



WASHINGTON STATE  
*Charter School Commission*  
STUDENTS • INNOVATION • TRANSPARENCY

# 2019 NEW SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT FOR: WHATCOM INTERGENERATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

May 16, 2019

## Report Submitted By

Joshua Halsey, Executive Director, Washington State Charter School Commission

## Evaluation Team

Team Lead: Krystal Starwich, Director of New School Applications, Washington State Charter School Commission

Evaluators: Adam Aberman, CA  
Casey Caronna, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Laura Crandall, WA  
Crystal Wash, IL

## Washington State Charter School Commission

P.O. Box 40996                      1068 Washington St. SE  
Olympia, WA 98504-0996      Olympia, WA 98501

[charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us](mailto:charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us)

Visit our website at: <http://charterschool.wa.gov>

For more information about the contents of this document, please contact:

Amanda Martinez, Executive Assistant  
Email: [amanda.martinez@k12.wa.us](mailto:amanda.martinez@k12.wa.us)  
Phone: (360) 725-5511

This document was adapted in large part from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) *Charter School Request for Proposals Recommendation Report*. The Commission wishes to express its thanks to NACSA for their willingness to share both the document and the background information that led to its adaptation in Washington.

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*Washington State Charter School Commission  
Attn: Executive Director  
PO Box 40996  
Olympia, WA 98504-0996  
[charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us](mailto:charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us)  
(360) 725-5511*

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# INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) was created in 2013, after the approval of Initiative 1240 and subsequent passage of Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6194, to serve as a statewide charter school authorizer. The eleven-member Commission is tasked with running a process to approve new charter schools, and effectively monitoring the schools it authorizes through ongoing oversight.

## Mission

To authorize high quality public charter schools and provide effective oversight and transparent accountability to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students.

## Values

Accountability/Responsibility  
Transparency  
Innovation  
High Expectations

## Vision

Foster innovation and ensure excellence so that every student has access to and thrives in a high-quality public school.

The Commission is committed to being culturally responsive. To that end, the Commission has adopted cultural competence definitions to support this commitment.

## Cultural Inclusion

Inclusion is widely thought of as a practice of ensuring that people in organizations feel they belong, are engaged and are connected through their work to the goals and objectives of the organization. Miller and Katz (2002) present a common definition: "Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work." Inclusion is a shift in organization culture. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes each feel valued and essential to the success of the organization.

Individuals function at full capacity, feel more valued and are included in the organization's mission. This culture shift

creates higher-performing organizations where motivation and morale soar.<sup>1</sup>

## Culturally Responsive Education Systems

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the beliefs that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources.<sup>2</sup>

## Cultural Competency

Cultural competence provides a set of skills that professionals need in order to improve practice to serve all students and communicate effectively with their families. These skills enable the educator to build on the cultural and language qualities that young people bring to the classroom rather than viewing those qualities as deficits.

Cultural competence allows educators to ask questions about their practice in order to successfully teach students who come from different cultural backgrounds. Developing skills in cultural competence is like learning a language, a sport or an instrument.

The learner must learn, relearn, continuously practice, and develop in an environment of constant change. Cultures and individuals are dynamic – they constantly adapt and evolve.

Cultural competence is:

- Knowing the community where the school is located
- Understanding all people have a unique world view
- Using curriculum and implementing an educational program that is respectful of and relevant to the cultures represented in its student body
- Being alert to the ways that culture affects who we are
- Places the focus of responsibility on the professional and the institution
- The examination of systems, structures, policies and practices for their impact on all students and families viewing those systems as deficits.

## Focus on Quality

<sup>1</sup> Puget Sound Educational Service District. (2014). Racial Equity Policy. (p. 7) Seattle, WA: Blanford, S.

<sup>2</sup> Leadscape, National Institute for Urban School Improvement. (2010) Culturally Responsive Coaching for Inclusive Schools. (p. 4) Tempe, AZ: Mulligan, E. M., Kozleski, E. M.

The New School Application solicitation and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is designed to ensure that charter school operators possess the capacity to implement sound strategies, practices, and methodologies. Successful applicants will clearly demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of education, charter school finance, administration, and management, as well as high expectations for excellence in professional standards and student achievement.

### **Autonomy and Accountability**

Charter schools have broad autonomy, but not without strong accountability. Charter schools will be accountable to the Commission for meeting academic, financial, and organizational performance standards. The three areas of performance covered by the evaluation policy correspond directly with the three components of a strong charter school application and the three key areas of responsibility outlined in charter contracts.

#### **Accountability**

Evaluation of charter school performance is guided by three fundamental questions:

- Is the educational program a success?
- Is the school financially viable?
- Is the organization effective and well-run?

The answers to each of these three questions are essential to a comprehensive evaluation of charter school performance.

Charter schools are evaluated annually against standards in the following categories:

*Academic Performance* – Charter schools are required to make demonstrable improvements in student performance over the term of the charter. Schools are required to administer all state standardized tests and to adhere to academic standards.

*Organizational Performance* – A nonprofit corporation holds the charter school contract and is responsible for complying with both the terms in the contract and all applicable laws. This charter school board of directors is a public body and is required to adhere to public meeting and public records laws.

*Financial Performance* – Schools must demonstrate the proper use of public funds, as evidenced by annual balanced budgets, sound audit reports, and conforming to generally accepted accounting practices.

Approved charter schools will be granted a five-year charter contract. Schools unable to demonstrate academic progress or unable to comply with legal/ contractual or financial

requirements may face corrective action, non-renewal, or charter revocation.

#### **Autonomy**

In exchange for rigorous accountability, charter school operators experience substantially greater authority to make decisions related to the following:

- Personnel
- School management and operations
- Finances
- Curriculum
- School day and calendar
- Education Service Provider (ESP) agreements

### **Application Process**

Commission staff manage the application process and evaluation teams that include national and local experience and expertise on the operation of successful charter schools. Commission staff leads these teams throughout the evaluation process to produce a merit-based recommendation report to approve or deny each proposal. This report from the evaluation team is the culmination of three stages of review:

#### **Proposal Evaluation**

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessments of the merits of the proposal based on the complete submission. In the case of experienced operators, the Commission supplemented the evaluation team's work with due diligence to verify claims made in the proposals.

#### **Capacity Interview**

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person assessment of the applicant team's capacity.

#### **Evaluation Team Ratings**

The evaluation team members each produced independent, ratings and comments regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial.

Commission staff collated the team ratings into an overall recommendation report to approve or deny each application based on its merits as outlined in the rubric. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of the Commission.

#### **Public Forum**

An opportunity for the public to provide official comment on the proposed application. While there is no formal assessment

of the public forum, it often confirms the evidence of community engagement provided in the application.

## Recommendation Report Contents

This recommendation report includes the following:

### Proposal Overview

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

### Recommendation

An overall rating regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

### Evaluation

Analysis of the proposal based on four primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

#### *Educational Program Design and Capacity*

- Family and community involvement
- Program overview
- Curriculum and instructional design
- Student performance standards
- High School graduation requirements (if applicable)
- School calendar and schedule
- School culture
- Supplemental programming
- Special populations and at-risk students
- Student recruitment and enrollment
- Discipline policy and plan
- Educational program capacity.

#### *Operations Plan and Capacity*

- Legal status and governing documents
- Organization structure and relationships
- Governing board
- Advisory bodies
- Grievance/complaint process
- District partnerships
- Education service providers (ESP) and other partnerships
- Staffing plans, hiring, management, and evaluation
- Professional development
- Performance framework
- Facilities
- Start-up and ongoing operations

- Operations

#### *Financial Plan and Capacity*

- Financial plan
  - Budgets
  - Cash flow projections
  - Related assumptions
  - Financial protocols
  - Fundraising plan
- Financial management capacity

#### *Existing Operators (if applicable)*

- Track record of academic success
- Organizational soundness
- Plans for network growth

## Rating Characteristics

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation rubric. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

### Exceeds

The response surpasses all key performance expectations/goals found under meets expectations. It exhibits high overall performance in all categories and routinely goes beyond what is expected and is fully aligned with the strategic mission of the Commission.

### Meets

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

### Partially Meets

The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail or specificity and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

### Does Not Meet

The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas or the response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

# PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

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## Applicant Names

Cindy Reuther

## Proposed School Name

Whatcom Intergenerational High School

## Mission

WIHS will ensure that Whatcom County high school students—regardless of their life circumstances—develop the competencies and agency for success in college, career, and life.

## Board Members

Cindy Reuther – Board Chair  
Dr. LeAnne Robinson – Board Vice Chair  
Darlene Snider – Board Secretary  
Cliff Geis-Poage – Board Treasurer  
Nancy Braam  
Braythen Hernandez  
Sadie Olsen  
Emma Owens  
Dr. Tracey Physcher

## Proposed School Leader

TBD

## Proposed Location

Whatcom County (Bellingham or Ferndale)

## Enrollment Projections

Academic Year	Planned Enrollment	Maximum Enrollment	Grades Served
2020/2021	75	75	9
2021/2022	150	150	9-10
2022/2023	225	225	9-11
2023/2024	300	300	9-12
2024/2025	300	300	9-12

# SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Whatcom Intergenerational High School

APPROVE

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## Summary Analysis

Whatcom Intergeneration High School (WIHS) proposes to serve 300 high school students in the Bellingham/Ferndale area. It will be the first charter school in the region and hopes to attract students who have not found success in traditional school models, particularly students with limited English proficiency and those who identify as Indigenous.

The applicant first applied to the Washington State Charter School Commission in 2018, but ultimately withdrew the application. In the intervening year, the applicant continued to engage the community as well as recruit new community partners and board members.

These community engagement efforts lead co-founder Cindy Reuther to Whiteswan Environmental and that organization's Executive Director, Shirley Williams, who is now listed as a co-founder of WIHS. Ms. Williams will play an integral role in recruiting students, developing a health and wellness program, and assisting the school in authentically incorporating First People's Principles of Learning (FPPL). WIHS is committed to aligning "Indigenous ways of knowing with Western knowledge" to support student success both in and out of the classroom (pg. 18).

The cornerstone of the educational model is Phenomenon Based Learning (PhenoBL). Developed in Finland, it cultivates student curiosity through investigation of real-world issues in a holistic and multidisciplinary way. The applicant also plans to support intergenerational learning for students by utilizing elder volunteers from the community to serve as mentors. These mentors will provide adult connections for students to support them socially, emotionally, and academically.

Ms. Reuther has experience starting and operating a charter middle school and the founding board has significant educational program capacity in both K-12 and higher education. The board has some experience with school operations and finance, but will benefit from continued recruitment efforts to round out its collective skill set and knowledge base.

The applicant acknowledges that enrollment is the driver of financial sustainability and long-term success and plans to leverage community partners in recruitment efforts so that the school can open at capacity. Given the many unique aspects of the program, it has the potential to attract and retain a diverse group of learners who want a non-traditional high school experience.

Overall, the applicant team has demonstrated sufficient capacity to open and operate a high-quality public school.



## Summary of Section Ratings

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weaknesses in others.

*Therefore, to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must maintain a “Meets” rating in all areas.*

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>Educational Program Design and Capacity</b>
<b>MEETS</b>	<b>MEETS</b>
<b>Operations Plan and Capacity</b>	<b>Financial Plan and Capacity</b>
<b>MEETS</b>	<b>MEETS</b>
<b>Existing Operators</b>	
<b>MEETS</b>	

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whatcom Intergenerational High School

MEETS

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## Summary

Whatcom Intergenerational High School (WIHS) is proposing to open a 300 student high school in Bellingham or Ferndale, WA. The school will be the first charter public high school in the region and hopes to provide an option for students who have disengaged from traditional high-school settings.

The applicant states “WIHS [was] co-created with Whiteswan Environmental (WE), an equity-driven Indigenous-led nonprofit. WE promotes knowledge democracy for all people through the spread of the Coast Salish’s people’s beliefs and practices regarding the natural environment” (pg. 8). The school hopes that all students “will develop Indigenous and Western competencies that will contribute to a more equitable, just, and environmentally sustainable world” (pg. 8).

The applicant demonstrated the community’s educational need by providing data demonstrating ninth grade course failure, chronic absenteeism, post-secondary enrollment, and students needing to take remediation courses in college. Nearly all data showed disparities between income levels, and amongst Hispanic and Native American students compared to overall district averages.

WIHS understands that it is essential to prepare students academically and socially for college and beyond so that those students persist and attain a degree/certification or find other post-secondary success.

WIHS submitted a charter application to the Washington State Charter School Commission in 2018, but ultimately withdrew it. It is clear from the application that in the intervening year WIHS continued to engage “youth, elders, parents, and community members in meetings and Discovery Cafés (October 2017-March 2019) to gather input on how new learning pathways could address the gaps found in the data” (pg. 11). WIHS was also able to form a strategic partnership with WE, which complements other WIHS programmatic elements well.

The WIHS model is “founded on First Peoples Principles of Learning, which reflect Indigenous pedagogies and recognize the role of local Indigenous knowledge embedded in memory, history, and story” (pg. 8).

WIHS’s unique program is based on the following three program terms:

- Phenomenon-based learning (PhenoBL)
- Intergenerational learning
- Critical literacy

The following mission, vision, values, and goals will guide the school.

<p><b>Mission:</b></p> <p>WIHS will ensure that Whatcom County high school students—regardless of their life circumstances— develop the competencies and agency for success in college, career, and life.</p>	
<p><b>Vision:</b></p> <p>WIHS envisions learning designed with students and supported by elders generating deep inquiry skills, thoughtful interactions, and critical consciousness, ensuring every young person can contribute to a more just and sustainable world.</p>	
<p><b>First Peoples Principals of Learning (FPPL):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning ultimately supports the well-being of self, family, community, land, spirits, and ancestors.</li> <li>• Learning is holistic, contextual, reflective, experiential, and relational-focused on connectedness, reciprocal relationships, and sense of place.</li> <li>• Learning involves recognizing the impact of one’s actions and developing personal and social responsibility.</li> <li>• Learning requires exploration of one’s identity and culture to find one’s purpose(s).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Goals:</b></p>	
<p><u>Academic</u></p> <p>All students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are prepared to succeed in a postsecondary education option.</li> <li>• Plan and engage their future goals through meaningful interactions with staff and elders regarding their High School and Beyond Plan.</li> <li>• Make yearly progress toward mastery on their phenomenon-based learning goals.</li> <li>• Acquire social, emotional, cultural, and physical dispositions for enjoying a purposeful life by understanding and practicing First Peoples Learning Principles.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Operational</u></p> <p>The school will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement intentional and strategic recruitment practices to meet enrollment projections annually.</li> <li>• Maintain positive operating income annually.</li> <li>• Maintain 30+ days unrestricted cash on hand and increase that amount per the Financial Performance Framework.</li> </ul>

The applicant anticipates that the student population will mirror that of the local community but hopes to serve higher percentages of students who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, as well as students who identify as English language learners, and students who identify as either Hispanic or Indigenous.

<b>Projected Demographics</b>	<b>FRL %</b>	<b>SPED %</b>	<b>Hispanic %</b>	<b>ELL %</b>	<b>Indigenous %</b>	<b>Homeless %/ Foster Care %</b>
Whatcom Intergenerational High School	60	15	20	20	20	4/2
Bellingham School District	33.9	15	16.1	7.8	1	4/1
Ferndale School District	47.8	16.7	19	6.6	8.7	2.7/1.9

(pg. 10).

The applicant anticipates that transportation could be an issue for students and has proposed a facility that is less than half a mile from a bus stop and plans to provide bus passes to students. The applicant acknowledges that enrollment is “critical to long-term sustainability and will employ the following strategies to ensure that enrollment targets are met:

1. Align organizational resources to WIHS mission and vision.
2. Conduct ongoing student/parent/community meetings and engagement. In Summer 2019, WIHS will hold several programs through Whiteswan Environmental for grade 8 students to initiate recruitment efforts.
3. In Summer 2020 WIHS will partner with Whatcom Community College and enroll students in Upward Bound programming.
4. Continually gather feedback from all stakeholders to ensure that a diverse representation of voices are part of the planning and implementation to develop a culture of inclusiveness” (pg. 12).

Overall, the applicant demonstrated an educational need and community demand, articulated the anticipated student population and non-academic challenges, and provided an appropriate summary of the school plan.

## Executive Summary: Analysis and Evaluator Comments

### RUBRIC OUTCOME

### MEETS

- The applicant provided data that speaks to the percentage of students failing one or more courses in Grade 9 and information that shows that economically disadvantaged students in Whatcom County are at a much higher risk of dropping out. A table was included to show lower college going rates for some of the identified groups (pg. 9).
- The school plans to serve 20% ELLs, which is 2-3x the percentage in local school districts and 20x the percentage of Indigenous people in the Bellingham School district (pg. 10).
- The applicant plans to start a small school to allow for intentional focus on building the school culture and learning community as they progress toward full implementation of all core design elements. They will start with Grade 9 and add a grade each year (pg. 10-11).
- The applicant recognizes enrollment may be a challenge and has plans for outreach and partnerships to mitigate this (pg. 12).
- The team has engaged hundreds of youth, elders, parents, and community members in meetings and Discovery Cafés (October 2017-March 2019) to gather input on how new learning pathways could address the gaps (Attachment 2: Evidence of Community Engagement).

# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN AND CAPACITY

Whatcom Intergenerational High School

MEETS

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## Summary

WIHS proposes to be a new charter high school in Whatcom County that places PhenoBL, intergenerational learning, and critical literacy at the center of its program. Through a series of “Discovery Cafés,” the school’s co-founders have listened to the families of Bellingham and Ferndale and heard their request for additional school options. The applicant included information regarding Bellingham School District’s Options High School program, where demand exceeds capacity. In the Ferndale School District, the only additional high school options are online programs, which may not be appropriate for all students, particularly those in need of additional academic support. Conversations with the leadership at both districts “indicated the need for supporting a wide variety of students who are not currently finding success in traditional models; especially Indigenous students” (pg. 14).

Parents and students who participated in focus groups during the Discovery Cafés and “expressed interest in a school with the following opportunities”:

- A school/parent relationship from the start that is ongoing and prioritizes involvement and input into their students’ successes and challenges
- Arts, dance, cultural activities and events
- Learning skills to succeed in getting well-paying jobs
- Resources to help children apply to and enroll in college
- Extra help available for children
- Students working at the school and learning basic skills
- Parents learning technology and taking language classes
- Relevant learning
- Positive school culture
- Green space and animals
- Opportunities for leadership
- Extra help with homework during the school day
- Caring, attentive teachers (pg. 15).

As a result, “WIHS will prioritize facilities with access to green space; extra help with academic work and opportunities to meet one-on-one with teachers; and courses relevant to life success such as cooking, finance, and resume writing. [WIHS] will prioritize a parent resource room and provide access to technology and classes for parents” (pg. 15). The community engagement documentation lacked specific evidence of parent demand, though there was parent voice in the design process.

The applicant’s decision to spend an additional year planning and cultivating community connections is evident in the application. In the Capacity Interview, the applicant humbly admitted that understanding the

nuances of a new community, and then engaging that community can take substantial time and requires sustained effort.

WIHS plans to partner with the following organizations for a variety of programmatic and student support:

- Whiteswan Environmental
- Animals as Natural Therapy
- Whatcom Community College
- Whatcom Family and Community Network
- AmeriCorps
- Western Washington University

The applicant provided indicators for each of the following educational program terms and included strong justification for the culturally-responsive aspects of each:

- Phenomenon-based learning (PhenoBL) – “PhenoBL is a Finnish model focused on the study of real-world conditions, or phenomena, through a holistic, multidisciplinary, and standards-aligned lens to create a community-based learning environment (pg. 18).
- Intergenerational learning – “Intergenerational learning at WIHS means students learn from elders who are individuals from Whatcom County [who have] cultural knowledge and historical wisdom (Traditional Providers) as well as [] business and industry acumen to share, [and] who are interested in young people and committed to their learning” (pg. 19).
- Critical literacy – “Critical literacy is defined as ‘the ability to actively read text in a manner that promotes a deeper understanding of socially constructed concepts, such as power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships’” (pg. 20).

Position descriptions for both the volunteer elders and Traditional Providers were provided in the application. However, additional scaffolding for the elder mentor program will need to be developed during the planning year to further operationalize the program and clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations. It remains unclear how high-school aged students will respond to elders, specifically, as mentors even though the applicant did provide research to suggest that mentoring can help to close the achievement gap for at-risk students.

In addition to the elder mentors and Traditional Providers, AmeriCorps volunteers and students from Western Washington University will serve as tutors for students who need additional academic support. AmeriCorps volunteers will also assist families who may need other wrap-around services (housing, health referrals, etc.).

In the WIHS model, it is essential that curriculum is chosen and PhenoBL unit plans are designed and developed by the teachers in the school. As a result, teachers will be hired and receive a stipend during the planning year of the school. The applicant has provided a robust curriculum development plan, including a design map, in the application, though successful execution of that plan will be dependent on the experience and qualifications of the teachers hired and the quality of the professional development they receive. Additionally, much of the knowledge regarding PhenoBL specifically resides with the Executive

Director and board members. Imparting this knowledge to the Principal, who will be responsible for instructional leadership and curriculum development, is fundamental to the success of the program.

WIHS will adopt a standards-based grading system and will “use ongoing formative assessments, portfolios, and Community Learning Showcases (CLS) to monitor student progress toward mastery of standards” (pg. 30). Mastery (defined as 80% or above) of course content and critical literacy skills is expected in core subject area classes as well as in World Language, Art, and Health. The applicant provided a list of assessments, both external and internal, that will be used to monitor student progress. The school will adopt additional standards related to PhenoBL (PhenoBL 5 Dimensions Rubric included in Attachment 4: Curriculum Development Plan) and FPPL.

Progress monitoring will be ongoing through the following structures:

- Teachers hold one-to-one weekly meetings with students who are part of their cohort.
- Maximum 1:16 teacher/student ratio.
- Elders check in at least twice weekly with their student(s). Ratio for elders is 1:16.
- Quarterly progress reports ensure that students are on track for meeting and exceeding standards.
- Monthly informal teacher check-ins with parents/caregivers (pg. 33).

WIHS acknowledges that their anticipated student population includes students who are at high risk of dropping out. The applicant will employ the following strategies to support students and keep them engaged in school:

- Increase sense of belonging in an inclusive school environment through:
  - Culturally-relevant classrooms
  - Student leadership and autonomy
  - Community partnerships
  - Family home visits
- Develop agency for successful learning outcomes through:
  - Phenomenon-based learning
  - Disciplinary learning (math, science, ELA, social studies)
  - College experiences
- Deepen cultural awareness and identity development, relationships, and support through:
  - Student/elder collaboration
  - Mission-aligned teachers (pgs. 35-36)



The following table outlines the instructional time that students will receive each week. Over the course of the year, students will receive 1,267 hours of instruction (187 hours beyond the state requirement).

Core Subject Instructional Time		
Academic Blocks	Daily Minutes/Frequency	Instructional Time Weekly (minutes)
ELA	65 min 5x/week	325 min.
Science/Social Studies	130 min 3x/week	390 min.
Math	65 min 5x/week	325 min.
Core Subjects Instructional Minutes Total: 1,040 min./week		
PhenoBL	90 min 4x/week + 180 min 1/week	540 min.
Core Subjects + PhenoBL Instructional Minutes Total: 1,580 min/week		

The school expects at 20% ELL population which is over twice the percentage of the local districts. The applicant has stated that a Transitional Bilingual program will not be practicable given the size and financial resources of the school and will instead provide a Content-Based Instruction model, which is an allowable Alternative Instructional Program. According to the staffing model and budget, the school will employ one certificated ELL teacher in years one through three and will add a second in year four.

According to the applicant, the student discipline approach will be rooted in restorative practices and “[i]nfractions, or behaviors and occurrences [that warrant a discipline response, will be addressed through culturally-relevant restorative practices (RP) such as using affective statements, community circles, and peer or adult-led mediation that support students in resolving conflicts” (pg. 62).

The board of WIHS is made-up of community-based members, many with strong backgrounds in education, including two education professors from WWU. Other board (or design team) members have experience in curriculum, instruction, school leadership, cultural competency, and serving special populations. The co-founders believe in the importance of including younger voices on the board to provide a youth perspective and as such there are three college-aged members of the board.

Cindy Reuther, one of the WIHS’s co-founders, opened and operated a STEM-focused middle school in St. Paul, MN. If the application is authorized, she will transition from board member to full-time Executive Director of the organization during the planning year and first year of operation. In year two, her the role will move to part-time and by year three the role of Executive Director will be eliminated from the organization.

The school’s other co-founder will retain her role with WE, but serve as Indigenous Community and Cultural Inclusion Liaison and will lead student recruitment and community engagement. Additionally, “[s]he will build partnerships for a holistic health and wellness program” (pg. 67). She will not be an employee of the school, but instead a critical partner during the planning year and beyond.

Overall, the applicant has established the educational need in the proposed school location and demonstrated ongoing community engagement activities. The educational program was designed explicitly to meet the needs of students who may have been underserved in traditional public-school settings by placing them, and their lived experiences, at the center of their own learning. The FPPL competencies and

the supportive adult network at the school should support both personal and academic achievement of students.

Given that a core tenant of the model is the development of curriculum by teachers, it will be essential for the principal and Executive Director to ensure that all plans align to standards and have a sufficient level of rigor and appropriate differentiation for a diverse group of learners. The board and design team have demonstrated sufficient capacity to execute the plan proposed by the applicant.

<b>Educational Program Design and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments</b>	
<b>RUBRIC OUTCOME</b>	<b>MEETS</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The team has established a community partner in Whiteswan Environmental who will support the aspects of the educational program that are rooted in Indigenous culture and traditions, tribal history, culture and governance (pg. 14).</li> <li>▪ The applicant states that they met with over 200 community leaders, parents, and students to assess demand and generate feedback for designing a high school to fill educational gaps in Whatcom County. The applicant stated that conversations with Ferndale and Bellingham district leadership indicated the need for supporting a wide variety of students who are not currently finding success in traditional models, especially Indigenous students (pg. 13-14).</li> <li>▪ Animals as Natural Therapy (ANT) is another partner that will serve students who need social-emotional support (pg. 15).</li> <li>▪ The applicant has letters of support from organizations that will partner with them to support programming (Attachment 2: Evidence of Community Engagement).</li> <li>▪ The applicant identified seven specific requests from parents for the school as well as some requests from students. The applicant then incorporated several of the parent and student requests into the model (pg. 15).</li> <li>▪ It appears there would be sufficient demand for this school, at least in its early years: In the fall of 2017, Bellingham School District expanded Options High School and was unable to meet demand (pg. 14).</li> <li>▪ The program includes PhenoBL, which the applicant has described as culturally inclusive because it fosters connectedness and a sense of place as students decide what local phenomena to study. The applicant describes the program as providing independence to students. Students will participate in PhenoBL units that incorporate math, science, English Language Arts, and social studies standards (pg. 19).</li> <li>▪ PhenoBL has the potential to complement and draw from Indigenous practices such as sustainable fishing practices and food sources, and eco-healthy practices for restoration (pg. 18).</li> <li>▪ Applicant provides research evidence for culturally-responsive instructional aspects for each of the three program elements (pg. 18).</li> <li>▪ Research indicates that PhenoBL can produce stronger academic outcomes, lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, and higher rates of college attendance (pg. 19).</li> <li>▪ Engagement of community members in the intergenerational learning element gives students the opportunity to strengthen ties to community members, regional culture and history, and career pathways (pg. 19).</li> <li>▪ Partnership with Whiteswan is mutually beneficial. The team is authentically interwoven regarding values, goals, and intent (Capacity Interview Note).</li> <li>▪ The applicant demonstrates the importance of the critical literacy component for the anticipated student population because when students who have systemically underserved, become critically literate learners, they are ensured access to a way of learning “that engenders</li> </ul>

a sense of political efficacy” (pg. 20).

- The curriculum example, ninth grade math, is just a copy of Engage NY materials with no reference or explanation of the school’s key design elements: phenomenon-based learning, intergenerational mentorship, or critical literacy (Attachment 3: Course Scope and Sequence).
- The Elder program is undefined: the minimum amount of time each elder would spend at the school on a weekly basis is not determined; the method for training elders is not fully formed; the applicant is uncertain as to whether most of the Elder time will be spent in 1-to-1 mentoring or mentoring/teaching small group (pgs. 19, 26, Attachment 10: Leadership Team Job Descriptions).
- Three days of professional development to get the ten founding teachers sufficiently up to speed to create units and content on the following is ambitious: standards-based design, WIHS Design MAP, culturally-relevant pedagogies; text and context of disciplinary and critical literacy; and PhenoBL inquiry (Attachment 4: Curriculum Design Plan).
- Curriculum development section is comprehensive and detailed, with a clear description of responsible parties, outcomes, processes, and participants. Includes assessment for standards alignment, design element alignment, and culturally-relevant pedagogies (Attachment 4: Curriculum Development Plan).
- Applicant includes self-assessment tools, rubrics, First Peoples Principles of Learning, and a design map for quarterly unit planning. Applicant has clearly communicated design elements, curricular tools, texts, assessments, and implementation, indicating an intent for excellence in pedagogy and in student engagement and outcomes (Attachment 4: Curriculum Development Plan).
- Additional standards may capture more nuanced aspects of learning, rather than just attainment of certain knowledge/skills (pg. 32).
- Attention to dropout prevention details belonging, agency, and identity development as some of the key components of prevention. Applicant has clearly considered potential scenarios for both failure and success and has designed prevention efforts into the program (pg. 35-36).
- Phenomenon-based learning will occur five times a week for a total of 9 hours. That is a significant amount of time to potentially conduct inquiry-based learning (pg. 37).
- Interscholastic sports are not given serious consideration for funding, and this decision seems based primarily on affordability and not student interest or needs (pg. 44).
- In keeping with the theme of student ownership and buy-in to the school model (and in this case helping with cultural responsiveness), students will form and run clubs based on their cultural experiences, strengths, and interests (pg. 44).
- The school appears to now have a particular methodology and approach to meet the needs of ELLs: Content-Based Instruction (CBI). This is notable since 20% of the school’s students will be ELLs. Additionally, there is now a fairly robust series of steps the school plans to take to meet the needs of ELLs (pgs. 54-56).
- Strategies and opportunities for HiCap students are limited (pg. 58).
- A factor in choosing restorative practices (RP) as a basis for the discipline policy was feedback from student focus groups (ages 13-20) that a high school in Whatcom County with a positive

learning environment that is welcoming for all students is desirable (pg. 62).

- The majority of the leadership team has strong background in skills and experiences necessary for school launch and operation, and a number of members have relevant experience and background with Lummi and Nooksack tribal schools and communities (pg. 65).
- WIHS's founder (Cindy Reuther) was the founder and Executive Director of a MN charter school for 7 years. (Attachment 10: Leadership Team Job Descriptions).
- Cindy Reuther "traveled to Finland in 2017 to observe several schools implementing Phenomenon-based Learning (PhenoBL) ... She met with Finland's district design expert on PhenoBL and talked with students, teachers and administrators experiencing PhenoBL" (pg. 123).

# OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

Whatcom Intergenerational High School

MEETS

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## Summary

The applicant states, “WIHS currently operates as a planning board” and has multiple members with educational expertise to assist in the design of the school (pg. 73). The board will transition to a governing board after authorization and “provide oversight for academic, legal, and fiduciary outcomes” (pg. 73). When the transition takes place, the current vice-chair, Dr. LeAnne Robinson, will take over the role as chair. WIHS’ board of directors has four primary responsibilities:

1. Hire, monitor, and evaluate ED performance
2. Monitor academic, financial, and operational outcomes; monitor board goals
3. Ambassadorship: Share the WIHS vision and mission and seek volunteers/partnerships for the organization
4. Financial Support: Contribute to WIHS financially and seek financial support for the organization (pg. 73).

The board will enact its responsibilities through the duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience. Currently there is an inconsistency between the application and the bylaws regarding term limits, with one stating a maximum of three two-year terms and the other stating a maximum of five two-year terms (pg. 74 and Attachment 11: Governing Documents).

The board is responsible for assessing “the success of the school annually, based on achievement toward mission/vision, Performance Framework and mission-specific goals, fidelity to implementation of Education Program Terms and FPPL goals” (pg. 75).

Board member Sadie Olsen is the daughter of Shirley Williams, one of the school’s co-founders. As stated in the Educational Plan and Capacity section, Ms. Williams will not be an employee of the school; however, the applicant will need to ensure that vetted policies and procedures are in place to guard against any perceived or real conflicts of interest that may arise for Ms. Olsen. Board member Dr. Tracey Psycher and co-founder Cindy Reuther both disclosed their former professional and personal relationships in the application.

The board will have multiple committees including governance, fundraising, Executive Director review, finance, and facilities. Once authorized, the governance committee and Executive Director will lead recruitment efforts with a specific focus on finding board member with human resources, legal, and fundraising expertise.

The applicant provided a list of required onboarding and training topics for every board member. At this time, the board does not plan to have any formal advisory bodies, as building the strongest possible board is the stated priority.

In order to recruit mission-aligned teachers, WIHS will use the following criteria and indicators:

- Demonstrated alignment and personal commitment to the school mission, vision, FPPL, and to serving an underserved student population.
- Strong content knowledge and pedagogical skills.
- Experience implementing or passionate desire to learn how to integrate elements of PhenoBL, intergenerational learning, critical literacy, and culturally-relevant pedagogies.
- Knowledge of or desire to learn how to build units and knowledge of standards-based aligned curriculum design.
- Ability to assume accountability for classroom management and culture with a willingness to adapt classroom management style to meet the needs of WIHS students.
- Understanding of and ability to use data to develop and implement targeted learning experiences.
- Desire to collaborate in professional learning communities.
- Experience leading a cohort of students and building relationships with students and families.
- Desire to learn and grow personally and professionally.
- Capacity and interest in chairing an extracurricular activity and engaging in school-based leadership opportunities.
- Commitment to serving an intentionally diverse school community (pg. 87).

Teachers will be recruited early and offered a stipend during the planning year to partake in the professional development, planning, and curriculum development that will be necessary to implement the educational program. In the planning year, the Principal and the Executive Director will work with Educating for Change (consultants specializing in curriculum and instruction, critical literacy, and trauma-informed practices) to lead ten founding teachers in “designing and developing a Grade 9-12 curriculum scope and sequence map containing both disciplinary grade-level maps and aligned to PhenoBL” (pg.91).

The applicant will use the University of Washington’s Center for Education Leadership (UW-CEL) 5D+ Rubric for Instructional Growth and Teacher Evaluation from the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership (UW-CEL) to assess teachers. Additionally, they will set “goals related to FPPL, such as journaling weekly about their own identity as it relates to being an educator” (pg. 90). The applicant will use the UW-CEL’s 4 Dimensions (4D) Instructional Leadership Framework to assess the principal.

The professional development plan includes four core components; uniform principal-led instructional team planning sessions, individualized classroom observations and coaching, action research by teachers, and teacher/staff affinity groups. Each is designed to support the WIHS educational model. In total, there are approximately 27 days of professional development time (made up of August summer institute, data days, and weekly collaborative planning time).

WIHS will use “formative, summative and milestone assessments to track student outcomes” (pg. 95). Teachers will use the WIHS Design Map to “inform learning and instruction and ensure students meet/exceed proficiency and performance goals. Data are collected daily to annually, formally and informally, to inform learning and instruction for each student and grade-level” (pg. 95). Data will be presented to the board at an annual retreat.

The applicant included two Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) academic mission-specific goals and one operational goal. They are:

1. Students will make one level of growth on at least three of the five dimensions on the PhenoBL Rubric every year.
2. WIHS will demonstrate a decrease in exclusionary disciplinary incidents, including suspensions, and expulsions each year to reach zero expulsions/suspensions over a five-year period. If disproportionate demographic differences appear in disciplinary incidents, suspensions, expulsions WIHS will eliminate those differences.
3. 50% of the WIHS Board of Directors is composed of underrepresented populations, including people from a range of racial, ethnic, linguistic, ability status, and/or sexual orientation backgrounds by the end of the charter term (Attachment 23: Mission-Specific Goals).

The Sterling Drive Church is the proposed location of the school and it was the site of the Public Forum. At the forum, the church administrator spoke excitedly about the prospect of WIHS locating in the building and on the land, because of the unique school model. The location has the outdoor space that WIHS prioritized based on community feedback and should accommodate community gardening and outdoor recreation and learning.

Co-leaders, Cindy Reuther and Shirley Williams, along with board members, and outside partners demonstrate the operational capacity to open and operate a high-quality charter public school. Multiple members of the team have experience with staffing, professional development design and delivery, performance management, and facilities acquisition. The applicant acknowledges that partnerships with the Northwest Educational Service District and Northwest Regional Data Center as well as the hiring of an experienced Director of Operations will be critical for operational functions including payroll, accounting, reporting, and facilities management.

Overall, the applicant has demonstrated that the leadership team and board have sufficient knowledge, experience, and capacity to open and operate a high-quality charter public high school.



<b>Operations Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments</b>	
<b>RUBRIC OUTCOME</b>	<b>MEETS</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Principal is the instructional leader and the Executive Director is the organizational leader (Attachment 12: Organizational Charts).</li> <li>▪ The Board has individuals with expertise in K-12 and higher education and some experience in school finance. There is no one with legal expertise on the board. There are no board members, other than the founder and soon-to-be executive director, with previous experience running or starting a charter school (Attachment 14: Board Member Resumes).</li> <li>▪ Statement on structure indicates that members serve a maximum of three two-year terms, but Bylaws state a maximum of five two-year terms, for a maximum of ten total years (Attachment 11: Governing Documents).</li> <li>▪ Start-up members have met with both districts’ leadership teams and the applicant has identified a list of elements that might benefit from a strategic partnership (pg. 83).</li> <li>▪ School leader evaluation tool has been identified; Principal will have coaching session with ED, and will also engage in self-reflection (pg. 89).</li> <li>▪ Self-assessment and goal setting and monitoring align with student expectations. The principal will meet individually with each teacher every two weeks to discuss teacher progress and areas for growth and to discuss what the principal saw during his/her classroom observation. Teachers will set growth goals and progress on those will be assessed by the principal throughout the year (pg. 90).</li> <li>▪ The applicant has provided a PD plan for the planning year where the Principal, working in cooperation with the Executive Director (ED) and Educating for Change PD (pg. 91).</li> <li>▪ The applicant has provided a nine-month PD and coaching plan that should prepare the founding team to implement the WIHS framework, including culturally-relevant practices, disciplinary and critical literacy, PhenoBL, assessments and rubrics (Attachment 22: Professional Development Plan).</li> <li>▪ There is a good summary of the numerous assessments the school will use including teacher-generated tests, school-generated common assessments, vendor-created benchmarks, written reflections, surveys, quizzes, self-assessments, rubrics, peer assessments, and interactive class discussion” (pg. 95).</li> <li>▪ Academic goal #2, Reducing Exclusionary Discipline rates presumes that rates will need to be reduced. Discipline is not an academic goal, it is a result or a by-product of behavior (Attachment 23: Mission-Specific Goals).</li> <li>▪ The attached start-up plan is sufficiently detailed (Attachment 25: Start-Up Plan).</li> <li>▪ Applicant team has experience in founding schools, school administration and leadership, teaching, student health, safety, and wellness, and cultural competency; data collection, etc. One board member has experience with both state and federal compliance, but in another state. The team has a blend of skills that indicate a high chance for success (pg. 105).</li> </ul>

# FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Whatcom Intergenerational High School

MEETS

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## Summary

The applicant states that the board of directors, led by the finance committee including the board Treasurer, Director of Operations and in consultation the NWESD, will finalize all policies and procedures. Sample policies were provided in the application and align to Washington’s public-school financial reporting requirements. It does state that the school will follow Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) rules and regulations. However, charter schools must follow Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). Roles and responsibilities for financial oversight and budget development, and were properly described and delineated.

The Executive Director has eight years of experience managing a four million-dollar budget at a charter school. While under Ms. Reuther’s leadership, the school received the MN Department of Education Finance Award and “secured over \$2 million in start-up and facilities financing when she launched [the school]” (pg. 113). The board Treasurer, Cliff Geis-Poage oversaw a multi-million dollar budget as a former head of school. Shirley Williams and board member Darlene Snider have secured philanthropic funding from a variety of organizations. The Washington State Charter School Association (WA Charters), upon authorization, has committed to supporting WIHS with a grant of \$400,000.

Enrollment is the primary revenue driver for charter schools. The applicant reiterated the recruitment strategies that will be employed to ensure the school is fully enrolled on day one. Given WIHS’ size, there will be considerable small schools bonus funding in years one and two. There is a significant net income margin in year one of \$450,000, however that declines sharply in year two when there is only an \$8,000 margin which may be insufficient to cover unforeseen expenses or revenue shortfalls.

The curriculum development plan is fully dependent on stipends to be paid for by competitive grant dollars. The applicant does outline a contingency plan if those funds are not received, however it would be in the form of advance by WA Charters. This would result in a significant net income loss in year one.

The teacher salaries appear to be reasonable and competitive given the location of the school, though the applicant did not include a salary range. The administrative staff constitutes 15% of total revenue in year one and decreases to 7% of the total revenue in year three when the Executive Director position is eliminated. \$37,000 is set aside in year one to pay for Traditional Providers, though the elders who act as mentors and provide other academic support are volunteers.

Given the importance of enrollment in successful charter school operation, there are risks associated with a school the size of WIHS. In response, the budget appears to be lean while still offering salaries that are competitive and providing the services that align with the mission and values of the school. Overall, the applicant has demonstrated an understanding of the financial requirements and has presented a viable budget.

Financial Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments	
RUBRIC OUTCOME	MEETS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Whatcom Intergenerational High School is still in the process of finalizing financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll policies and procedures. They assure that all procedures will maintain a system for strong internal control including compliance with all financial reporting requirements, the school’s charter contract, and the School District Accounting Manual (pg. 107).</li> <li>▪ These are reasonable and industry-standard: Expenditures between \$5,000 - \$10,000 will be authorized by the Board chair and ED ... Purchase orders and invoices of \$10,000 or more will be approved by the Board (pg. 108).</li> <li>▪ The roles and responsibilities of each person/entity responsible for the financial management of the school are laid out in an easy to understand table (pg.110).</li> <li>▪ The salaries of teachers should be competitive. Starting veteran teachers at \$77,000 and new teachers at \$50,000 (Attachment 27: Financial Workbook).</li> <li>▪ The curriculum development planning is reliant on receiving grant funds, with contingency plan that is reliant on an advance if the funds are not received (Attachment 29: Budget Narrative).</li> <li>▪ Cindy Reuther has significant experience overseeing and managing a large school budget and other financial day to day activities (pg. 113).</li> <li>▪ There is a long-range fundraising plan that identifies the gap and amount needed. However, the applicant has not started fundraising (Attachment 30: Fundraising Plan).</li> <li>▪ Working with the Director of Development at the Washington Charter School Association, WIHS has generated a list of 500 potential donors who have previously given to education in the Bellingham and Ferndale region (664).</li> </ul>	

# EXISTING OPERATORS OR PROPOSED CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Whatcom Intergenerational High School

**NOT APPLICABLE**

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## Summary

WIHS does not currently operate any schools, nor is it planning to become a Charter Management Organization.

## EVALUATION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

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### **Krystal Starwich, Team Lead**

**Director of New School Applications**

**Washington State Charter School Commission**

Krystal is the Director of New School Applications for the Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission). In addition to managing the agency's new school application process, she also works to build capacity in potential charter school operators through educational and community outreach opportunities. Prior to her role with the Commission, she worked as a Grant Coordinator for Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and implemented the state's first US Department of Education Charter School Program (CSP) grant.

Prior to joining OSPI, she spent three years at an independent school in Seattle providing a variety of operations and student support. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Washington and her Master's Degree in Public Administration from Seattle University. Her non-profit professional experience includes legal advocacy and fund development for a community-based organization serving survivors of domestic violence, and volunteer program coordination for a political non-profit. She is passionate about youth civic engagement and has been a longtime volunteer and board member of the YMCA's Youth and Government program.

### **Adam Aberman, Evaluator**

Adam is the CEO and Founder of The Learning Collective. Adam has profound content expertise in technology-based innovation and a 20-year track record educating young people in numerous venues from traditional public schools to school district administration trainings. Over the past 15 years, Adam has assessed over 200 current, and 100 proposed, charter schools nationally (California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York and Washington), including lead writer for charter renewal inspection visits, charged with evaluating the school and writing the report that is submitted to authorizers. During every school visit, Adam evaluates the effectiveness of charter schools on a wide range of issues. The range of issues includes schools' use of assessment data, curricular development and alignment with the Common Core, instructional leadership and staff evaluations, classroom instruction, professional development, board governance, parental involvement and school finances.

Adam has led teams of reviewers on over 50 charter school applications, submitting the finalized application reviews to boards of education. Adam has also worked with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and other organizations on evaluation and strategic planning projects regarding Florida, Idaho, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma and Ohio authorizers. Other TLC clients have included Alliance College-Ready Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools, College Board, Inglewood Unified School District, KIPP, Tiger Woods Foundation and UCLA. Adam began his career in education as a Spanish bilingual public school teacher in Los Angeles. Adam received a B.A. from Vassar College and Master in Public Policy, with an emphasis on Education, from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

## **Casey Caronna, Charter School Program Grant Coordinator, OSPI**

Casey is the Charter School Program Grant Coordinator for Washington State's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Casey is a life-long Washington resident and obtained a Bachelor of Arts with an emphasis in Political Science and Educational Administration from the Evergreen State College and a Master of Arts in Education from Goddard College. His previous experience includes working for the Boy Scouts of America, Saint Martin's University, and the Evergreen State College. He brings a holistic and well-rounded understanding of the educational world to the newly formed charter school sector in Washington State.

## **Laura Crandall, Evaluator**

Laura is the head of Crandall Strategy & Research, and has twelve years of experience in education management. For six years she was Head of School in a preschool through grade eight independent school of over 200 students. There, she led a faculty of thirty-five and managed budgets of up to \$2.9 million. Laura has understanding of crisis management, having also served as Interim Head of School for an independent school that suffered the sudden loss of their School Director. She was on a dual accreditation team for the Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NWAIS), and this is her third year as an independent evaluator for the Commission.

Prior to becoming Head of School, Laura was the Business Manager of an independent school, and was responsible for facilities management, policy and procedure development, financial management and controls, and admissions processes. She has a deep understanding of what is essential to an educational environment in which students will thrive. Laura holds an MPA with a focus in local government. She works as a public policy and finance analyst based in Seattle, Washington.

## **Crystal Wash, Evaluator**

Crystal, a former school administrator, has served in various leadership roles including, Senior Literacy Trainer and Project Consultant where she provided expertise to IL School Districts in Teacher Evaluation. She began her career as an elementary classroom teacher, which led to becoming a demonstration classroom teacher. Crystal opened her classroom for teachers to observe and develop their expertise using the Balanced Literacy Approach. Following her teaching, Crystal was promoted to Literacy Project Consultant in which she led literacy Collaborative Inquiry Groups for K-2 teachers.

Crystal was accepted into New Leaders for New Schools, as a resident principal program and later became an Assistant Principal. Within her administrator roles, Crystal remained committed to developing teachers' expertise in instruction. In 2012, Crystal engaged in groundbreaking work as a Principal Calibrator. Her role focused on providing training and support on Danielson-based teacher evaluation to administrators. Over her career, Crystal has conducted a variety of education workshops that focused on teacher evaluation and content instructional strategies to support the Framework for Teaching.

Crystal received an MBA from Northwestern University, a Masters in Educational Leadership from National Louis, MED in teaching and learning from DePaul University, Reading Endorsement from Chicago State and a BA in Philosophy and English from Indiana University.