

BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
Bellingham, Washington

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

DATE: May 15, 2025

SUBJECT: Ends 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 Monitoring Report 2024-25

I am pleased to submit this year's final Ends monitoring report to the school district's board of directors. This report includes a representation of our progress this year in Ends 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 and provides a broad overview of district efforts to help our students make progress toward the vision, mission and 17 identified outcomes in *The Bellingham Promise*.

The report combines qualitative and quantitative data sources gathered across the schools. We have also summarized information shared throughout the year in various forms with the school board and the public, including brief accounts of Promise stories featured on the school district's website, data shared in earlier board reports this year and accounts and observations from schools. We include links to original sources where appropriate, as we continue to strive to offer more information for board members to explore if desired, while at the same time creating a readable and succinct report. We welcome feedback on the structure and content of this report.

The report details evidence on Ends 1.0, Ends 2.0 and Ends 3.0 organized into four sections. Section I reports on progress toward the mission and vision of *The Bellingham Promise* and includes an extended example from one of our schools that highlights various aspects of the work underway. Section II includes data and analysis focused on the Knowledge outcomes from *The Promise*. We include examples from across our schools to highlight the breadth of our work. Section III focuses on data capturing examples from our students' experience with each of the Character and Action outcomes and incorporates recent findings from our spring 2025 survey of students. Section IV closes with a summary reflection. By way of reminder, here is the policy language of Ends 1, 2 and 3:

Ends 1.0: Strategic Vision and Mission

Vision: We, as a community, make a collective commitment to Bellingham's children. We will empower every child to discover and develop a passion, contribute to their community and achieve a fulfilling and productive life.

Mission: We collectively commit that our students are cared for and respected, and that they will graduate from our schools prepared for success. All will be exceptional in their own way, with strong character, a passion for learning and ready for the widest range of educational and vocational options to support a diversity of life choices.

Ends 2.0: Outcomes Focused on Knowledge

Bellingham Public Schools is committed to developing students and graduates who are:

- Readers and writers,
- Scientists and mathematicians,
- Historians and global thinkers,
- Artists and performers,
- Artisans and technicians,
- Multilingual readers and speakers, and
- Skilled users of technology and information.

Ends 3.0: Outcomes Focused on Character and Action

Bellingham Public Schools is committed to developing students and graduates who:

- Display Character
 - Leaders, collaborators and team players
 - Dependable and responsible people
 - Confident individuals who continually challenge themselves
 - Respectful and compassionate humans
 - Honest and ethical citizens who act with integrity
- Take Action
 - Healthy active individuals
 - Critical thinkers and problem solvers
 - Effective communicators
 - Innovators and creators
 - Well-rounded community members engaged in the broader world

I. Ends 1.0: Focus on *The Bellingham Promise* Vision and Mission

The vision of *The Bellingham Promise* calls out our collective commitment to Bellingham’s children and helps us to imagine schools where every child is empowered to discover and develop a passion, contribute to their community and achieve a fulfilling and productive life. To highlight progress toward the vision and mission of *The Promise*, we begin the report with an account of the work over this year at Kulshan Middle School, where evidence of the mission and vision of *The Promise* is alive and well. The account that follows contains aspects of the strategies and structures the school has put in place around students’ connection to the school, student conduct and student academic learning. The board will correctly understand that this account includes aspects of the “means” toward our Promise “ends,” but we believe including a focus on relevant strategies and structures the school has worked on provides a backdrop and context for the evidence.

Under the leadership of new principal Kevin Terpstra and assistant principal Nikki Lockhart, Kulshan Middle School has been working on “creating a joyful, collective school culture by

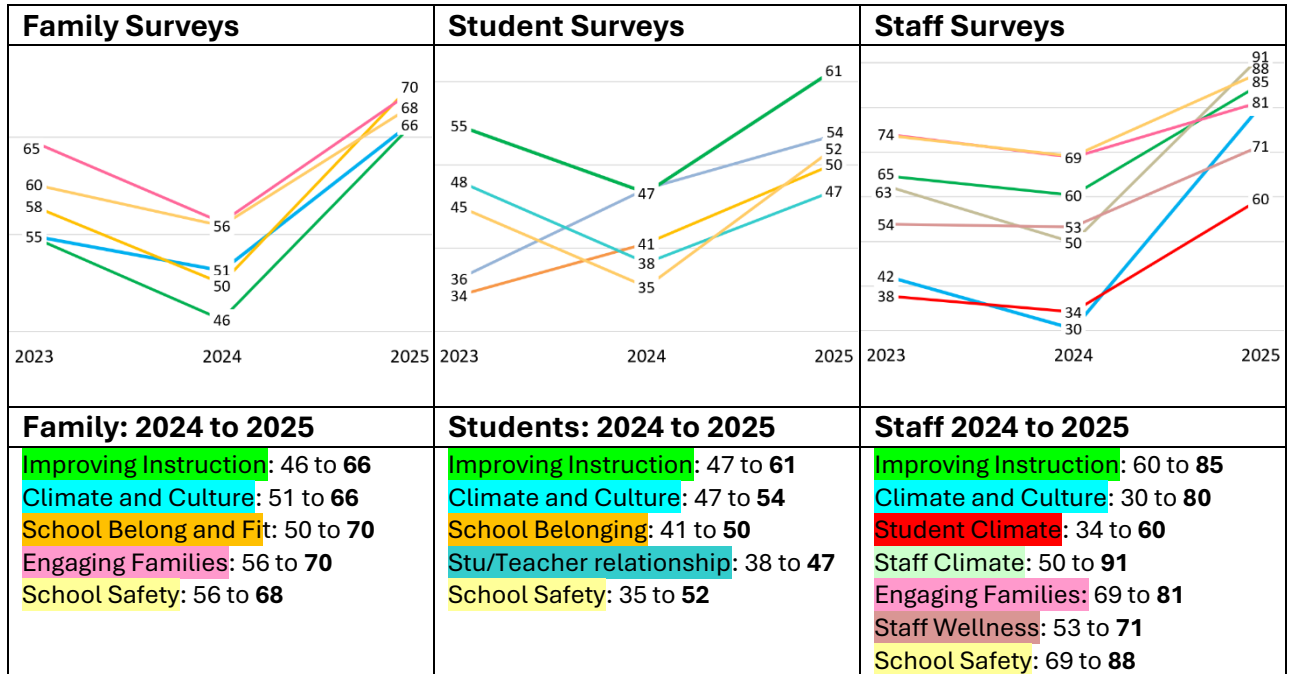
building and maintaining shared systems and practices.” The theory is that a focus on the culture of the school—their “collective commitment” to put it in terms of the vision of *The Bellingham Promise* - and on clarifying and building shared practices among the adults would result in a strong shared identity for all within the school and, ultimately, would benefit student learning.

As Mr. Terpstra started his entry process as Kulshan principal this past August of 2024, he engaged with every staff member to hear about the strengths and needs at the school. In this process he learned that staff wanted stronger, clearer systems related to (student) behavioral norms and response. A percentage of staff reported feeling siloed and that they had been experiencing an increasing amount of stress over time. Out of the principal’s entry process, the school developed a focus for the 2024-2025 school year which has included the creation of a schoolwide multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) utilizing a framework and tools from the Center for Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). The focus of this work has been primarily on Tier 1 systems (supports in place for all students) while beginning to establish Tier 2 (interventions for students who need more support) and Tier 3 (students who need the highest levels of support) systems. This emphasis on starting with “all” kids and what supports are needed to ensure that “all” are successful as mission calls us to do is consistent with our districtwide work on multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Through efforts led by the Department of Teaching and Learning and a broad-based [MTSS Standing Committee](#) a focus of this work, initially, has been on social emotional learning. Consistent with this, Kulshan has engaged in a schoolwide effort to develop and teach expectations for all Kulshan students. These shared expectations start with a commitment to be courageous, kind and committed in all school settings and are posted around the school as visual reminders for the Kulshan community.

The Kulshan team is also examining big picture climate survey data over time. Students, families and staff were surveyed on cultural indicators (see Figure 1). Kulshan showed growth from 2024 to 2025 in every category for all three groups. Categories include perceptions about: improving instruction, climate and culture, school belonging, student and teacher relationships, engagement of families and school safety.

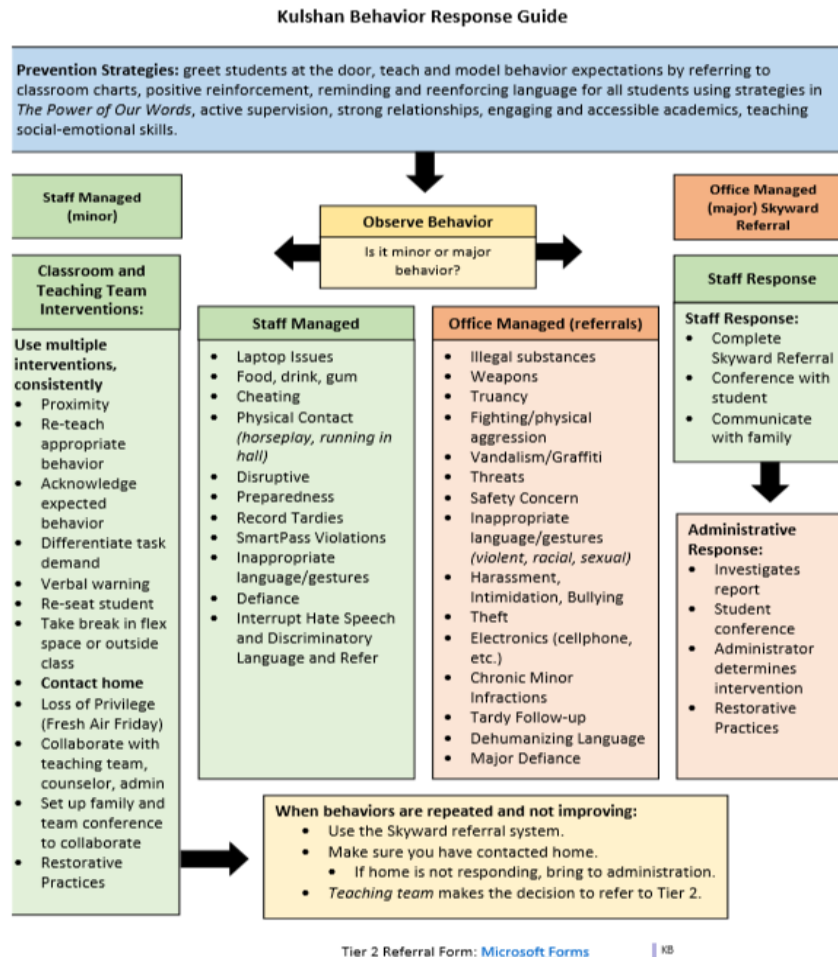
Progress is also occurring in the special education program and examination and improvements in the process of how students are considered for special education services. A building-wide MTSS team consisting of a special education teacher, campus monitor, counselors, classroom teacher and administrators is in the process of creating a system that includes a process for student intervention team help, parameters around data collection on student progress, a protocol for taking family meeting notes and a calendar to track interventions. As of March 7, 2025, this team has created support plans using this process for 23 students and is monitoring those plans. Of those 23, two students have been referred for special education evaluation, four students no longer need support plans and the others have continuing support plans.

Figure 1. Family, Student and Staff Survey Data 2024 to 2025.



Along with the shared school-wide expectations, the Kulshan team produced a behavior response guide that helps with guidance for staff about managing student behaviors and clarifies expectations for staff in dealing with student conduct (Figure 2). This approach closely matches the work recommended by the [Joint District-BEA student conduct committee](#) that met over the last few years. The Kulshan staff began the year by teaching into the schoolwide expectations for all students. This teaching included schoolwide assemblies where expectations were taught and shared lessons to introduce staff, teach norms and routines for lunchtime, use of electronic devices, hallway and bathroom rules, as well as information about sports, clubs and other activities at the school. This was a daily focus for the first three weeks of school. Reminder lessons have been provided throughout the year, including some targeted for specific students and some for classrooms and the whole school. In March, the school introduced the positive rewards system (“Thunderbucks”) designed to provide a way to highlight progress toward and evidence of students exemplifying conduct consistent with expectations.

Figure 2. Kulshan Behavior Response Guide



In addition, the staff has been focused on analyzing various forms of data through staff professional development related to this work. These efforts have included twice per month leadership/PBIS team meetings to guide professional development and student lessons, as well as the development of systems shown above based on needs identified by staff. Staff development has included a focus on using common language related to envisioning, reinforcing, reminding and redirecting students using *The Power of Our Words*, a text published by Responsive Classroom. Staff survey responses related to this work in the spring of 2025 suggest a high degree of progress on students conduct issues and response to student behavior schoolwide, when compared with data from spring of 2024. Also, Kulshan recently sent a school team to the PBIS/MTSS conference in Portland, OR and they returned with tangible next steps for professional learning.

Collectively looking into data related to systems and student referrals has raised concerns of disproportionality in office referral data for Kulshan’s Black and Brown students (Figure 3). Specifically, Kulshan office referral data show a disproportionate ratio of referrals for Black and Brown students. This data has been made a focus for continuing

Figure 3. Office Referral Data on Kulshan’s Black and Brown Students

By Month and Percentage of Black and Brown Student Referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September: 20 out of 68 referrals (28%) October: 43 out of 122 referrals (35%) November: 26 out of 60 referrals (43%) December: 23 out of 59 referrals (39%) January: 34 out of 74 referrals (46%)
Referral rate by Grade Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 46% for 8th grade students 30% for 7th grade students 24% for 6th grade students
By Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male- 79% Female- 21%
By Tier	<p>Tier 1- 90.8% (0-1 referrals)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 492 students have 0 referrals 54 with 1 referral = 54 referrals <p>Tier 2- 6.3% (2-5 referrals, 38 students = 94 referrals)</p> <p>Tier 3- 2.9% (6+ referrals, 18 students = 221 referrals)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.9% of our students have 60% of our referrals 10 of 18 Tier 3 are Black and Brown students

staff development and planning, including digging into what this data means and designing strategies for how the school will respond to this data. This examination of the data reveals the disproportionate experience of our Black and Brown students, which is understood by school leaders and staff as an urgent matter. Responses to date include the creation of focus groups for Black and Brown students, facilitated by a non-Kulshan employee, to provide student support and learn more about student experience at Kulshan.

Kulshan staff are also focused on tracking academic data now and into the future. Kulshan student’s academic growth data over the past year has been above district averages in language arts and math as captured by the Smarter Balanced assessment (SBA) (see Figure 4 – darker green indicates higher growth). It will be important to see how that growth translates into students’ academic proficiency over subsequent assessments.

Kulshan’s work shows progress and their vision moving forward beyond 2024-2025 includes maintaining and strengthening their focus on Tier 1 systems for all kids including shared reading and writing strategies, common assessments and shared academic intervention practices. Their plan is to continue to explore academic and referral data from an equity lens and respond to inequities by questioning systems, bringing in outside support and providing resources where necessary.

Figure 4. Academic Growth in ELA and Math: Kulshan and District

Median Student Growth Percentile			English Language Arts					
School	Category	Student Group	2023	2024		2024		
			All	All	6th	7th	8th	
Kulshan	All Students	All Students	56	64	69	62	62	
		Multilingual	51	51				
	Gender	Female	56.5	64.5	70	60.5	64	
		Male	55	64	66	65	61	
	Low Income	Low-Income	50.5	56	61	51	59	
		Non-Low Income	56.5	67	74	65.5	62	
	Race/ Ethnicity	Asian	50	77.5				
		Hispanic/Latino	53.5	68	70	50.5	78	
		Two or More Races	52	62	71	63.5	57	
	Section 504	Section 504	57	63	68	62	61	
		IEPs	64.5	66	49	71	67	
	IEPs	Students w/ IEP	47	51.5	50	56.5	54	
		Students w/o IEP	57	65.5	71	63	63	
	District	All Students	All Students	52	53	60	59	50
			Multilingual	37	45	56	52	40
Gender		Female	54	54	61	59	53	
		Male	50	51	56	54	51	
Low Income		Low-Income	45	48	56	51	43	
		Non-Low Income	57	57	63	62	55.5	
Race/ Ethnicity		Asian	52	57	53	70	51.5	
		Hispanic/Latino	46	47.5	59.5	51.5	41.5	
		Two or More Races	55.5	48	51	59	55	
Section 504		Section 504	54	55	62	60	54	
		IEPs	53	56	50.5	55	56	
IEPs		Students w/ IEP	41	44	51.5	61	42	
		Students w/o IEP	55	55	61	59	53	

Median Student Growth Percentile			Mathematics					
School	Category	Student Group	2023	2024		2024		
			All	All	6th	7th	8th	
Kulshan	All Students	All Students	67.5	70	74	70	61	
		Multilingual	83	71				
	Gender	Female	67	70	74	70	62.5	
		Male	66	70	76	71	58.5	
	Low Income	Low-Income	69	69	72	68	62.5	
		Non-Low Income	65	67	70	72	58	
	Race/ Ethnicity	Asian	68	70	77	68	64	
		Hispanic/Latino	57	78.5				
		Two or More Races	65.5	71	73.5	69.5	60	
	Section 504	Section 504	65.5	70	72	71	44.5	
		IEPs	69	69	75	68.5	64	
	IEPs	Students w/ IEP	65	75	72	80.5	69.5	
		Students w/o IEP	56	65	61	60	69	
	District	All Students	All Students	69	70	76	70	59
			Multilingual	57	57	66	70	54
Gender		Female	46	51	57.5	63.5	50	
		Male	58	58	67	70	55	
Low Income		Low-Income	56	56	67	70	53	
		Non-Low Income	58	58	66	70	56	
Race/ Ethnicity		Asian	52	52.5	57	70	50.5	
		Hispanic/Latino	60	61	69	69.5	58	
		Two or More Races	60	61.5	71	76	46	
Section 504		Section 504	48	54	60.5	70.5	50	
		IEPs	58	55	69	70	55	
IEPs		Students w/ IEP	60	58	67	70	59	
		Students w/o IEP	62	60	68	77	56.5	

Opening with this deeper dive into current work in one school is intended to provide a more wholistic view of how the vision, mission and Promise outcomes coalesce in the work inside one school. In addition, district-wide efforts like the annual Block Party embody the vision and mission of *The Promise* at work. Our district hosted the fourth annual Back-to-School Block Party on Saturday, August 24, 2024, at Bellingham High School (BHS). This event reflects the vision of *The Promise* in making a collective commitment to Bellingham’s children, evidenced through the widespread support and enthusiasm from kids, families and staff throughout the day. Each school in our district was represented with a table in the BHS Commons, while community partners filled the gym with table stations to share program information and resources. Multilingual students representing multiple languages were on site to provide translation support. Approximately five hundred families attended and were welcomed with free backpacks, books, haircuts, health services and more along with complimentary food trucks outside.

A quick snapshot of data following the event indicated the following services were provided:

- 71 onsite sports physicals provided by four different doctors,
- 15 childhood vaccines dispensed,
- Hundreds of backpacks and free books,
- 50 haircuts were completed, and
- 540 slices of pizza, 580 tacos and 350 hot dogs served

This event helps get the school year started right for families who attend. We acknowledge and give to the Bellingham Public Schools Foundation, the Project Neighborly Fund of

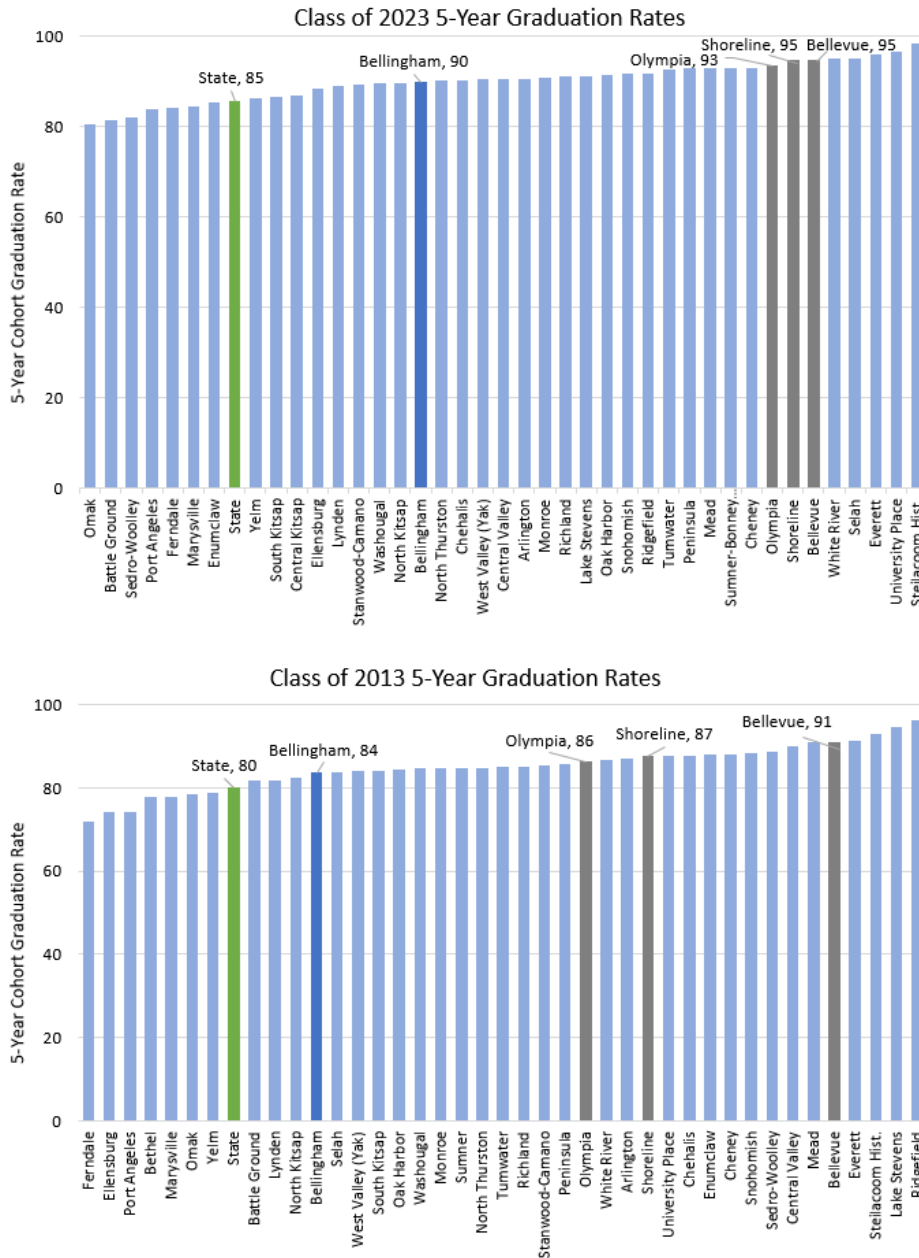
the Whatcom Community Foundation, BECU, Molina Healthcare and PeaceHealth for financial support of this back-to-school readiness event. More information can be found at: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2024/08/29/collective-commitment-showcased-during-fourth-annual-back-to-school-block-party/>

Our systemwide efforts to support equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) continue and are one means by which we, as a community, demonstrate our collective commitment to all of Bellingham's children. This work embodies *The Promise* mission that "ALL our students are cared for and respected." Specific efforts this year include:

- John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial (JMLSTI) Community Night was the third annual event and the third variation in location, program and set up. Students at all levels participated by showcasing learning around Treaty Day, Billy Frank, Jr., and JMLSTI curricular content. The district office was filled with family members, students and community members associated with the district and Children of the Setting Sun Productions.
- Our district is a strong, active player in culturally responsive teaching and learning events that positively impact over 300-400 people in county-wide audiences. BPS elementary, middle and high school students have been highlighted on panels, served as "masters of ceremony" and volunteered in multiple ways for Indigenous Peoples' Day (Lummi Nation School), Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service (Bellingham High School) and Asian Pacific Islander Desi Heritage Month Festival (Whatcom Community College).
- 100 percent of schools completed Bias & Hate: Interrupting Harm part I trainings led by our EDI team of Director Janis Velasquez-Farmer and teacher on special assignment (TOSA) Yana Mansfield. The training serves to help staff understand policy and procedure 3209, 3209 protocol, the importance of interrupting harm, lawful obligations to student safety and provides practice in interrupting every comment, every time, in the moment, without exception. Additional training was provided to paraprofessionals, volunteers, local organizations and parent organizations.
- The Title VI Indian Education Formula Grant Fund application was submitted following a lengthy process establishing requirements for the program. To finalize the application, the district formed the first Native American Family Committee, held over three formal meetings, collected 506 forms, held a public hearing and a final vote consisting of over 50 percent American Indian/Alaska Native parent approved the application.
- The EDI team led planning for a Centering Black Excellence teaching and learning event to kick off Black History Month and a second visit by Dr. Sonia Cherry-Paul, author of *Antiracist Reading Revolution*. Teachers were invited to a professional learning session which reviewed Black history lesson plans for elementary and secondary. Community members were invited to review lessons, books and visit tables for local organizations. Students, staff and administrators shared time and space with Dr. Cherry-Paul and elementary teachers were able to engage with the anti-racist framework for literacy.

- Finally, no accounting of evidence of *The Promise* mission and vision would be complete without mentioning of our ongoing work to improve graduation rates. Graduation is the ultimate marker of student progress. Figure 5 displays big picture data on overall graduation rates of students in Bellingham over time, compared with other districts.

Figure 5. 5-Year Adjusted Graduation Rates for 2013 and 2023

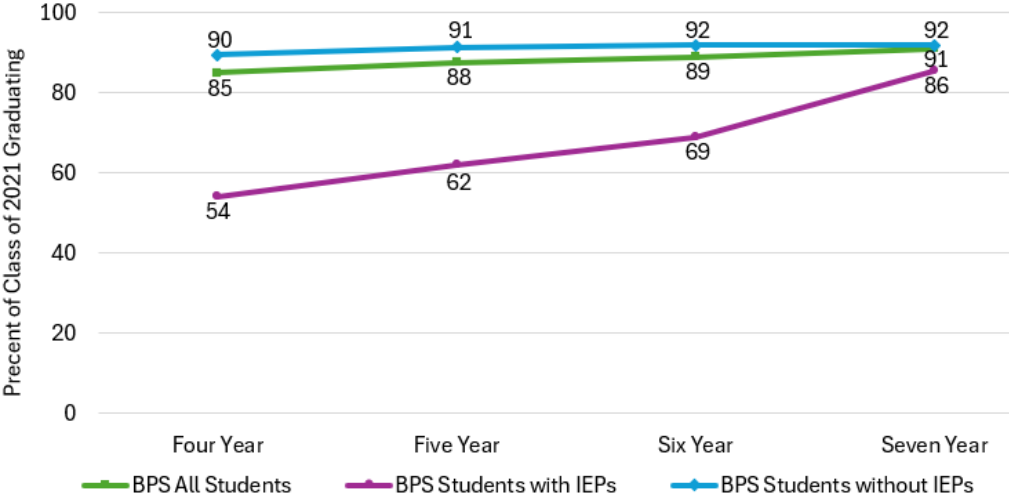


Specifically, this graph displays the graduation rates for the five-year adjusted cohorts of the class of 2013 and class of 2023 for Bellingham and 38 demographically comparable or high-bar peer districts and Washington state. Over this period of a decade, graduation rates

for Bellingham students increased from 84 percent in 2013 to 90 percent in 2023 which puts our district five percentage points above the state average.

As the board is aware, we track our graduation rates into the seventh year of high school. The most recent seven-year cohort (class of 2021) attained a 91 percent graduation rate, with students on IEPs graduating at a rate of 86 percent in the seventh year (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Graduation Rates by Cohort Year for BPS Students With and Without IEPs



As well, our four-year graduation rate improved from 85 to 89 percent in year-over-year comparisons, while the five-year and six-year rates each improved by 1 percent in year-over-year comparison. Year-over-year dropout rates also decreased by a point in Bellingham, placing Bellingham 4 percent lower in the dropout rate of our four-year cohort than the statewide average.

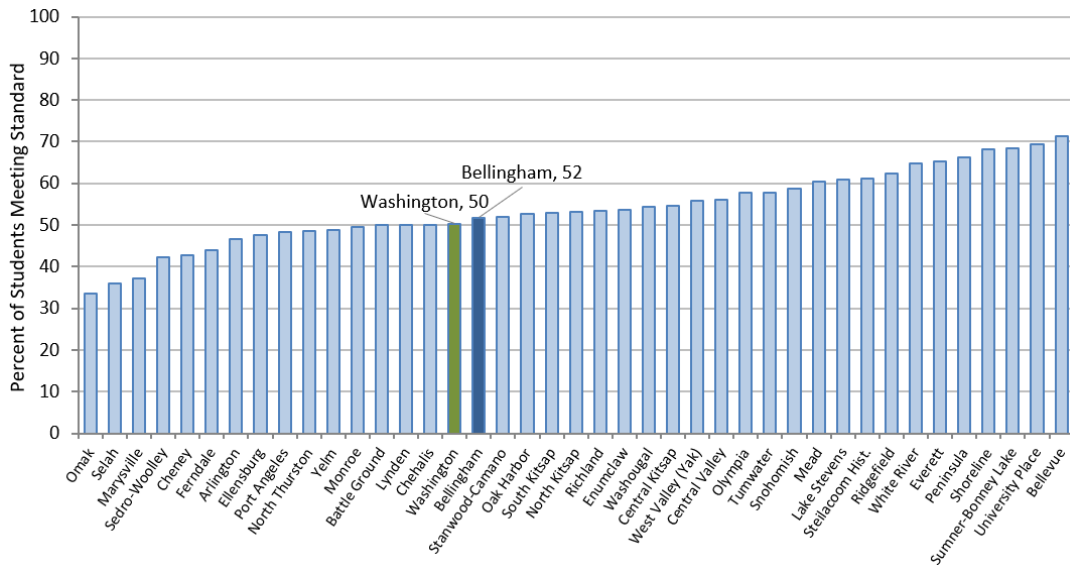
II. Ends 2.0: Knowledge Outcomes

Ends 2.0 focuses on seven outcomes centered on achievement and growth. We have included brief examples of ways schools have taken action to support and improve student learning and ways our overall program is supporting learning in the knowledge outcomes. The descriptions highlight specific people and places across our entire system of schools and, where available, link to further details.

Readers and Writers

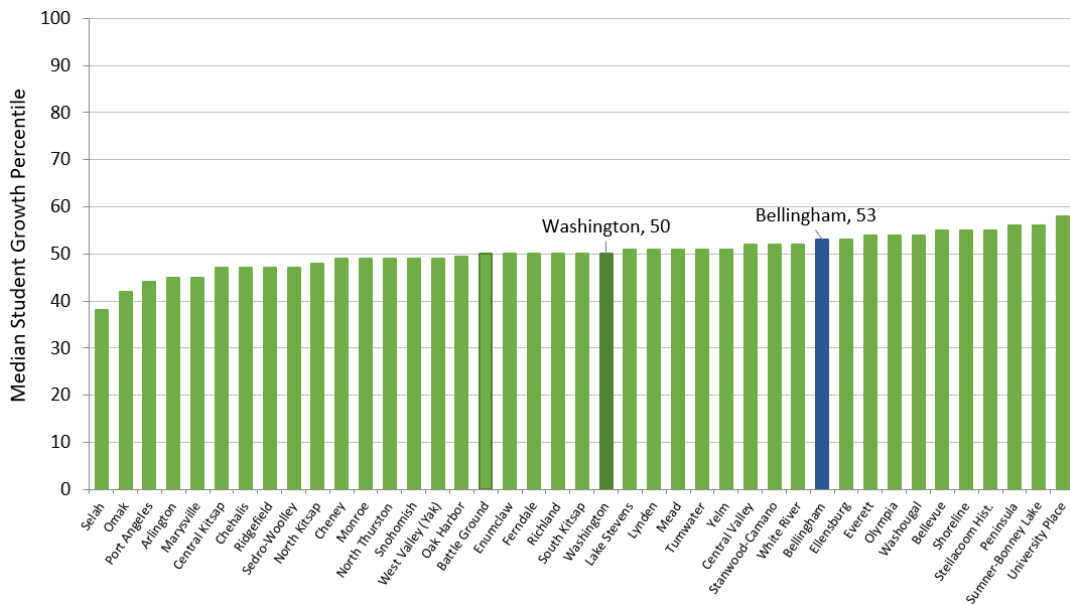
- In Ends 2.1, part 1 we compared the Smarted Balanced (SBA) English language arts (ELA) scores of those 38 comparable districts along with Bellingham and the state. Specifically, Figure 7 shows, on average, 52 percent of Bellingham students in Grades 3-8 and 10 met standard in ELA in 2024, putting our scores slightly above the state average and just below the middle of the group of 38 comparable districts.

Figure 7. 2024 ELA – Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 3-8 and 10.



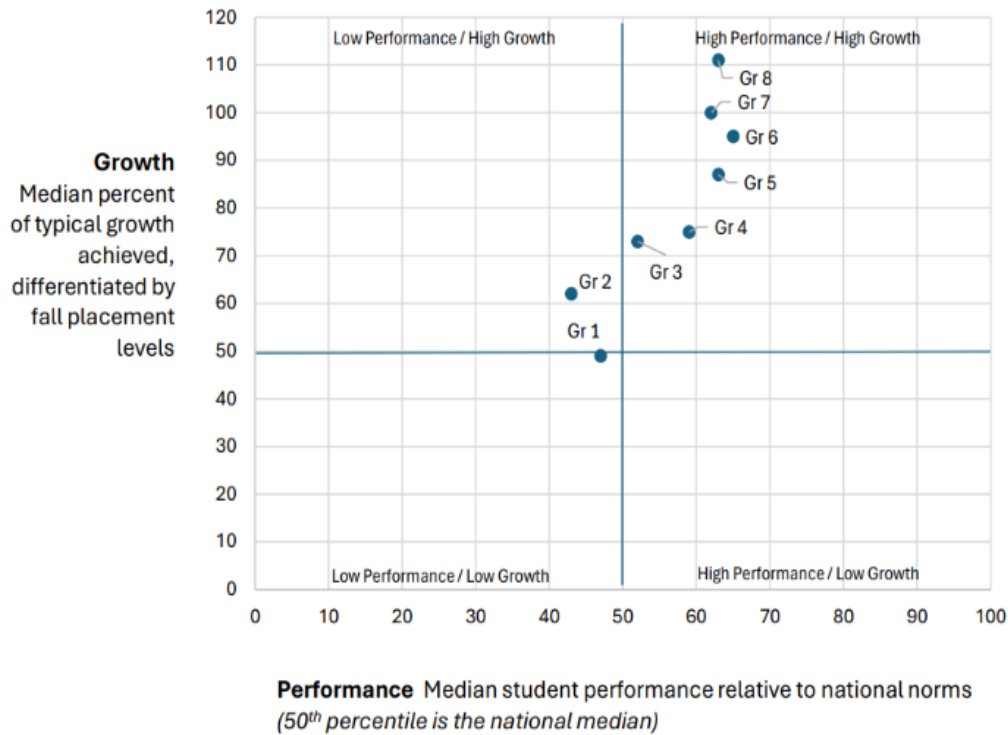
- We also shared in Ends 2.1, Part 1 that Bellingham student ELA growth in Grades 4-8 was above the median on the 2024 SBA, with the percentage meeting standard at approximately 53 percent. Figure 8 shows the districts in the group of 38 arrayed by student growth percentile, which provides a way to see how our district compares to others in the group. As is evident from this second chart, Bellingham’s average student growth percentile in ELA positioned our district in the top third of the comparable group of 38 districts.

Figure 8. ELA – 2024 Median Student Growth Percentile in Grades 4-8



- We observed promising growth in reading for 2024-25 as measured by the i-Ready assessments in use in Grades K-8. Figure 9 shows the median student performance data by median student growth in reading. Data from Grades 3-8 grade levels clustered well above median performance and all grades' levels were at or above median growth in math. Grades 3-8 stood out as high performing and high growth.

**Figure 9. i-Ready Median Performance by Median Growth in Reading
Fall to Winter 2024-25**



- Middle school students have been engaged with the use of the i-Ready assessments and personalized learning tool *MyPath* to a greater degree this year. Whatcom Middle School principal Mischelle Darragh reports that “teachers have utilized i-Ready benchmark assessments to guide their instruction meeting regularly to review student data and teach and re-teach skills based on that data.” Darragh further notes, “We have seen significant growth of our students in reading at 93 percent already from the fall to winter benchmark. For math we have 69 percent of our students already meeting annual typical growth from fall to winter.”
- For the past four years, our elementary schools have supported the implementation of a Foundational Skills Literacy Curriculum, called *Really Great Reading*. Columbia Principal Minh Nguyen reports that “teachers at Columbia have been strong implementors of this curriculum as well as the partnering i-Ready resource, *MyPath*. While implementing (these curricular tools) the Columbia team has developed strong routines to review data ~5 times a year to monitor student progress.” Consistent with the district’s MTSS work, Columbia teachers have all implemented Tier 2 small intervention groups to support students who need more

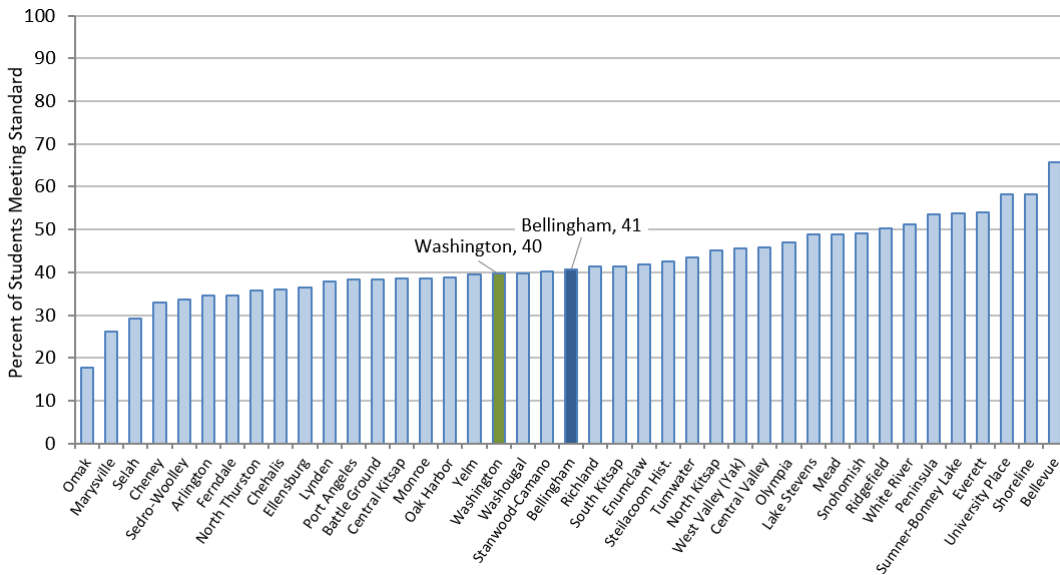
help to meet standards. This happens in “What I Need” intervention groups held four times a week for about 30 minutes. The results are impressive. Principal Nguyen reports “fifth graders were averaging 277 percent growth as compared to the national norm. In our diverse classrooms, we know that we cannot just teach a concept or skill one time, and kids will get it. Students need layers of support and our small intervention groups are leading to schoolwide growth that we are proud of.”

- Assistive Technology Specialist Amy Connelly led professional development for special educators on comprehensive literacy for all strategies which are aimed at increasing literacy skills for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As an example, multiple students now have access to eye-gaze technology which they use to communicate their wants, needs and interests with others.
- Additional training on *Morpheme Magic for Little Ones* was provided for third grade teachers in December 2024. This resource was provided in school year 2023-24 for primary grade teachers (K-2) and this additional training was to support foundational skills development in Grade 3.
- Standing before a full audience at Village Books, the author event featuring Bellingham High School brothers Cody and Taylor Watts and their new book represented the culmination of a process five years in the making. Cody, now 18 and a senior and Taylor, now 16 and a junior, shared insights and reflections of *The Deck: Stories from a Pandemic* – penned five years prior when the brothers were 13 and 11, respectively, and in middle school during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 425-page book chronicles journal entries made over an 18-month span, intentionally and uniquely written from the lens of middle school minds. Fifty attendees packed into *Literature Live! Events* space on the lower level of Village Books on Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025, as Cody and Taylor introduced the book, read select excerpts and answered audience questions before a book signing session. To read more about the Watts brothers, see:
<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/01/28/bellingham-students-and-brothers-publish-book-the-deck-stories-from-a-pandemic-host-author-event-at-village-books/>

Scientists and Mathematicians

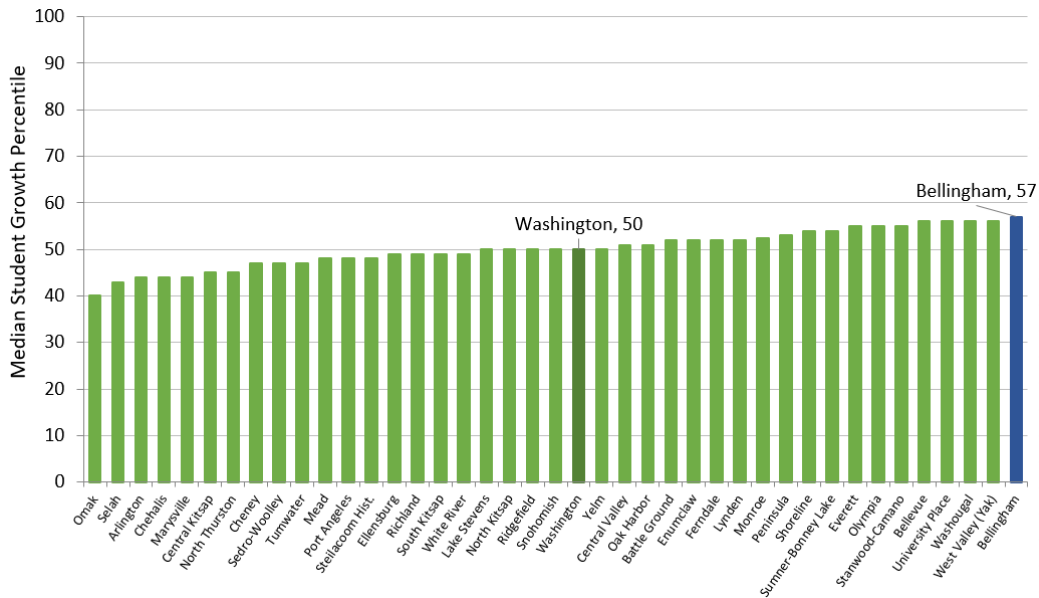
- Figure 10 displays the 2024 SBA percent meeting or exceeding standard in math for Bellingham, Washington state and among the 38 comparable districts in our comparison group. Bellingham students’ scores held steady in math in year-over-year comparison, slightly above the state average and about in the middle of the group of comparison districts.

Figure 10. 2024 Math– Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 3-8 and 10



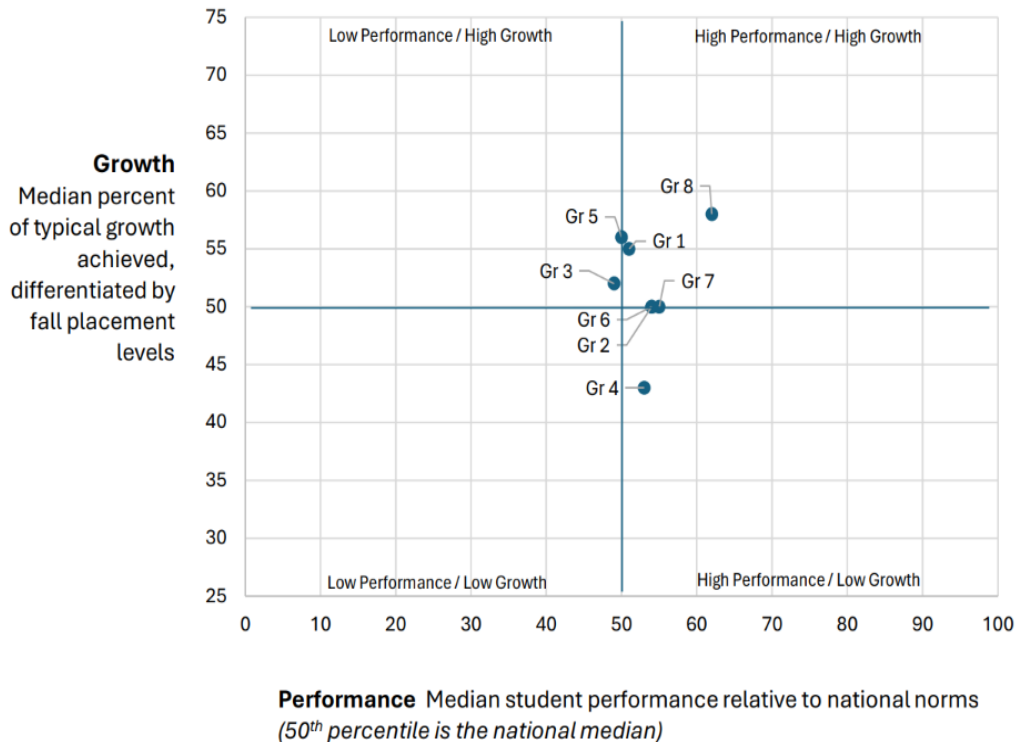
- Figure 11 displays SBA growth percentile comparisons with our group of 38 comparable districts. Bellingham student growth in Grades 4-8 was the highest among this group.

Figure 11. Math – 2024 Median Student Growth Percentile in Grades 4-8



- We also observed promising growth in math as measured by the 2024-25 i-Ready assessments in use in Grades K-8. Figure 12 shows the median student performance data by median student growth in math. Most grade levels clustered at or above median performance as well as at or above median growth in math. Eighth grade stood out as high performing and high growth.

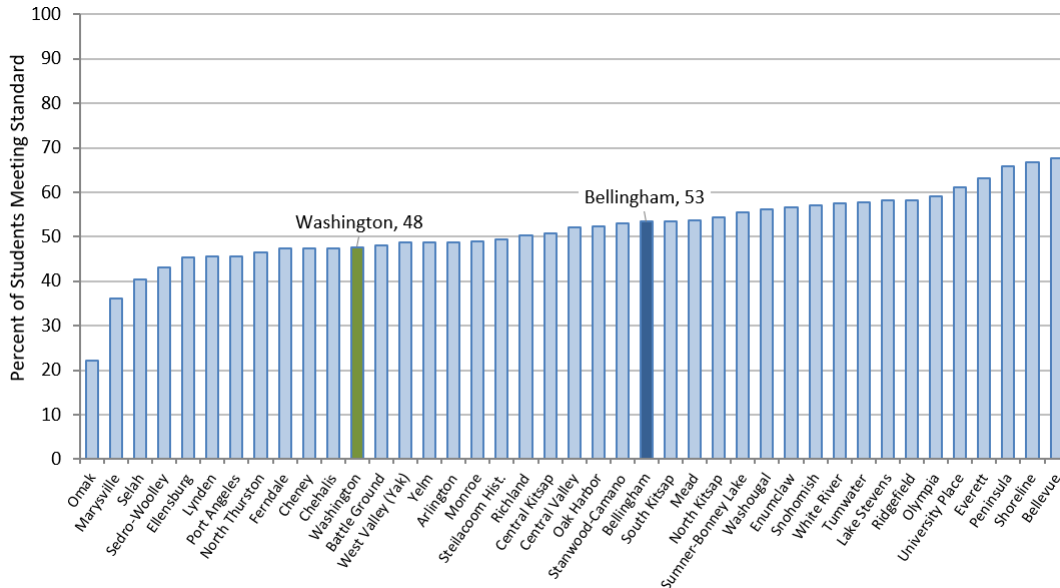
**Figure 12. i-Ready Median Performance by Median Growth in Math
Fall to Winter 2024-25**



- Development of common curricular units of inquiry continues in elementary schools. Instructional coaches are once again working in collaboration with teachers to lead the development of new units of inquiry at various grade levels in the elementary program this year. For example, second grade teachers at Silver Beach (Sadie Hostetler), Lowell (Blayne Lambert) and Birchwood (Angie Titus) have been collaborating with instructional coaches Rachel Frye, Kristin Gresham and Tess Ridgway to build an inquiry unit around the central idea “Living things are connected and rely on one another.” Key elements of this integrated work:
 - The unit incorporates material from Open SciEd’s NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) aligned curriculum so that students can investigate how seeds disperse and what plants need to grow.
 - The unit also incorporates the *Since Time Immemorial* pathway 2: Honoring the Salmon. When students are studying how living things are connected and rely on each other they are learning about *natural helpers* (how black bears and rodents distribute salmonberry seeds) and *human helpers* like the Nooksack Tribe and Lummi Nation working collaboratively to restore salmon habitats.
 - The unit further incorporates learning happening through elementary PLC (Professional Learning Community) time and weaves in interactive read-aloud with picture books written by local Indigenous authors.
 - Future work involves refining lessons based on feedback from Lummi and Nooksack partners, piloting the units with students this spring and updating the instructional materials and supplies based on teacher and student feedback.

- Figure 13 shows the percentage of students meeting standard on the SBA in science in Grades 5 and 8; 53 percent of Bellingham students in Grades 5 and 8 met or exceeded the science standards in 2024. Bellingham students' scores were positioned above the state, and above the middle of this group of 38 comparable districts.

Figure 13. 2024 Science– Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 5 and 8



- Our students have participated in external math competitions this year. These include 17 Geneva fourth and fifth graders who have been participating in a Math Olympiads after school enrichment club at Geneva since fall. Eleven out of the 17 students won awards for excellence within Division E, Grades 4-6, with four students scoring within the top 3-10 percent of all participants. In addition, 11 of our high school students participated in the American Math Competition on November 6, 2024, and 29 students participated in the middle school version of the Competition on January 29, 2025.
- TOSA Rey Ramos and Director Tom Gresham are leading a pilot group of elementary teachers in developing their pedagogical skills with math instruction. We began this work envisioning that this group of elementary teachers once trained will be able to host other teachers in observing their shifts in math instruction through a lab classroom approach. The foundations of the work are rooted in Peter Liljedahl's "Thinking Classroom" approach to math instruction. Professor Liljedahl, from Simon Fraser University, has conducted staff development sessions for our secondary math teachers on the use of vertical white boards to enhance group problem solving.
- In 2025, more 5,000 chum salmon fry were raised in cold water salmon tanks in seventeen BPS schools. Chum salmon eggs were harvested in December by Bellingham Technical College Fisheries students and placed in a hatchery. In January, community volunteers, led by volunteer Wendy Sherrer, regional coordinator of the Salmon in the Classroom program, delivered 300 salmon eggs to

each of the 14 elementary schools, the Bellingham Family Partnership Program and Bellingham and Sehome high schools. Science lessons about the egg-to-fry lifecycle, salmon anatomy, water quality, habitat needs and connection with fishing, as well as Lummi and Nooksack culture, were coordinated by teachers and community volunteers in each school. The chum salmon fry were released in seven local creeks in March and April. The Bellingham Public Schools Foundation serves as the fiscal sponsor of the Salmon in the Classroom Bellingham program. To read more, see: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/04/28/bps-students-release-over-5000-chum-salmon-fry-from-the-salmon-in-the-classroom-salmon-science-program/>

- Ocean Science classes continue to be of high interest to students and integrate big picture research alongside studies of our local bioregion. For example, Options High School Ocean Science class has been active this year in the management of a saltwater aquarium and has been engaged in learning at Larrabee State Park site. Sehome science teacher Garrett Knoll and his students Grace Deluca, Elliot Dorn, Max Hunter and Chevelle Kalawa shared about their learning experiences about stewardship of the ocean amid climate change with the district's Sustainability Standing Committee on February 25, 2025. Mr. Knoll and the students shared more information and reflections about the Ocean Science course, which focuses on local sea life including orcas and salmon. The students raved about their experiences in class, including the positive environment, the hands-on learning, the connection to local resources and how it affects our community. Read more at: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/04/28/sehome-mariners-take-on-ocean-science/>
- Bellingham High School senior Katie Knies took second place overall the 2025 International Bridge Building Contest in Chicago, IL on April 26, 2024. BHS teacher Paul Clement called the award "a very close result" with Knies also taking home the coveted Architectural Award which is given out ahead of the contest and based solely on design. Knies shared that the competition brought home to her the importance of working closely with other students to learn how to build the best bridge. Knies said, "Both last year and this year, I worked together with other students to improve my bridge design and building techniques." Next fall, Knies plans to attend Purdue University in Indiana to study engineering. To read more, see: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/04/29/bhs-senior-katie-knies-wins-architectural-award-takes-second-place-overall-in-international-contest-for-bridge-building/>

Historians and Global Thinkers

- The first Native American Student Union (NASU) at Squalicum High School prepared and led an all-school assembly for Indigenous Peoples' Day and adapted lessons for Treaty Day for high school. NASU engaged in the Multicultural Night, supported events for the Native American Family Council and led a session at the JMLSTI Community Night.
- Happy Valley Elementary developed and implemented the first elementary Black Student Union (BSU). The BSU offered a community event and explored other

events with their advisors, an active and engaged parent and a Western Washington University (WWU) student.

- Our district culture calendar continues to grow and add culturally relevant events for various parts of our Bellingham community. This includes references to observed religious holidays in various religious traditions to help our staff be aware of when students and families may be involved in traditions and celebrations. See the calendar at: <https://bellingshamschools.org/about/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/>
- Sehome High School installed a mural by local artist Jason LaClair and held an assembly to highlight the historical and cultural importance of the work.
- Every November, public schools in Washington state take part in educational activities in observance of Veterans Day. Generally held the week prior to the Veterans Day federal holiday on November 11, assemblies often include student-led presentations and performances, visits by veterans who speak to their experience and heartfelt art projects showing gratitude for service. As part of the Squalicum High School commemoration of Veterans Day, students and staff viewed a variety of documentaries on the history and importance of honoring our veterans, the impact of women and minorities in the military and in depth look at D-Day and Vietnam. Then, students had the opportunity to engage in discussion questions about family/friends who served in the military, the structure and future of the military and ways to honor veterans. Read more at: <https://promise.bellingshamschools.org/2024/12/11/veterans-day-assemblies-give-students-a-chance-to-engage-with-community-and-history/>

Artists and Performers

- Student musicians from all our high schools competed in the annual SJMEA Regional Solo and Ensemble Contest. First place soloists and ensembles listed by school included: From Sehome High-Jae-Yoon Lee (cello), Kaden Schmidt (string bass), Julietta Herrera-Carreon (mezzo soprano), Maria Horja (piano), Lucy Naiman (harp), as well as the Sehome Chamber Orchestra; From Bellingham High-Aubrielle Blum (flute), Aliya Otto and Claire Bloom (woodwind ensemble), Rylan Neem (percussion), Rose Rombaoa (soprano) and Showstoppers (mixed vocal ensemble); from Squalicum High-Jackson Randall (snare drum), Harjas Grewal (soprano), Vander Burley (composition), Mercury Rising (large group percussion), Golden Trio (small SMA group vocal), The Raindrops (large TBB group vocal) and Harmon & Malpica (small TBB group vocal).
- Thanks to a Big Idea grant from the Bellingham Public School Foundation, Options High School (OHS) students collaborated with local theatre company, Bellingham TheatreWorks, on a production of “Working: A Musical.” The show is based on the non-fiction book by Studs Terkel that was originally published in 1974. Through oral histories, the book investigated the meaning of work and explored what makes work meaningful. The musical stage production includes songs by well-known composers such as Stephen Schwartz, Lin-Manuel Miranda and James Taylor. This is the first OHS collaborative musical production in its history.
- Lively dramatic and musical theater productions in the other three high schools featured the following shows this school year: Much Ado About Nothing, Footloose

(BHS); Hades Town: Teen Edition, Three Musketeers (SHS); and The Thirty-Nine Steps, Gretel!: The Musical (SQHS).

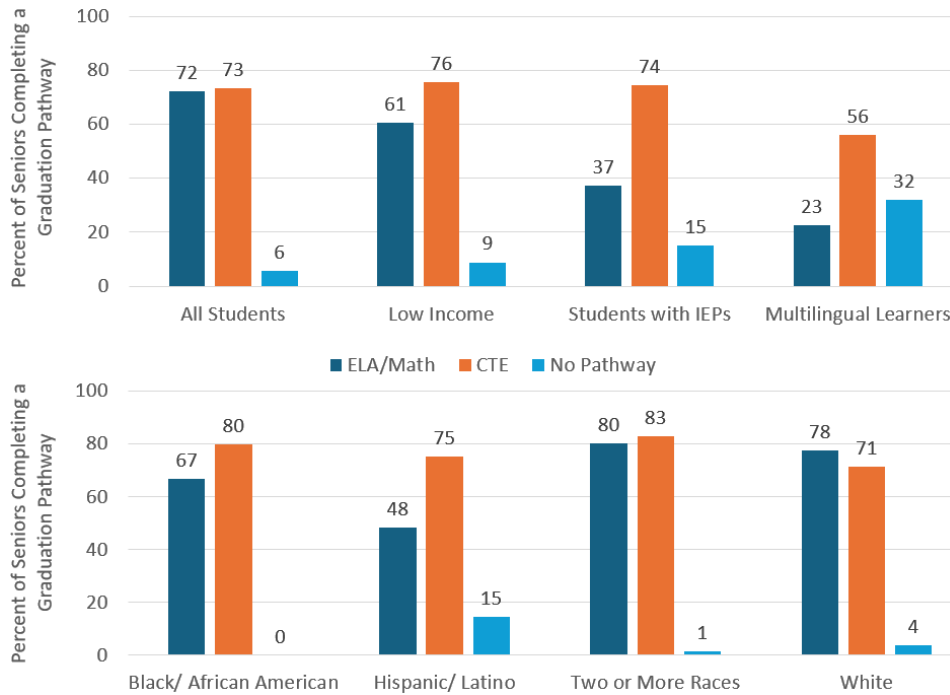
- Shuksan Middle School is seeing impressive growth in students with a desire to increase opportunities to display their skills as artists and performers. As middle school students, Principal Alli Chryst notes, “they want to blend in and stand out at the same time. We are looking for ways to build their confidence through learned skills, acting, musical gifts, artistic expression and more. Through talent shows, assemblies and one day, a drama performance.”
- Choral, band and orchestra concerts thrilled audiences several times in 2025. For example, the first All-City concert featuring all the bands in Grades 6-12 was held at Bellingham High School on March 12, 2025. Students from all the middle school and high school bands stretched out on the floor of the BHS gym and performed a unified piece to cap off the performance.
- Bellingham Public Schools was well-represented at [the Washington State Thespian Festival](#) this year with more than 65 students attending. Special recognition in this year’s festival goes to two district students who are national qualifiers and have been chosen as state finalist honorees in the Thespy Showcase. They are Sehome High School student Chelsea Li and Squalicum High School student Callie Young. National qualifiers receive an overall “superior” score and can enter their submission to the International Thespian Festival which takes place in June in Bloomington, Indiana. Read more at: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/03/21/bps-theatre-students-showcased-at-washington-state-thespian-festival/>
- Five Sehome students spent two days in early March writing, shooting and editing a film as part of the 48 Hour Film Off hosted by the [National Film Festival for Talented Youth \(NFFTY\)](#). Just under a month later, the team traveled to Seattle in April for a weekend of learning at NFFTY, punctuated with news the film took the grand prize. Sehome’s team of seniors Cooper Wilson, Rebekah Peterson, Charlie Johnson, Grady Boudreaux and sophomore Colin Cook composed a film called [Faceless Fears](#). The 3-minute short film illustrates social and academic anxieties of a high school student. The entries, submitted March 9, were evaluated through a combination of festival jury deliberation and audience voting. Read more at: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/04/29/sehome-filmmakers-take-top-honors-at-national-film-festival-for-talented-youth-nffty/>
- Wade King Elementary School music specialist Angela Mazur was inspired to start an elementary choir in fall 2023 ahead of the school’s Veterans Day assembly. What began as 28 students who joined and performed for the assembly quickly blossomed to 75 at the next rehearsal due to overwhelming interest. For 2024-25, the Wade King choir has two subsections. This school year, 85 students are enrolled in morning choir while the afternoon “honor” choir has 70 students. The morning choir performed at the school’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day assembly on Friday, Jan. 17, 2025. One highlight of the choir’s inaugural year was being selected to perform the national anthem at a Seattle Mariners game in May 2024. Read more about the choirs at:

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/01/31/program-highlight-wade-king-elementary-school-choir-a-popular-musical-avenue-for-students-to-experience>

Artisans and Technicians

- Students are increasingly accessing Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways for graduation. Data displayed in Figure 14 reveals for the class of 2024 overall that 72 percent of Bellingham students completed an ELA/Math pathway and 73 percent completed a CTE pathway. Students identified as low income, served in special education, multilingual, Black, Hispanic/Latinx or as two or more races all completed a CTE graduation pathway at a higher rate than an ELA/Math pathway.
- Options High School students displayed their work in ceramics with exhibits at Unknown Skateshop and Good Earth Pottery during 2025.
- The launch of our new electric vehicle course will take place in the fall of 2025, made possible through a generous grant from *Foundry 10*, which also provided essential teacher training. This innovative program, taught by BHS teacher Paul Clement with support from CTE TOSA Jenny Styer, will be located at Options High School. The curriculum will encompass sustainability, energy, engineering, technology and auto shop, allowing students to engage firsthand in building and taking apart (for reuse) a real EV designed to seat three people and be licensed for the road.

Figure 14. 2024 Graduation Pathways Data for BPS Grade 12: All Students and Students from Low Income Households



Multilingual Readers and Speakers

- An all-time high number of students across Bellingham Public Schools registered and completed testing during two testing dates offered in March 2025. A total of 189 students registered with a large majority completing testing across another record high of 17 languages. The languages tested were Amharic, Arabic, Dari, Chinese-Mandarin, Farsi, Hindi, Japanese, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Ukrainian, Urdu and Vietnamese. Minimum threshold scores are set for high school credit and the Seal of Biliteracy. As of April 2025, 62 students qualified for the Seal. BPS offers testing for free to all students wishing to take the test, and students can retake if they wish to try and improve scores. The test is an important metric to prove proficiency for student transcripts.
- Latinos In Action (LIA) expanded to BHS this year and LIA club students are also coming to Birchwood Elementary to provide academic support and mentorship to the elementary students.
- Roosevelt Elementary piloted a World Language model that merged Spanish with classroom International Baccalaureate (IB) Units of Inquiry. The school's multilingual teacher, Carmen Avila Cervera, in collaboration with classroom teachers designed and delivered lessons in both Spanish and English. This dual-language approach supported Spanish-speaking students with the ability to serve as experts while English speakers were learning complex Spanish vocabulary in a language rich environment.
- Sehome High School (SHS) reports significant strides in creating an inclusive environment where multilingual students are recognized and supported as critical members of the school community. SHS increased WIDA test (state assessment for multilingual students) participation from 73 percent to 87 percent, a testament to improved outreach, student engagement and systems for supporting language development.
 - Sehome also launched a Multilingual Conversations Club, student-led and open to all students, to provide authentic language practice and celebrate linguistic diversity. SHS also began implementing bilingual advertisements and reader board slides in Spanish and English to increase awareness of opportunities and events, elevate visibility and create belonging.
 - Sehome is quick to acknowledge that they are still working toward meeting several outcomes. For instance, while the school has made gains in providing access to rigorous coursework, multilingual students are not equitably represented in advanced classes or leadership roles. To address this, the school is expanding co-taught English language development (ELD) sections—including a new math-focused AVID course and actively recruiting multilingual students into Associated Student Body (ASB) and leadership electives.
- We intentionally continue to work to increase the number of schools' front office and other staff members who are multilingual. This is part of our ongoing effort to diversify the district's workforce in ways that more robustly reflect the diversity of our student population. Out of twenty-three sites, including the Bellingham Family Partnership (BFPP), ten now have bilingual front office assistants in place. These

include Alderwood, BFPP, Birchwood, Carl Cozier, Cordata, Fairhaven, Options, Roosevelt, Sehome and Shuksan. In addition, we have added multilingual office staff support in the district office since the last filing of this report.

Skilled Users of Technology and Information

- Parent groups and parent teacher associations (PTAs) from Wade King, Happy Valley and Lowell elementary schools hosted a panel of local experts at Wade King in March to help share information, resources and advice for families about healthy use of technology. The panel of experts included Bellingham Police Department detectives, an internal medicine/pediatric specialist, a certified mental health professional, psychologist and behavior specialist Dr. Sara White and Bellingham Public Schools Director of Safety and Security Russ Robinson. These experts tackled important topics such as screen time and brain science; advice for combatting online predators; gaming, anxiety and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Dozens of families attended the evening event, which was filmed to provide information available to all families to help inform and arm parents with information and strategies to support our children. See more at: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/04/28/watch-or-listen-local-experts-talk-about-healthy-technology-use-and-share-tips-with-families>
- Professional development in artificial intelligence (AI) continued along with a focus on the Healthy Tech Promise. Director Bill Palmer has been leading work with secondary instructional coaches on better understanding available AI tools for teachers and supporting learning around appropriate use of screentime with all digital devices. In March, a panel of leaders participated in a discussion with the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee with the central focus on student access and use of cell phones. The discussion broadened to include aspects of the Healthy Tech Promise.

III. Ends 3.0: Character and Action Outcomes

This section of the report delves into the character and action outcomes from *The Bellingham Promise*. Sections that follow incorporate students' self-perception data related to character and action outcomes, drawing on data from our annual Qualtrics survey. We have also included examples of the ways our schools, staff members and community partners demonstrated and exemplified various outcomes noted here.

Leaders, Collaborators and Team Players

- High school Black and Brown students and peers actively engaged in multicultural learning, developed teaching and learning opportunities for students, staff and community members. Squalicum High School students led Multicultural Night for over 300 attendees as a collaboration between Latinos in Action, Black Student Union, Asian Pacific Islander Student Association, Desi Club and staff advisors and featured Judge Cecily Hazelrigg, the first Latina Chief Judge in the Washington Court of Appeals. Sehome High School's Young Multiracial Society held the annual Ebony Gala, a celebration of Black community during Black History Month. Bellingham

High School's Multicultural Club and Black Student union held a Multicultural Night. Students from all high schools attended all events.

- First grade student, S, at Cordata Elementary led her class in lessons on orientation mobility. Her classmates learned how to support an individual with visual impairment and how to help them navigate unfamiliar spaces. This is one example of how S is learning how to advocate for herself and strengthen her community. After these lessons, her classmates acted by advocating to district administration for improved signage at their school for people with visual impairments. Pictures below!



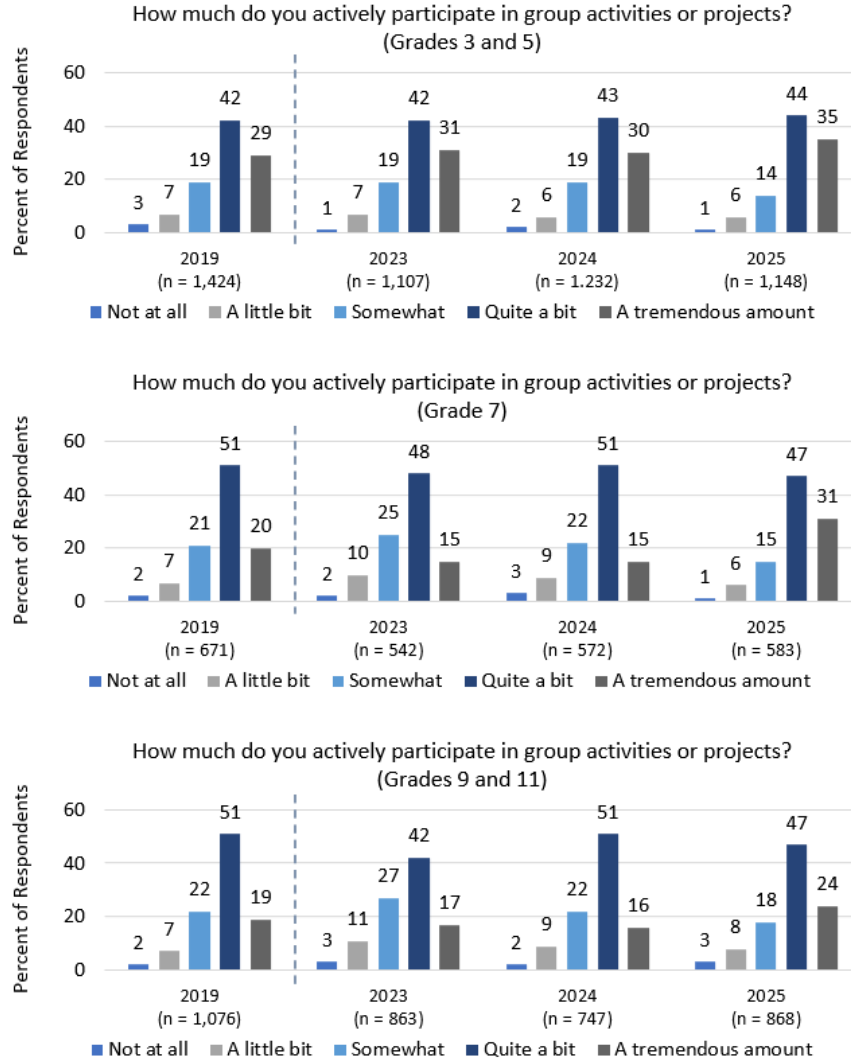
- Options High School held its first ASB leadership election, selection of officers and year of leadership service.
- The Whatcom Middle School PBIS Team has strengthened their schoolwide positive discipline system this year which included schoolwide “culture camp” at the beginning of the year and then ongoing PAWS, Quarterly Recognition Breakfasts and support in upholding expectations via their vision of Safe, Responsible and Kind.
- Two separate groups of intermediate student leaders spearheaded community building campaigns this school year at Geneva. One was kindness week and the most recent was a "You Belong" campaign. Both ideas originated from student leaders who wanted to increase kindness and belonging at Geneva. The student leaders came up with how to promote the campaigns which included writing a script and talking about them in our weekly school-wide assemblies and Friday announcements, what activities all students can choose to participate in and making posters to spread kindness and belonging.
- Teacher Academies at Sehome, Bellingham and Squalicum High Schools continue to support bilingual students interested in exploring and pursuing an education career. Led by teachers Lori French, Angela Garcia and Mary Hooker, approximately 65 budding teachers are being placed in elementary school classrooms this fall of 2024, alongside of our BPS classroom teachers who agree to participate as mentors.
- Fairhaven Middle School (FMS) sixth grader Harrison Burgess stopped by the local chapter of the American Red Cross earlier this year to present a donation of more than \$200 raised by students, staff and families from Fairhaven. Harrison brainstormed and organized the fundraiser on his own as a tangible way to lend support to victims of the Los Angeles wildfires in January 2025. Executive director Alexander Newman of the [Northwest Washington Chapter of the American Red](#)

Cross accepted the Fairhaven Middle School donation and presented Harrison with a certificate and a special Red Cross pin. “My dad’s house burned down in a house fire when he was a kid,” Harrison shared “and the Red Cross came and helped him and his family.” In a desire to pay it forward to the Red Cross, Harrison approached Fairhaven Principal Steve Ruthford to get permission and then worked with him on the best way to collect funds. To read more, see:

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/03/11/fairhaven-student-heads-up-red-cross-fundraiser/>

- Girls flag football officially launched in Bellingham Public Schools as Bellingham, Sehome and Squalicum high schools played their first-ever games on Wednesday, January 15. Bellingham, Sehome and Squalicum were joined by Ferndale to form a Whatcom County quartet of teams competing in an eight-week flag football season spanning January and February 2025. Read the full story at:
<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/01/17/inaugural-girls-flag-football-games-mark-welcoming-of-sport-opportunity-in-bellingham-public-schools/>
- This spring’s annual student survey results on questions gauging students’ levels of active participation in group activities or projects revealed significant improvement in year-over-year comparisons and reached levels above pre-pandemic 2019 (Figure 15). The largest gains were in percentages of students answering “a tremendous amount” to the question “how much do you actively participate in group activities or projects” and this was true at elementary, middle and high school levels.

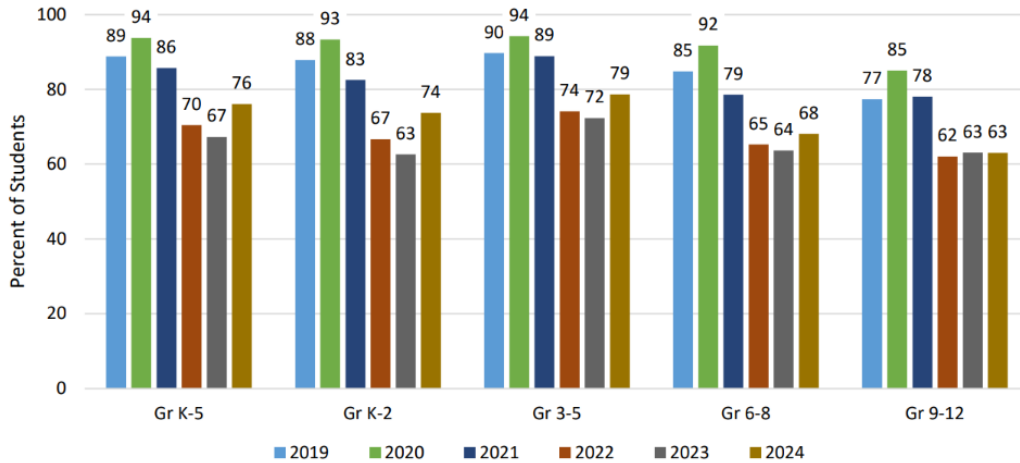
re 15. Bellingham Students Participation in Group Activities or Projects



Dependable and Responsible People

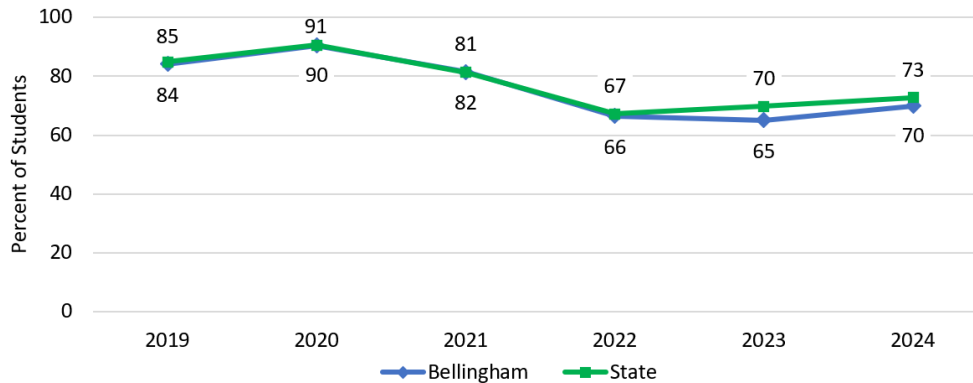
- One of the measures we track that is highly focused on developing dependable and responsible people is school attendance. For two years, we have reported on a concerning trend showing that our overall attendance rates were lagging in the wake of the pandemic. Board members may recall that the percentage of students with regular attendance, meaning students who average fewer than two absences a month, declined significantly in all grade levels over the last two years. That trend has reversed this 2024-25 school year in Grades K-8 with attendance rates increasing, while Grades 9-12 rates held constant. Figure 16 provides a visual representation of attendance rates over time.

Figure 16. Percent of Bellingham Students with Regular Attendance



We also noted that attendance trends for Bellingham students shifted in a positive direction and are closer to the overall state average in 2024 (Figure 17). We believe the work that schools are engaging in to improve attendance is contributing to the positive reversal in the trend.

Figure 17. Percent of Students with Regular Attendance for All Grades Bellingham and Washington State

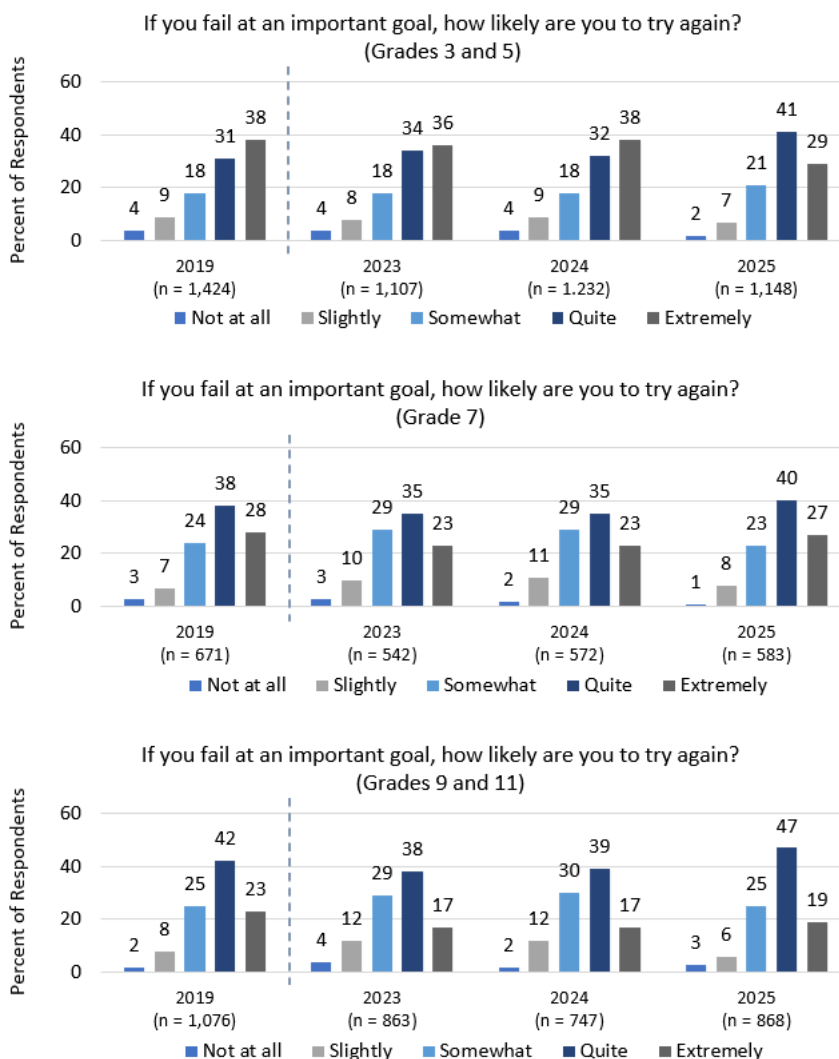


- As mentioned earlier, every August BPS hosts a Block Party for our families. One feature of this Block Party is free sports physicals for our athletes. To assist with the registration process we lean on our multilingual students to provide interpretation services to our families who speak a language other than English. These students are instrumental in the success of the Block Party. We have about 30 students yearly who provide support as interpreters at events. They not only help the families, but, as Executive Director of Family Engagement Isabel Meaker reported, “we were very pleased to find out that our community partners look forward to having their support year after year and have been highly impressed with their kindness and professionalism.”

Confident Individuals Who Continually Challenge Themselves

- The annual student survey results this spring on questions about persevering through failure show similar trends seen in 2019 among Bellingham elementary students and a slight drop among high schoolers. See comparison chart embedded as Figure 18.

Figure 18. Bellingham Students’ Perseverance Through Failure Three-Year Trend



- Advanced Placement (AP) course participation is one pathway for high school students to challenge themselves with advanced learning opportunities. AP course completion increased 2 percent between 2023 and 2024, the third annual year-over-year increase we have observed in a row in that category.
- Bellingham, Sehome and Squalicum high schools each received 2024 AP Honor Roll recognition from the College Board, and all three schools have earned this honor for at least two consecutive years. Nationally, 5,061 high schools, or around 32 percent of schools with AP programs, earned this honor. Squalicum, Sehome and

Bellingham are among 83 recipient high schools in Washington state. More than half of our 4,000 high school students have taken at least one AP class, including hundreds of ninth grade students who take AP Human Geography as they launch into high school. High schools in BPS offer more than thirty-five different AP courses although not every school offers every class every year.

- This year at Shuksan Middle School, Principal Alli Chryst reports that, “we have seen incredible growth in our students as confident individuals who continuously challenge themselves an outcome that beautifully captures our collective efforts toward building self-determined learners. In so many classrooms, we have witnessed students setting goals, reflecting on their progress and recalibrating their plans—sometimes with adult support, and increasingly on their own. Whether it is sixth graders revising their personal narratives or eighth graders navigating complex math problems without relying on step-by-step scaffolds, our kids are learning to trust themselves as thinkers. They (are) also showing resilience when things do not go as planned—an essential part of real learning.”

Respectful and Compassionate Humans

- We increased our prevention efforts related to sexual harassment this year by having all middle and high school students watch a BPS-produced video on sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination. We were fortunate to have high school students support this project by providing the voiceover for the video. Schools sent the video and related information home to parents via Parent Square to help families learn more about this topic and to help reinforce learning at home.
- This year, we hosted [MAD HOPE](#), local suicide prevention program, to present at all middle schools in Grade 7 or 8. In recent years, we have had them visit some middle schools, but not all. Standardizing our approach to ensure all middle schoolers receive this training provides consistency and allows all students to have this baseline knowledge as they move to their various high schools. This program not only helps students identify their own feelings that could relate to suicide but also teaches them about how to support their peers and identify trusted adults from which to seek assistance.
- Elementary Professional Learning Community meetings have focused on developing racial literacy. All grade levels went through training to infuse aspects of Dr. Sonia Cherry-Paul’s work to guide how they are selecting texts, asking questions of kids and bringing a focus on elevating respect for all.
- Options High School community-based learning experiences included partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, The Bellingham Food Bank and We-Grow Garden, which had Options students engaging in efforts within those organizations to impact community.
- Birchwood Elementary School identified corresponding areas of empathy and perseverance as key areas of growth, based on student and parent survey data in the 2023-24 school year (both the Qualtrics survey and a building survey as a part of Principal Micah Smith’s entry plan). The school has emphasized these themes as a basis for weekly assemblies, defining the language, reading books about it, hearing

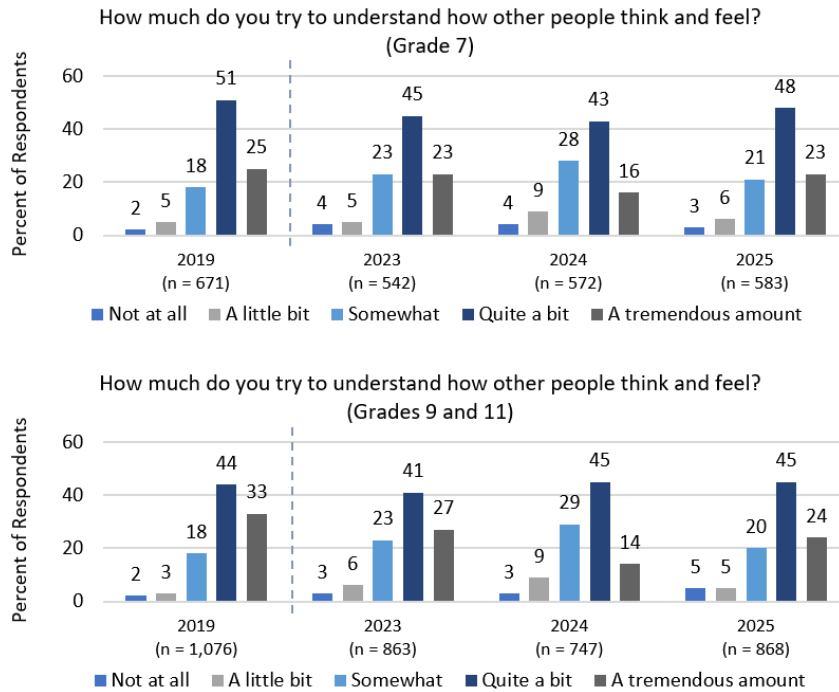
from students and encouraging them to continue to set goals and grow in these areas.

- On April 29th Squalicum boys' soccer played Meridian High School. During that match, a Meridian soccer player had severe calf cramps and went down to the ground. Two Squalicum players immediately came to the aid of the player and assisted him in stretching out to alleviate the cramp. This display of sportsmanship is exactly the outcome of we want to shape our athletes in being respectful and compassionate human beings. Picture below!



- Schools are engaged in compassionate efforts to serve their communities. For example, February is Kindness is Caring month at Wade King. One way the school celebrates the importance of kindness and caring is through a canned food drive, resulting in students collecting 750 lbs. of food for the Bellingham Food Bank. Silver beach does three different resource drives during the year; fall food, winter pet drive for Whatcom County Humane Society, and spring-hygiene drive. The school is also doing a Ridwell campaign for eliminating plastics in their community.
- Dehumanizing language lessons were created and implemented in classrooms across the district, addressing issues of bias and hate. TOSA Yana Mansfield created the lesson for secondary and Instructional Coach Kirsten Jensen modified the lesson for elementary. Director Velasquez Farmer, along with Mansfield, visited middle schools to introduce the lesson and prepare teachers for all-school rollouts. Frank Alvear, student equity and inclusion liaison and Nelly Reyes, multilingual specialist, translanguaged the lesson in Spanish for specific incidents.
- Our district has partnered with the Common Goodness Project to support safety and belonging for LGBTQ+ youth. This work includes professional development, technical assistance and general support. More information about the Project can be found at <https://www.commongoodnessproject.com/schools>
- District survey responses from students to the question “how much do you try to understand how other people think and feel” are trending positive over the past three years. Figure 19 displays the data on this question for middle and high school students from 2023 through the present.

Figure 19. Bellingham Students' Empathy Toward Others--Three-Year Trend



Honest and Ethical Individuals Who Act with Integrity

- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) coordinators have been researching the best practices for teaching students essential artificial intelligence (AI) literacies. Four lessons have been developed and will be piloted on the following topics: a) understanding how generative AI works, b) identifying potential opportunities and risks when using AI, c) demonstrating academic integrity and critical reflection when using AI and d) examining AI outputs for accuracy and bias.
- Bellingham High School Associated Student Body leaders made a promotional video about not showing up at the dances intoxicated. This effort came about through discussion about an issue with a student and alcohol at a previous dance.

Healthy, Active Individuals

- BPS high school environmental clubs from Bellingham, Sehome and Squalicum joined second graders at Geneva Elementary School to help plant their new rain garden on Earth Day 2024. Installed in fall 2023 by Northwest Rain Solutions, the rain garden is adjacent to the playground field and hardscape. The native plants and trees will serve as a natural filtration system before storm water runoff ends up in Lake Whatcom, the source of our community’s drinking water. The classrooms of Kaylee Nelson, Courtney Oostema and Julia Ritchey (second grade teachers) joined more than 20 high school students on the project. Thank you to the high school environmental club advisers Joe Balsiger, Izze Dulion and Erika Thorsen who brought students across town to join the work party. The BHS entourage even took a bus in honor of Earth Day! Special thanks to our facilities team who were onsite and

brought in the plants, to Climate Corps fellow Gagan Kaur and special projects manager Gretchen Pflueger who helped coordinate this memorable Earth Day planting project.

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2024/05/16/high-school-environmental-clubs-join-earth-day-planting-party/>

- Visions Treatment Center is a treatment facility in our community where we provide educational experiences for those students who are engaged in treatment. A focus on health, prevention and exercise is in place in collaboration with Options High School and taught by our teachers.
- On April 23, 2025, our physical education team held a middle school adventure run at Lake Padden Park. Over 300 runners from all four middle schools participated in a noncompetitive fun run. We continue to see the number of participants increase in all our middle school athletic programs as we promote being healthy and active individuals. Our middle school athletic programs are a “no cut” program (everyone who turns out, plays) as we encourage everyone to participate and be healthy and active.
- Whatcom Middle School PE teachers have partnered with special education staff to create a Unified PE class. This class is modeled on the unified sports program where, working together as partners, students help each other learn skills and participate in the PE curriculum as a team.
- The district is supporting our ongoing partnership with Vamos Outdoors Project with a new memorandum of understanding that included a data-sharing agreement and shared information with Vamos educators to support student learning/engagement during our Summer Literacy Program. District TOSAs Andrea Quigley, Yana Mansfield and Jessica Wallace co-facilitated training in partnership with Vamos educators to bridge instructional strategies and the establishment of safe learning spaces in collaboration with kids. For example, the training bridged community-building and classroom routines and expectations so our students can have similar experiences and expectations in the Vamos program setting to those they have in school. Vamos will be sharing data back to BPS this fall in support of our Latine students. Read more about Vamos at: <https://www.vamosoutdoorsproject.com/>
- Mountain School/Camp Kirby outdoor learning experiences. Last year, to provide an outdoor experience for the seven schools who were unable to attend Mountain School, we added a three-day, two-night trip to Camp Kirby, located on Samish Island. This experience proved to be of high value and offers a meaningful outdoor experience in addition to Mountain School at North Cascades Institute (NCI). As a result of the success of this new opportunity, we have integrated this into our regular program offerings; schools will be on a rotation so that every year about half the schools will attend Kirby while the other half attend NCI.

Critical Thinkers and Problem-Solvers

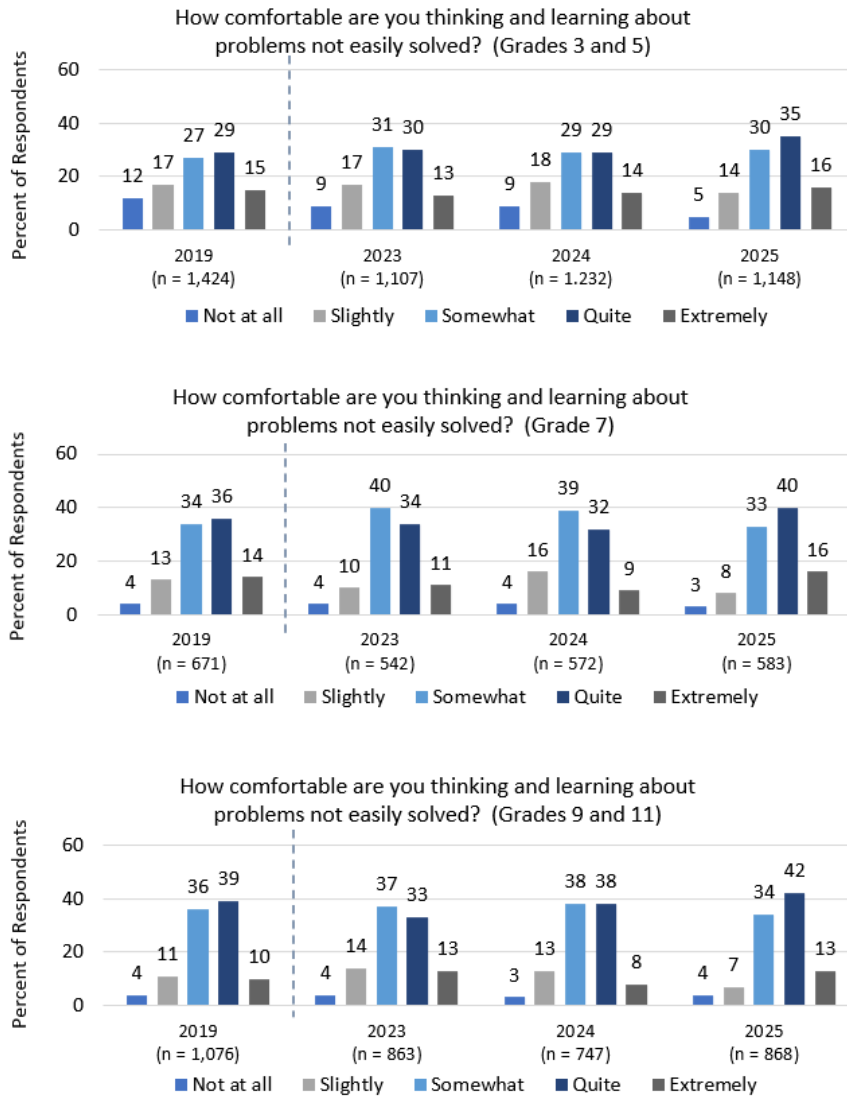
- Bellingham High Civics and AP Government classes partnered with the non-partisan League of Women Voters (LWV) to host a 42nd legislative district candidate forum on Wednesday, Oct. 9. In this active spirit, LWV representatives worked alongside the BHS students and their teacher, Jen Reidel, to author strong, detailed,

non-partisan questions about issues that matter to high school students and the greater Bellingham and Washington state communities. Topics for student-authored questions included: school funding, youth homelessness, the environment, mental health programs and services and gun violence in public spaces. “Being civically engaged is how we as Americans can enact the change we want to see,” senior Cadence Phelps said, before presenting her question to the candidates. Other presenting students reflected on the importance of community engagement to strengthen democracy and build a more inclusive society. To read more, go to:

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2024/10/22/local-candidate-forum-provides-authentic-civic-engagement-opportunity-for-bhs-students/>

- Shuksan Middle School has been focused on help students to ask better questions—ones that show they are not just trying to get the “right answer,” but to understand deeply and think critically. From science lab discussions to classroom debates on historical movements, they are demonstrating curiosity and courage. They are not just learning *what* to think, they are learning *how* to think. Principal Alli Chryst notes, “We know that kind of growth doesn’t happen by accident. It’s a result of the intentional work our staff have done—building classroom cultures where reflection, revision and risk-taking are normalized. It is because they hold high expectations *and* create support structures to help students rise to them.”
- Student responses on the district survey related to problem solving trended positively this year. Figure 20 charts responses from students to the question “how comfortable are you thinking and learning about problems not easily solved” over the past three years. Responses trended positive in all grade levels surveyed, including more students marking either “quite” or “extremely.”

Figure 20. Bellingham Students’ Comfort with Problem-solving Three-Year Trend



Effective Communicators

- Alderwood fourth grader meeting the outcome of an effective communicator: Noe wrote a persuasive letter to Principal Amy Berreth and the PTA, requesting soccer goals for our field. He included reasons such as children helping other kids learn to play soccer, along with examples of doing that at his previous school. He also wrote that big soccer goals would bring excitement for students in coming to school. Principal Berreth reports that, “at a recent PTA meeting, we discussed Noe's letter and brainstormed ways to make this happen. As we discussed the possibility, we thought of additional benefits of soccer goals, including contributing to the Alderwood community (they can use the fields when school is not in session). After talking with Director James Hayes about the right kind of goals and then figuring out how we could partner with PTA to provide funding from Alderwood, with

PTA providing two-thirds of the cost, we are now moving forward with this purchase. Children have the power to make change! Effective communication is powerful.”

- The Community Transitions (CT) relationships class focuses on building capacity and working transition goals through communication with the broader community. A big emphasis in CT is helping students with special needs to transition effectively to life as community members post-high school. Programs at CT regularly involve students in jobs out in local community businesses.
- Kulshan student L, with the help of her paraeducator, answers yes/no questions using a communication system that reads eye motion supported with our assistive technology efforts. L chose the words in a poem about her best friend, an assignment in Kulshan’s Hidden Voices unit, which focuses on the themes of empathy and empowerment. The unit had students participate in book clubs by reading and analyzing literature that explored diverse perspectives and real-world experiences. It also included poetry and photography, allowing students to express their thoughts and emotions creatively. The final project had students identify real life individuals whom they wanted to empower or show empathy toward. L's poem is about her best friend V who sits with her every day and has become a huge part of her life. The poem was worked on both by L and her paraeducator N. Together they selected a topic, picked out words and picked a voice (Snoop Dogg!) to record their poem.
- This year one of Parkview’s school-wide goals was to focus on more inclusive practices and creating a space where everyone felt a sense of belonging. To give a deeper meaning to saying that "We are all different, and we ALL belong," a group of students, with the support of Parkview’s Instructional Coach and Administrators, created a video highlighting school-wide social emotional learning vocabulary each month in all the languages of the student population. For example, in December 2024, Parkview students said how they say "Traditions and Celebrations" in their home language. Each time a different language was presented, a Parkview student who is hard of hearing signed the words in ASL. The inclusion of ASL allowed for everyone in the school to have a common language for traditions and celebrations emphasizing that while everyone is different, everyone belongs! Click to see the video: <https://bellingham.wistia.com/medias/2t2thazig2>

Innovators and Creators

- The Whatcom Middle School team has set up a “sensory room” to support students who need breaks for regulation, sensory needs and other needs throughout the day. A small team planned and implemented this intervention this year that has supported over 25 percent of our students. Students now have a safe, calm environment to take breaks as needed.
- Programs that support student learning through innovative partnerships continue to grow. The Aerospace Engineering CTE program at Options High School and the CTE Cosmetology Program at Squalicum High School are two examples providing evidence of innovation. The launch of our new electric vehicle course will occur in the fall of 2025, as noted earlier.

- Northern Heights fifth grade teaching team members Taraleen Wildly, Tawni Eisenhart and Staci Shrum have developed a unit of inquiry centered around the essential question “What can we make to clean up our oceans from plastics and other debris that are affecting our sea animal populations and undersea habitats in the Salish Sea?.” Through a CREST grant secured by Wildly, the team has been able to purchase curricular materials in support of students building remotely operated submersible vehicles (ROVs) to remove debris from aquatic environments. The ROVs are steered using motors and hydraulics and contain engineering elements in their designs. After rigorous testing and validation within collaborative teams, the students have packed up their ROVs for their final mission at Camp Kirby this May of 2025. They have been studying how long various materials remain intact in aquatic environments. Did you know that chewing gum takes between 100 and 200 years to biodegrade in an aquatic environment?
- Funded through support from philanthropic partner *Foundry 10*, our new district audiology van is now in use. Audiologist Geeta Sawh is now able to drive state of the art audiology equipment to the parking lot outside of schools, enabling students and families access to real-time opportunities for screening and testing. The investment in this van and the equipment it contains was the product of conversations between our Special Education department and *Foundry 10* sponsors.
- 2024-25 was the opening year of Early Learning Center (ELC) at the district office. The inaugural group of early learners has inhabited our ELC space this year. The student population has grown over the course of the 2024-25 school year. The school district was awarded a subcontract with our local Educational Service District (ESD) 189 to offer thirty Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) slots for students to be served in the center. ECEAP is a state program that provides early learning education to children from low-income families. ESD partners, including ECEAP program Director Maureen Hodge and her team, are onsite in our district office working alongside Early Childhood Assistant Director Debbie Haney and Assistant Superintendent Ari Feeney to recruit students and families to the program.
- The school-based health center housed at Options High School opened this year and this effort will serve students’ learning in multiple important ways and serves as an example of the innovative practices and approaches to serving the whole child that we continue to develop in our district.
- Sunnyland Elementary School held a “coding night” on March 12, 2025. Software coding instruction in various stations was well received by parents and students.

Well-rounded Community Members Engaged with the Broader World

- Options High Schools Weekly off-site community learning experiences in all AVID classes and Civics enrich the experiences of students and create engagement opportunities within the curriculum.
- In partnership with Family Engagement Liaison Jami Pittman, multilingual teacher Erin Sebby and Campus Monitor, Gerardo Cisneros and 20 Whatcom Middle School students were able to attend the Association of Washinton School Principals’

Regional La Chispa at LaVenture Middle School in November 2024. Students were able to identify their Chispa’s (English translation “sparks”) and realize implications for their future. They also said they hope to do more trips like this!

- Students from across Bellingham elementary schools learned the relationship between music and story while attending a live performance of “Peter and the Wolf” by the Bellingham Symphony Orchestra (BSO) at the Mount Baker Theatre on Thursday, February 27, 2005. Superintendent Greg Baker served as the guest narrator for the story. The concert was part of the BSO youth engagement educational concert series. The presentation was geared toward elementary students and offered the chance for students to witness their first-ever live orchestral concert. Read more about this event at: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2025/03/10/elementary-students-experience-bellingham-symphony-orchestras-peter-and-the-wolf-educational-concert-with-bps-student-staff-among-the-performers/>
- Students across the four high schools are engaged in ninety-four clubs or activities this year. This marker of student engagement with each other in settings where they are not “required” to attend speaks volumes about being well-rounded and engaged and we believe is reflective of students’ interest in being part of the broader world. Figure 21 captures the list of 2024-25 high school clubs and activities:

Figure 21. BPS High School Student Clubs and Activities for 2024-25

Aerospace	Construction	Irish Club	Role Playing Game
Animanga	Cooking Club	Juggling Club	Rotary Interact
Anime	Costume, Hair, Makeup	Key Club	Rugby
AP Physics	Creative Writing	La Chispa	Science Olympiad Team
Archaeology Club	Crochet for Community	Lacrosse	Spanish
Art Club	Culinary Club	Latinos in Action	Speech & Debate
Asian Pacific Islander Student Association	Debate	Latinx Club	Sports Medicine
ASL Club	DECA	Lemon Club	Stage Production
Aviation club	DESI	LINK Crew	Stitching Club
Badminton	DIA	Math Team	Storm Soldiers
Band	Drama	Mentors	T.E.C.
Bible Club	Dungeons & Dragons	Multicultural	Teacher Appreciation
Black Student Union	Engineering	Multiracial	Teen Court
Book Club	Environmental Club	National Hispanic Honor Society	Tri-M Music Honor Society
Broadcast Club	FBLA	National Honor Society	Ultimate Frisbee
Ceramics	FCCLA	Native American SU	Video Game Design and E-Sports
Chess Club	Film Making	Newspaper	Volunteer Club
Choir	French	Orchestra	Yearbook
Choreography Club	Futbol Mundial	Peer Centered Outreach	Young Multiracial Society
Clef Club	German	Philosophy	
Club de Lectura	Girl Up	Poetry Club	
Color Guard	GSA	Pottery Club	
Compost Club	Herencia Latinas Dance	QSA	
Computational Linguistics	Hispanic Latinx	Racquet Sports	
	Heritage	Robotics/Engineering	
	HOSA		

IV. Summary Concluding Statement and A Look Ahead

We believe that this Bellingham Promise Ends 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 monitoring report, in combination with the ongoing exploration of outcomes that occurred during board meetings, school visits and linkages this year, serves as evidence of a reasonable interpretation of these Ends and is supported by data that demonstrates progress toward achievement of these Ends. We hope this data set captured in stories, numbers, quotes and pictures from across the system do provide the school board with an adequate sense of the scope of our work as a school system. It is always difficult to parse what gets included in this final annual report and keep it to a digestible length! Further, we hope this report serves as a useful tool in support of the school board's ability to regularly review our *Promise Ends* to ensure they remain relevant and inspire meaningful work throughout the organization and community.