

Alderwood Plan

Entry Plan information was gathered from families, staff, community members, District office administration, and students through:

- Paper and online surveys
- Leadership survey
- Emails
- Conversations
- Observations
- Individual interviews with all staff
- Presentations and feedback

Why an Entry Plan?

Dear Alderwood Community,

The Alderwood Entry plan process has been a powerful way for me, as an incoming principal, to listen carefully to community strengths, concerns, and hopes for the school as I came to know the students, the staff, and the community. Gathering information through surveys and conversations has provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to have input into the future of Alderwood, and to participate on an ongoing basis. It has also given me a chance to build relationships with everyone who serves and learns at

our wonderful school.

The information that follows includes the information I have collected, and is presented as the current plan for Alderwood's next steps as it develops to best meet students' needs. I say *current* because needs will change, and the power of this document is not in the product but in the partnership and our collective commitment to meet the Outcomes in the Bellingham Promise for all Alderwood kids.

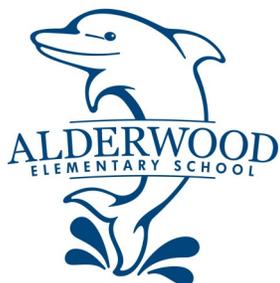
Do you still have ideas to share? Do you want to be a part of this exciting work? Be in touch; I look forward to

learning more, growing more, and sharing in this great work.

Thank you for your participation this year. Thank you for reading and processing now as you continue the relationship with our community. Thank you for looking ahead with us at the great years to come!

Respectfully,

Micah Smith



What will I find in this document?

In the following pages you will read about the themes generated through the Entry Plan process. These themes are broad, but will encompass all aspects of our system, and will form the basis of our work.

In each theme you will find quotes that embody aspira-

tions that rang true for many people in the Alderwood community, data from the surveys you completed, and ideas for next steps that we will consider as we continue the journey toward those hopes.

This Plan does not include detailed and technical checklists

for improvement as my intent is that it aid us in staying focused on our bigger picture, and provide flexibility to adjust to new students and needs. But rest assured, those action steps will be developed with our collaborative teams to help us make these dreams a reality!

Alderwood Plan

Theme I: Develop Critical Thinkers

Aspirations and Assets

School: Alderwood staff love to teach and see the students learn. As they work to teach a diverse group of learners they believe that a combination of teaching basic skills along with integrated learning opportunities, collaboration with other staff in the building, small group settings and personalizing learning are keys to helping students learn at the highest levels. The best teaching experiences that teachers have had, for themselves or for their students, all involved ownership of the task and clarity in purpose outcome. The biggest teaching moment is not just when it “clicks” for students, but when that learning is meaningful, personal, and connected to something they are actively pursuing.

Families: Families are excited about the direction of the Alderwood academic program, and are interested in being involved as partners. Over 90 percent of our families believe that their children are successful at school and that they feel encouraged to be a partners with the classroom. Families attend school meetings for academic planning and review. Parents share that they work best when they know the progress and the learning targets that students are aiming for at each level, and also appreciate a whole-child approach to academics.

“The learning environment I need pushes me to extend and is patient with how I process.”

Community: Community volunteers to the classroom have been impressed with the quality and skill of the Alderwood teaching staff, and appreciate a chance to support in each room because they see the difference that a 1-on-1 or small-group instructional setting can have for students.

Focus for Improvement

School: Alderwood will continue to **develop integrated units of study** that use an **inquiry** process to thoughtfully bring together appropriate learning standards and the diverse experiences and needs of each child. Instruction will provide opportunities to reflect on goals and progress, solve problems, and **communicate and think critically** in a learning community. **Building-wide instruction of language** will be a focus for development. Alderwood staff will gain a deeper understanding of the **role of technology** in personal learning, in communication, and as a tool for developing curious learners. Finally, the school will develop a **plan for assessment** of the range learning targets and outcomes.

Families: Families ask that the school **maintain a focus on academic growth** in key areas of literacy, math, and science as well as develop artists and compassionate human beings. Learning goals and progress need to be **regularly shared with parents** in a way that students understand.

Community: Alderwood will **continue to work with volunteer groups** to provide meaningful ways to be in the classroom with students, as well as look for ways to bring community expertise to the students in way that validates the learning and skills they will need for postsecondary education.



Theme 2: Building a Strong Staff

Aspirations and Assets

School: The Alderwood staff is a hard-working, dedicated, and resilient team of educators. They regularly seek opportunities for professional development, collaborative learning, and willingly participate on a school-wide level in many meaningful ways, including family engagement, after-school clubs, building-wide committees, and in leadership roles. Staff are a professional and effective group and appreciate the contributions of their colleagues as they plan, learn, and work together for student growth. Teaching teams provide consistent learning experiences across grade levels through regular collaboration and data review, work with parents, district instructional coaches, and volunteers to build a strong program.

Families: Families believe in the staff. 95 percent of parents believe that their kids are excited to come to school and report their confidence in the work of the teacher to build relationships with each child.

Community: Volunteers and community partners are regularly appreciative of the expertise and commitment on the part of Alderwood staff, recognizing the efforts, skills, and care that go into coming to work and bring their best effort each day, *“The staff are the best thing at Alderwood. The individuals I’ve had the privilege of working with are exceedingly dedicated to their work and deeply interested in the welfare of their students. Being at the school regularly for the last few years has shown me clearly just how skilled Alderwood teachers are.”* -Alderwood volunteer



“Staff work there because they love kids and will do anything; there is a strong commitment.”

Focus for Improvement

School: Alderwood has an outstanding team but faces an evolving challenge in meeting students’ social, emotional, physical, and educational needs. Turnover in the teaching staff has also created barriers for systematic growth. Professional development initiatives, building-wide agreements, school-wide systems, and relationships can all stall in this environment and create barriers for teachers who remain. Providing **opportunities for self-care, professional learning, systematic classroom support, and teacher participation in decision-making** will be a priority.

Families and Community: Families recognize a need for stability in the relationship and educational programming for their children. **Efforts for recognition, teacher support, classroom volunteering,** have all begun and have created relaxed, fun atmospheres. The more that **parents have active, healthy relationships with teachers and school staff,** the more the school can shine in serving all students. *“Parents want to be involved with their kids and what is going on in their classrooms. Teacher support means there is time for teachers to be their best, to communicate with parents, and to invite parents to be involved with school activities. Support means help in the classroom, funds for materials...and whatever else they need.”* - Alderwood parent

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Theme 3: A Healthy Alderwood

Aspirations and Assets

School: All staff have been working to develop an understanding of our students that come to school with a diversity of backgrounds, languages, and personalities as well as academic, physical, social, or emotional needs, and the strategies to support those learners. There is visible District support in a variety of ways. Class size, counseling support, the food program, collaboration for hiring and increased building-wide staff have all made a positive difference in supporting students to be their best learning selves.

The staff use a common language for identifying emotions and teach strategies to handle small problems. There is a positive response to daily classroom meetings, regularly practicing conflict resolution and self-regulation, and teaching the language for interpersonal relationships.

The students themselves bring a rich diversity to the school, and regularly identify adults in the building who care for them and help them solve problems. Older students provide care and support for siblings and friends, and have risen to leadership roles throughout the building through the Jobs program.

Families and Community have both shared that they value the commitment that Alderwood staff have for building nurturing relationships and focusing on creating safe, healthy classrooms. They appreciate the presence of so many caring adults in the building, including staff, volunteers, student mentors, and families. Recognition and support for social and emotional developments has been the base of regular family meetings, and leads into efforts for academic growth. Many families believe that using strategies at home that align with the school has been helpful for their children and in both environments.

Focus for Improvement

School: Each of the classrooms at Alderwood is learning similar social skills, strategies, and language, but strategies have not been taken to a **building-wide agreement**. A focus **on specific language and skills** developed from research would allow for confidence in working with students in the classroom and in using data to collaborate for support and in communicating with families. Attention to **strategies for communication, self-regulation, and mindfulness for staff** will also benefit all members of the community. Teachers see value in continuing to understand **healthy food and physical activity practices** across the school.

Families and Community: The many family and community members that regularly support students at Alderwood is quite large. This network of caring adults would benefit from **thoughtful orientation to the needs and efforts of the school** and the efforts and the teacher for each student. Sharing common language, providing understanding of development levels and progress, and clarifying ways that adults can support students in the classroom and at home would be helpful to students in many ways. Families and volunteers both can **know the language** being used, the expectations for social/ emotional learning, and the value of things such as Work Time; Plan, Do, Review; and Family Meetings, and have asked for ways to **implement similar strategies at home**.



*“I would hope for a great love of learning...among Alderwood students”
-Community volunteer*

Theme 4: Family and Community Partnership

Aspirations and Assets

School: The Alderwood school staff is motivated to continue to find ways to work alongside parents, sharing that they do their best work for students when they are partners with families in supporting the whole child, communicating learning progress and next steps, and understanding family needs. The teachers believe in creating classroom communities that are safe, respectful, and responsive, and highly value the ability to work with families and community agencies to support the health and welfare of the whole child. Bringing in outside expertise is also valued as a way to support communication and training for staff and parents. Alderwood staff also report having valuable and powerful relationships with parents when they are able to keep in close touch.

Families: Survey and personal responses show that Alderwood families have a high opinion of the work that the school is doing, of the confidence and success of their children, and they regularly attend school conferences, learning demonstrations, recognition events, and community events.

Community: The greater Alderwood community, including our PTA, local volunteer groups, and community agencies, is also excited to support Alderwood students, families, and staff through ongoing partnerships, including volunteer support, financial support of programs and events, and maintaining partnerships for student and family health. They are visible in the building on a daily basis, and often form the backbone of the outside-of-school events.

Focus for Improvement

School: **Families are the students' first and most important teachers**, and as Alderwood develops common language and expectations for the academic and social school community, they would like to **invite parents to participate** in this thinking and to be able to consider how this might **align with efforts at home**. While families generally have a positive perception of the work of the school and the progress of their child, there can be a disconnect in understanding when school and home are not using the same language or expectations for learning.

Families: Alderwood families are hopeful that they can find **consistent ways to be connected to the school** and to each other. Families have a desire to be **involved in learning workshops** on a variety of topics, and are comfortable in **communicating with the school** and local partners.

Community: Community partners for Alderwood are interested in creating a healthy school and healthy neighborhood. They would like to have access points to support teachers in their work, support students through **mentorships and instruction**, and support families through organizing and **providing for health and education needs**, and supporting strong **enrichment programming**.



“Every child is precious and should know that about themselves and see their worth as an individual.”

- Alderwood community volunteer



The Alderwood Community values...

Through interviews, conversations and surveys, the members of the larger Alderwood community have shown that they value:

Collaboration and communication: Working together for a common purpose and feeling confident that home and school are connected for a quality educational environment

A healthy, balanced Alderwood community where families, students, and staff can learn and work with confidence.

High expectations for learning for all students, with a broad focus on whole-child development and a vision to develop curious, active, and globally-minded learners.

Our diverse student body, celebrating with respect for individual differences and linked by common goals toward learning and growing together.

Alderwood Elementary
3400 Hollywood Ave
Bellingham, WA 98225
360.676.6404

