



# Student and Family Handbook

Updated April 2022

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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 *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 to earn credit.

Students work at their own pace from home with a supervising district teacher as the main contact/point person facilitating instruction, using reporting tools to monitor student progress, and ensuring continued movement through the course. To earn credit, students are expected to complete 100% of assigned coursework.

### 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, Zoom/Teams meeting or in-person meeting with an instructor
- Electronic exchange with instructor such as discussion board, blog, text 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 to complete the course on time.

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

If a student’s progress is evaluated as non-satisfactory for the previous month, the BVL instructor will create and implement a Student Intervention Plan (SIP) that the student must acknowledge to remain enrolled in their BVL class. Students generally

have until the next month's grading period to show adequate progress.

After two Student Intervention Plans: Barring a special circumstance such as a medical emergency, if a student does not begin to show adequate progress after two SIPs, the student will be removed from their course(s) and will no longer be able to enroll in BVL courses.

### 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, parents/guardians and counselors will receive this monthly progress report via email. If the student is behind in a course, we recommend increasing the amount of time/effort put into coursework and communicating plans with the instructor. Instructors can

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

### What courses are offered through BVL?

Please see the application packet at [bellingshamschools.org/bvl](http://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 readings and learning modules, electronic assignments, emails, etc.

Like 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 must 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 large 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 a student's 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 the 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 is located at [bellingshamschools.org/bvl](http://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 online courses 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 0.5 credit in each of 2 classes every 4-5 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. We recommend that students focus on no more than two courses at a time, and then begin the next class as soon as they finish one. By completing two classes every 4-5 weeks, students will finish the same 8 classes per semester as an in-person student. 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 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 coursework assigned 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	93.00
A-	92.99	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 Public Schools website at [bellingshamschools.org/bvl](http://bellingshamschools.org/bvl)

### What family support do students need in BVL classes?

- Families are critical partners with BVL teachers. We encourage families to actively read weekly reports and stay on top of progress in their BVL student(ren)’s BVL classes.
- Make sure your BVL 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 technical

assistance for our district-issued devices.

- Set up a Family Portal and learn how to monitor your BVL 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 BVL student in making adequate progress each week.
- Know how often your BVL student should log in during the day.
- Make sure you and your BVL student know what the requirements are for the course.
- Assist in creating a daily routine and organization system for your BVL 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 BVL student.
- If your BVL student is placed on a Student Intervention Plan, this is an indication that something is not working for them with the online courses or program. Please be in

immediate contact with their BVL teacher(s) and high school counselor so we can problem-solve together.

- Encourage your BVL student to participate in BVL tiered support –BVL teachers will direct their students to this.

## Student support from BVL staff

BVL staff offer many 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 students can seek individual help with their coursework via phone call, email zoom, etc.

Additionally, students may contact instructors to arrange other individual support times, including in-person meetings at OHS as needed and agreed upon.

We encourage students and parent/guardians 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 BVL student's account. 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](https://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](https://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 BVL student, 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.

**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:

Kevin Terpstra, BVL Coordinator  
Options High School Assistant  
Principal (begins summer 2022)

[Kevin.Terpstra@bellingshamschools.org](mailto:Kevin.Terpstra@bellingshamschools.org)

Visit [bellingshamschools.org/bvl](https://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](http://bellingshamschools.org/policies-and-procedures).

## Academic Honesty:

Academic integrity and honesty are as important in online courses as they are to in-person classes. Students enrolled in a BVL online course are expected to conduct themselves honorably with their academic work. 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.

- Think through any abbreviations (like BRB for “be right back”) or emoji you use in your communications, and make sure your reader knows what they mean, and that they enhance and support your writing.
- Use your digital citizenship skills; do not send chain letters, spam, or any inappropriate communications to your teachers or classmates.

## 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.
- Include your first and last name in your communications.
- Avoid writing in all caps, which can be perceived as SHOUTING by your reader.