Fall 2021

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BELLINGHAM VIRTUAL LEARNING



Introduction to Bellingham Virtual Learning

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 Bellingham Virtual Learning (BVL) student. Below are some common questions that will help you and your family determine if taking online courses, whether part- or full-time, is right for you.

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What is BVL?

Bellingham Virtual Learning (BVL) is a web-based educational program of the Bellingham Public Schools. It provides instructor-led online courses to high school students who want to learn remotely. BVL classes are taught through the learning platform called *Edgenuity*, and BVL courses are *asynchronous*. Asynchronous means that students move through courses at their own pace and are not bound by scheduled class periods. However, students are expected to log in every day and complete course work.

BVL is an ideal environment for a motivated learner who seeks the independence of completing coursework that runs “parallel” with the Bellingham Public Schools high school curriculum, wants to learn asynchronously and be remote.

What is the pace of BVL like?

The Edgenuity software platform provides flexibility in accessing coursework in research-based content with certificated teachers instructing through videos and 100% online courses. Students and families who choose BVL must note that these courses follow a quick pace, require regular daily participation, and are at

least as rigorous if not more so than a traditional classroom course. It is imperative that students remain self-motivated, disciplined, and consistent within each course to ensure that all assignments and requirements are completed on time in order to earn credit. Students work at their own pace from home with a supervising district teacher as the main contact/point person facilitating instruction, utilizing reporting tools to monitor student progress, and ensuring continued movement through the course. Students are expected to complete 100% of each course in order to earn credit.

What are the rules or laws for online learning programs in Washington state?

In our state, taking courses through programs like BVL are considered Alternative Learning Experiences (ALE) and there are laws which govern all ALEs.

Most significantly, Washington state [WAC 392-121-182](#) requires remote learning to:

1. Have a Written Student Learning Plan (WSLP)
2. Maintain weekly contact with their instructor(s)

3. Make adequate progress in their online classes.

1. WSLP

All BVL students are required by law to have a documented learning plan that is unique to the student for all online remote courses. It must include the requirements of the student, state standards, learning targets, performance objectives, timelines, certificated teacher information, and instructional materials to be used for online courses. The WSLP must be signed by the student, parent/guardian, and school counselor or principal before a student may begin BVL.

- a. BVL uses Edgenuity software for our instructional materials for all courses
- b. The learning targets, state standards, timelines and certificated teacher information will be written on the application for BVL registration. Also in the application packet is the student expectations document. All BVL course descriptions are provided in the BVL course descriptions document.
- c. Individual course syllabus, course schedule and

coursework are available within Edgenuity and available for each course via the Family Portal access online or by hard copy upon student or family request of the BVL instructor.

2. Required weekly contact

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

Here are some examples of what weekly contacts can look like:

- An assignment/test/activity submitted to an instructor to be graded or to provide feedback on.
- Email exchange with an instructor
- Phone call with an instructor
- Electronic exchange with instructor such as discussion board, blog, instant message, etc.

3. Adequate progress in all online classes.

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 to maintain adequate progress.

What if I am not making adequate progress in my online courses?

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 do we monitor student progress?

Progress in online courses is monitored weekly and monthly.

Weekly: student and parent/guardians will receive a progress report electronically via Edgenuity showing student's current progress based on benchmarks specific to the course.

Monthly: BVL staff also evaluate students' progress 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(s). Students, parent/guardians and counselors will receive this monthly progress report via email. If the student is behind in a

course, increasing the amount of time/effort put into coursework and communicating plans with the instructor is recommended.

Instructors can provide suggestions, tutoring and support to get the student back on track.

BVL two-week trial period

The BVL program is not an appropriate match for all students. Therefore, a 10 school day (two week) trial period is established each semester to assess a student's ability and desire to complete online BVL work. Students who meet our participation standards for contact and progress during the trial period will be fully vested in their courses of study. However, a student who withdraws or is dropped from a BVL course after the trial period will receive a mark of "NC" on their transcript for that course.

What courses are offered through BVL?

Please see the application packet at bellingshamschools.org/bvl for courses available through BVL.

How is an online class/course similar and different from an in-person class?

Unlike an in-person class, online courses rarely ever meet with an instructor. Students in online courses move through the curriculum asynchronously without following a defined bell or period schedule. All communication and learning is done electronically through online texts, , electronic assignments, emails, etc. Similar to an in-person class, there is a state-approved curriculum that the instructor guides students through during the course of a semester.

What helps students succeed in online classes?

Students who do well taking online courses typically have strengths that include:

- Strong study habits
- Independent learning skills
- Enjoyment of reading and writing
- Ability to problem-solve and work through frustrations
- Strong organizational skills
- Intrinsic motivation
- Willingness to take notes during lessons -- these notes can be used on tests and quizzes and other activities
- Strong tech skills
- Comfort with technology

It is 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 each online course. Taking an online course is not necessarily easier than taking an in-person class, but it can provide more flexibility for a learner given its asynchronous format.

Students who struggle with time management, course completion and self-motivation may not be good candidates for BVL. Additionally, Edgenuity coursework requires copious amounts of reading so students who are significantly behind grade level reading may struggle to complete the academic content on their own.

Is BVL a good fit for students who have an IEP or are in ELL support classes?

The best way to answer this is to carefully read through the profile above of what makes a student successful with online classes. As with any student considering an online course, it is also best to talk to trusted adults and have conversations with your school support team, such

as school counselors, IEP teacher, ELL teacher, and so forth. These decisions are best made as a team and on a case-by-case basis.

What is the role of my high school counselor?

High school counselors are responsible for ensuring students' online courses meet requirements for their high school diploma. The school counselor will work with the student to sign up for BVL courses.

Can students take any classes they want?

Current courses available are listed in the application form, which you can find at bellingshamschools.org/bvl. 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. Since high schools base staffing on enrollment, we ask families to make a one semester commitment to BVL courses. Students are allowed to take blended schedules (some classes online through BVL and some classes in person at their home high school) with administrator approval and on an

individual basis. Note: AP and World Language course are offered through Spokane Virtual Learning. BVL does not offer AP or World Language courses.

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. The Bellingham School District provides each student enrolled in BVL with a laptop.

How do I earn credit?

The only way for students to earn credit via BVL and Edgenuity by completing an *entire* contracted course. Students have the opportunity to earn credit at their own pace and can rapidly advance if determined to put in the time to do so. A typical pace would be to earn 0.25 - 0.5 credit every 9 weeks (if the student worked approximately one hour daily on a class). Students may work ahead and earn credit faster; however, this does require self-motivation and time management. It is recommended that students focus on no more than two or three courses at a time and then begin the next class as soon as they finish one. If a student is struggling, do not wait to get help! Students should

contact their supervising teacher or BVL contact right away for ideas, support, or assistance.

How is BVL graded?

Students earn standard A, B, C, D, INC (Incomplete) and NC (No Credit) grades in BVL courses. It is not graded on a *growth model*. Students need to pass their BVL courses by completing 100% of the course and pass with a 60% or higher. If students do not complete the course at the end of a semester, they earn an incomplete (INC) mark for the grading period. However, the student may continue working on the course during the next grading period. Once completed, the INC mark will be changed to a letter grade on their transcript. Students who do zero work in their BVL course will receive a no credit (NC) mark on their transcript.

BVL Percentages and Letter Grades revised 12/4/2020

A	100	92.00
A-	91.99	90.00
B+	89.99	87.00
B	86.99	82.00
B-	81.99	80.00
C+	79.99	77.00
C	76.99	72.00
C-	71.99	70.00
D	69.99	60.00
INC	59.99	.01
NC	0.0	0.0

Note: All assignments, projects, quizzes, tests, etc. must be attempted prior to awarding credit using this scale

How do I sign up for BVL?

Students and families who are interested in taking a BVL course should contact their high school counselor to complete an application packet. School counselors will review and approve the student's BVL course selection before the BVL application is considered complete. The application packet is turned in to the registrar at Options High School (OHS) and a BVL staff member will call or email to set up a one-time orientation meeting in person or via Zoom with the student and

parent/guardian prior to the student starting BVL classes. More information about BVL can be found on the Bellingham School District website.

What family support do students need in BVL classes?

- Make sure your student has internet access. They can use their district-provided device or a personal computer/device to engage with classes. Please note that Bellingham Public Schools can only provide support
- Set up a Family Portal and learn how to monitor your student's online progress, check grades and connect with instructors (see below)
- Find out when teachers are available for student support and what options exist for extra help.
- Support your student in making adequate progress each week.
- Know how often your student should log in during the day.
- Make sure you and your student know what the requirements are for the course.

- Assist in creating a daily routine and organization system for your student.
- Recognize students may need to set aside extra time to complete assignments.
- Designate a comfortable place free from distractions as a work area for your student.

Student support from BVL staff

BVL staff offer a variety of student support options that can be individualized based on student need. Support structure may include teachers, support staff and parent/guardian input. BVL teachers want each student to succeed and may have scheduled office hours where student can seek individual help with their coursework via phone call, email zoom, etc. Additionally, students may email instructors to arrange other individual support times, including in-person meetings at OHS as needed and agreed upon. Students and parent/guardians are encouraged to contact BVL teachers regularly by email with any communication and/or concerns.

Family resources for monitoring student progress

Parents/guardians have access to an observer account called a Family Portal within the Edgenuity software, and can use this account to monitor their student's progress in their BVL course(s). This portal must be activated by BVL staff, who will then provide the requesting parent/guardian an individual activation code along with the email that was put into the account.

Here is how to activate the account in Family Portal:

Look for an email notification stating you have been given access to your child's naccount. Click the link in the email to begin the registration process, or, if you have misplaced the email, access the page directly at learn.edgenuity.com/family

Click Activate Account. Do not fill out the email and password boxes, just click Activate Account.

Enter the email address and activation code provided by the BVL staff, then click Continue.

Determine a password and recovery question for the account. The security question and answer will help recover the account in case it gets locked.

Click Continue

Once activated, log in using the email address and newly-created password.

The site is learn.edgenuity.com/family

Click Log In

Select the time zone. Click Save.

Upon login, you can view basic information about the student as well as information explaining the different reports available.

If you have more than one student, you will need to request an activation code for each child, then repeat all the steps in these directions.

Summary of steps to get started with BVL

Meet with home high school counselor and complete the district BVL application with required signatures.

Give signed application to Options High School registrar who will enter information into Skyward and forward application to BVL coordinating teacher; teacher will

create the Edgenuity account for the student and assign courses in the system.

BVL coordinating teacher will call or email to schedule an orientation meeting with student and parent/guardian. At this meeting, the student will be guided through logging in and accessing courses, as well as get oriented to the BVL program. It's a great time for questions and clarifying roles.

Student begins their 10 school day trial of BVL classes.

I still have questions about high school BVL and need more information. Who can I contact?

You can contact your high school counselor, or you can contact:

Nancy Barga, BVL Coordinator
Options High School Assistant
Principal

nancy.barga@bellingshamschools.org

Visit bellingshamschools.org/bvl for application packet and course list

Behavior Expectations in BVL

All students enrolled in BVL courses are Bellingham Public Schools students and are accountable to the policies of our school district. A full list of policies pertaining to students is available at bellingshamschools.org/policies-and-procedures.

Academic Honesty:

Academic integrity and honesty are paramount to online courses just as they are to in-person classes. Students enrolled in a BVL online course are expected to conduct themselves honorably with regards to academics. This includes, but is not limited to, refraining from all forms of cheating, including academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Violations may result in loss of credit on assignment or for the entire course. Violations will also result in parent/guardian contact and documentation in the student's discipline file. Chronic violations of academic dishonesty or extreme cases may result in further discipline such as removal from the BVL program.

For more information regarding cheating and plagiarism, see our

district policy 3240. Excerpts are below:

Cheating, plagiarizing, or turning in another person's papers, projects, electronic-generated products as one's own work or enabling misrepresentation to occur is a violation of Bellingham Public Schools rules.

The inappropriate use of electronic devices to give/obtain answers or to promote or aid in cheating and/or plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty is prohibited.

Digital Citizenship

Use of electronic resources is guided by our policy and procedure 2022. We expect our students to be good digital citizens when interacting with each other and with our staff. We have more information about digital citizenship and our 1:1 technology resources [here](#).

Below are a few highlights that are important to remember when engaging in online classes.

BVL "Netiquette" expectations

Online and network etiquette (called

netiquette, or digital citizenship.in cyberspace) exists in the wide world of computers. Perhaps just as important as "real world manners," netiquette rules are necessary because readers draw inferences from your words rather than nonverbal body language. Be aware that teachers and administrators have complete access to your communications. All postings within the email system or the class discussion area are public. Any inappropriate use of email or communication within the course will result in administrative action. Email messages should be written in a more formal manner than instant messaging but not as rigid as a business letter.

Online and digital communication

- Show respect for your fellow students and instructors.
- Work to communicate using more formal spelling, grammar and capitalization, as compared to less formal communication used in other settings, like social media.
- Avoid writing in all caps, which can be perceived as SHOUTING by your reader.
- When using abbreviations like BRB (for "be right back") make

sure your reader knows what you mean.

- Avoid using emoji to express feelings. There is no substitute for a clearly written email.
- Always sign your first and last name to your communications.
- Please do not send chain letters or spam material of any nature to your teachers or fellow students.
- Only send appropriate electronic communication.