

Strategic Plan Study: Driving Academic Excellence at Bangor Union Elementary School District (2022-2025)

1.0 Introduction: Vision and Guiding Principles

This strategic plan provides a comprehensive, actionable framework to elevate student academic performance across the Bangor Union Elementary School District. This plan was developed and executed by then Superintendent, Scott Johnson. While the district possessed a dedicated staff, a focused strategy was needed to systematically improve foundational skills. The initial challenge was twofold: to significantly increase reading scores and to address lagging performance in mathematics. Recognizing the critical importance of these fundamentals, this plan outlines a multi-year, integrated approach focused on strengthening school culture, implementing data-driven instructional cycles, and enhancing professional practice. The deliverables of this work resulted in Bangor having the #1 District Reading Scores for 2023 AND 2025 in Butte County*.

Bangor USD CAASPP Scores

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
ELA	28.00	30.35	34.69	33.33	36.51	40.00	*58.00	47.06	*57.70
Math	15.00	25.00	25.53	24.00	12.69	30.90	24.00	38.46	32.07

** Top Butte County District Score*

Core Guiding Principle

The success of our students is a direct result of the dedication, skill, and collective effort of our professional staff. We resolved to operate under the foundational belief that we are the primary drivers of student achievement.

The staff explicitly agreed: “We are the professionals. We are the ones who are driving achievement. We don't blame the kids, and we don't blame the families.”

This principle of professional accountability is the cornerstone of our strategy, fostering a proactive and solutions-oriented environment focused entirely on student growth. This commitment begins with establishing a district-wide culture where high expectations and

achievement are the norm. We dedicated ourselves to being a community that champions **"the three Rs: reading, writing, and arithmetic."**

2.0 Foundational Pillar I: Cultivating a District-Wide Culture of Achievement

The bedrock of any successful academic initiative is a strong, supportive culture. Our first strategic priority was to create the "conditions that are conducive to some of the best practices" needed to raise student scores. This involved fostering a shared belief in student potential and a collective commitment to academic rigor among staff, students, and the wider community.

2.1 Professional Culture of High Expectations & Accountability

The transformation began with our instructional staff. The first step was to establish a culture where professional responsibility for student learning was clear and embraced. Key initiatives included:

- **High-Leverage Instructional Mandates:** A clear, non-negotiable expectation was set for all teachers to display a daily or period-specific learning objective (unpacked directly from The Standards) posted on the board (or in the room). This practice anchors daily instruction in measurable outcomes and communicates high expectations for every lesson.
- **Shared Responsibility:** Through direct and productive conversations, we established a collective understanding that the academic growth of our students is the shared responsibility of the entire professional team. This work was enabled by a willing staff, open to shared responsibility and adopting new practices to better serve students.
- **Started High Reliability Schools Framework** (HRS-Marzano Level 1) Surveys and artifacts.

2.2 Student & Community Culture of Valuing Achievement

To counteract a student culture that did not always take academic testing and achievement seriously, we implemented a robust system of recognition and communication. Key strategies included:

- **Growth-Based Awards:** An awards program was launched to celebrate both academic achievement and, critically, academic growth. Students who achieved **fifty points of growth on their scaled score** in reading or math during a trimester were recognized with prizes.
- **Motivating Recognition:** The rewards evolved over time from medals and candy to highly coveted **3D printed trophies**. These tangible symbols of success proved to be a powerful motivator for students across all grade levels (TK-8).
- **Consistent Community Messaging:** The district's focus on the "three Rs" was consistently and repeatedly communicated to parents, the community, and students.

This created a unified message that academic achievement is our core mission and is something to be celebrated.

This intentional focus on culture created the necessary environment for systematic, data-informed improvements to take root.

3.0 Foundational Pillar II: Implementing Data-Driven Instructional Cycles

To move from aspiration to measurable results, a systematic and frequent approach to data is essential. The district shifted from infrequent assessment to a continuous cycle of data collection, analysis, and action, ensuring that instruction was precisely targeted to student needs.

3.1 Systematic & Frequent Screening

A district-wide screener, Renaissance Star, was implemented for reading and mathematics to be administered every six weeks. This represented a significant strategic shift from the previous "misapplication" of using the tool only a few times per year. This change repositioned the assessment from a summative, evaluative tool, to a formative, instructional one, providing timely, actionable data for guiding classroom practice rather than simply measuring year-end performance.

3.2 Structured Data Conversations

Following each six-week screening cycle, structured "data dives" were conducted with teachers. In these sessions, staff were explicitly taught how to analyze student data using established protocols, moving from simply collecting data to actively interpreting and using it to inform instruction.

3.3 Fostering a Data-Positive Culture

A critical element of this process was cultivating a culture where data was viewed as a tool for improvement, not judgment. We consistently reinforced the message that data is neutral—**"It's not bad. It's not good."**—and that student performance data reveals a **"team problem... a school problem,"** not an individual teacher's failure. This collaborative, non-punitive approach enabled staff to transparently analyze student results. In year two, Bangor received a Literacy Grant, where we celebrated and fostered a culture of reading with events and "reading gifts" for all students. This also paid for Getting Reading Right Training and Training Stipends for staff.

3.4 Data-Informed Instruction

The ultimate purpose of data is to improve teaching and learning. The Star Reading assessment proved particularly valuable because it drills down to deficient skills, providing teachers with specific, actionable information to target interventions. To visualize and monitor progress, an electronic Data Wall was developed using Google Slides, allowing the entire team to track student growth and levels of proficiency.

With a clear, granular understanding of student skill gaps provided by our data cycles, the district could now make targeted, high-return investments in the specific instructional practices needed to close them.

4.0 Foundational Pillar III: Enhancing Instructional Practice

Data provides the map, but skilled instruction is the engine that drives student progress. This pillar focuses on strategic investments in teacher capacity through targeted professional development and the implementation of powerful collaborative structures. These efforts ensured our teachers were equipped to translate data insights into effective classroom practice.

4.1 Leveraging Existing Strengths

The strategy capitalized on a significant pre-existing strength: teacher proficiency with small group instruction. Because all classes at Bangor are "combo" classrooms (containing multiple grade levels), our teachers were already skilled in managing differentiated learning activities. This pre-existing skill in multiple small-group management was the perfect vehicle to deliver the targeted interventions identified by our new 6-week data cycle. Critically, this existing expertise allowed for the effective implementation of in-class interventions without needing a "big school RTI model," which was previously tried and deemed ineffective without significant personnel to run the groups. This asset was further supported by the deployment of paraprofessionals in each classroom for grades TK-4, though classrooms for grades 5-8 did not have this support. The existing instructional landscape was also varied, with one teacher holding a "seasoned" master's in reading instruction and another who had just completed a current master's in the Science of Reading instruction, underscoring the need for a common, district-wide approach.

4.2 Targeted Professional Development

To deepen expertise and create a shared instructional framework, the district invested in several high-impact professional development opportunities:

- **Getting Reading Right (for teachers and paras):** Through a grant provided by LA County "Getting Reading Right" curriculum, all instructional staff were trained to build a common language and set of practices for reading instruction.
- **Orton Gillingham:** The district's Special Education teacher received this specialized, intensive training to support students with the most significant reading challenges.

- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** The entire teaching staff attended the "Solution Tree PLC at Work" symposium to build a shared understanding of this powerful framework for collaborative, results-oriented teamwork.

4.3 Implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

The district undertook a deliberate, multi-year implementation of PLCs to embed collaborative inquiry into our culture. The process was scaffolded to ensure success:

1. **Shared Foundation:** The process began with the entire staff attending the symposium together, creating a common vision and vocabulary.
2. **Guided Practice:** Following the training, staff were provided with a monthly "PLC to-do list" that walked them through the practices step-by-step and outlined "artifacts" that were the product.
3. **Full Implementation:** By the third year, teams were holding "**reasonably tight and faithful PLC meetings,**" consistently using common formative assessments and focusing their work on the four key questions of a PLC.
4. **Scope and sequence** identified with Common Formative Assessments.

4.4 Administrative Instructional walkthroughs and formal evaluation

Often overlooked is accountability for an instructional team. Much of this was apparent in our Data Team meetings, then our PLCs. Formal evaluations and observation, and a number of informal walkthroughs, also reinforced the importance of our work.

- **Instructional walk-throughs:** Although we did not institute this, we discussed the importance of teachers walking through other teachers' classrooms with specific look-fors.
- **I have been known to use a walkthrough tool:** a Google Form on my phone to collect data. At Bangor, due to the size, I did not do this. Patterns and staff behaviors were easy to see.
- **A quick note on Bangor staff:** The culture was very much a "rule following" staff. I simply had to ask and tell them why (x) is important, and for the most part, it was adhered to.

5.0 Action Plan & Implementation Timeline (2022-2025)

This section provides the operational roadmap for executing the strategic plan. The following actions synthesize the core initiatives from each pillar into a phased, multi-year implementation sequence, ensuring foundational systems are established before more advanced practices are layered in. The integration of a strong culture, robust data systems, and enhanced instructional practice is operationalized through the following action plan.

5.1 Year 1: Foundational Systems & Culture Building

- Establish and communicate a high-leverage mandate for displaying daily learning objectives in all classrooms.
- Implemented district-wide reading and math screeners (Renaissance STAR Reading / Math/ Early Literacy) on a 6-week assessment cycle, with assessment windows and an expectation of 95% tested..
- Initiated structured "Data Team Meetings" with teaching staff following each assessment cycle to build data literacy. We used ATLAS Data Protocols in these conversations.
- Begin development of the electronic "Data Wall" (using Google Slides) to track student progress and proficiency. Blue, Green, Orange, Yellow, Red groups from STAR
- Launched the student achievement and growth awards program to build a school culture that values and celebrates academic success.
- Began consistent community and parent messaging focused on the district's core mission of "the three Rs." (Back to Basics approach)

5.2 Year 2: Deepening Instructional Capacity

- Executed "Getting Reading Right" training for all instructional staff to build a common approach to literacy instruction. We also had half of our classified staff take "Getting Reading Right for Paras" training. This was a separate training altogether from the teachers, but the two trainings complemented each other.
- Provided specialized "Orton-Gillingham" training/ curriculum for the Special Education teacher to enhance support for struggling readers.
- Continued and refined the 6-week data cycle and data conversation protocols, deepening the use of data to inform instruction.
- Started High Reliability Schools Framework (HRS-Marzano Level 1) Surveys and artifacts. Written into LCAP and used as a local survey measure to drive improvement.

5.3 Year 3: Embedding Collaborative Practices

- Facilitated full teaching staff attendance at the "Solution Tree: PLC at Work" symposium (summer prior to Year 3) to create a shared foundation for collaboration and PLC practices. This was the first "real" conference for 80% of the teaching staff.
- Instituted guided PLC implementation using monthly checklists and step-by-step practice walkthroughs to support teams.

- Ensured PLCs are fully operational, utilizing common formative assessments and adhering to the four key questions to drive continuous improvement cycles. Scope and Sequence for Reading was identified for grades 1-8.

The impact of this comprehensive action plan will be tracked using clear, data-driven performance indicators.

6.0 Measuring Success: Key Performance Indicators

6.1 Student Growth on Scaled Scores

The primary metric for individual student progress will be the number and percentage of students achieving **50 points of growth on their scaled score** in reading and math on the Renaissance Star assessment within a given trimester.

6.2 “Success breeds success”

A key comparative metric will be the district's overall ranking in reading scores within Butte County for reading. The first #1 Reading score in 2023 for Bangor was heavily celebrated with Assemblies, banners, and a community celebration pancake breakfast. This staff efficacy, no doubt, had contributed to the 2025 #1 Reading Score Status.

6.3 Proficiency in Foundational Skills

Progress will be tracked by the reduction in the number of students identified with specific deficient skills in reading and math, as identified through the analysis of screener data during our Data Teams/ Screeners. Bangor's 2024 LCAP has all of these goals/ actions outlined.

7.0 Referenced Research and Tools

Who	What	Why
Muhammed	<u>Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division</u> 2017	school culture schema used
DuFour	<u>Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work®</u> 2016	school culture, PD and collaboration schema used
Hattie	<u>Visible Learning: The Sequel: A Synthesis of Over 2,100 meta-analyses</u> 2023	Instructional walkthrough and “high leverage” schema used
Marzano	<u>School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results</u> 2005 <u>Five Big Ideas for Leading a High Reliability School</u> 2023	Instruction and scope and sequence schema used Systematic school improvement schema used

LACOE	Getting Reading Right Training through BCOE	reading instruction training
LACOE	Getting Reading Right for Paras Training, through BCOE	reading instruction training
Orton-Gillingham Academy	Orton-Gillingham training and curriculum	reading instruction training
Renaissance Learning	Renaissance STAR Reading/ Math, Early Literacy Screeners	Screeners, progress monitoring
Renaissance Learning	Renaissance Freckle and Lalilo	progress monitoring
IXL	IXL	progress monitoring, individual practice
Apmlify Education	DIBLES	Screeners, progress monitoring
	BPST	Screeners, progress monitoring