

BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
Bellingham, Washington

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

DATE: May 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Ends 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 Monitoring Report 2023-24

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 seventeen identified outcomes in The Bellingham Promise.

This year's report follows a similar format from prior years, combining qualitative and quantitative sources and adding numerous bulleted examples gathered from across elementary, middle and high schools. In some cases, we include links to original sources, 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 continue to welcome feedback on the structure of this report.

The report details evidence on Ends 1.0, Ends 2.0 and Ends 3.0 (included below) organized into four sections. Section 1 reports on progress toward the mission and vision of *The Bellingham Promise*. We highlight the work at one of our elementary schools to improve inclusionary instructional strategies exemplifying the collective commitment to reach and teach every child, as well as examining the ultimate evidence of system success, our graduation rates. Section 2 includes data and analysis focused on the Knowledge outcomes from *The Promise*. We have made an effort to include examples from across our schools to highlight the breadth of our work. Section 3 focuses on data capturing examples from our students' experience with each of the Character and Action outcomes and incorporates recent findings from our spring 2024 survey of students. Section 4 closes with a summary reflection. By way of reminder, here is the language of the Ends 1, 2 and 3 policy:

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. This year, we have observed students pursuing their passions in many ways, from Promise K classrooms during periods of play, all the way through senior high school academics, clubs and extracurricular activities. Our school board visits to schools this year have included exchanges with students in a Bellingham High School (BHS) Career Technical Education (CTE) classroom, where learning how to build and program robots had kids on fire, followed by a conversation down another wing in the school in a sports medicine classroom where we heard students' pride in the way they've learned to help support other students' healing from sports injuries. We heard from student leaders at Geneva Elementary School engaged in various jobs that serve their school and fellow students; students in the Squalicum High School multicultural clubs and student associations impressed us with their well-articulated hopes and dreams for their school and for their collective futures; The Whatcom Middle School Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) club

participants courageously helped us to see how their very identities are strengthened and supported through club conversations and friendships in the context of a comprehensive middle school. In presentations, exhibitions, games, competitions, concerts and performances, we have observed our students' passions developing around a diverse array of interests in music, art, drama, athletics, technology, culture, history, science and other fields.

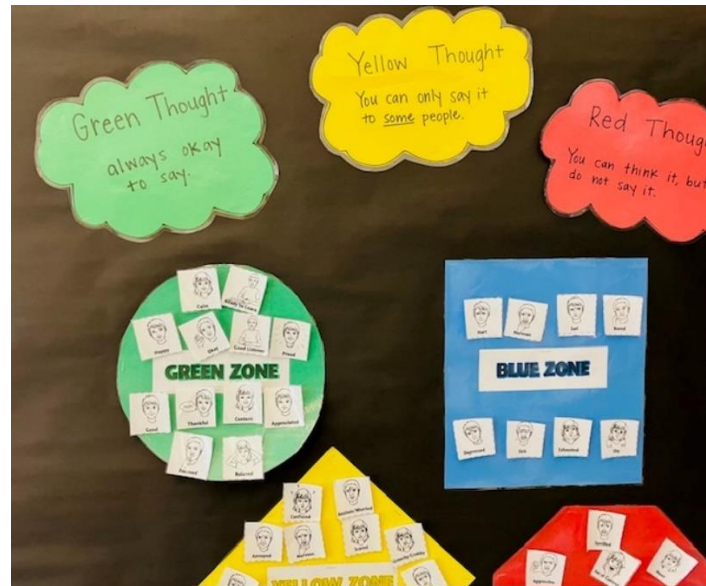
Our district-wide work on inclusion and belonging for all students, detailed in an earlier board report this year, exemplifies the heart of our district mission that “all will be exceptional in their own way.” Inclusionary instructional strategies designed to recognize, value and build on strengths that each student brings into the classroom are core to this effort. To provide one small window into the kinds of changes involved in the work of increasing inclusion and belonging, we take a deeper look into the experiences at one school, in this case our smallest elementary school, Columbia, and how their work on inclusion exemplifies our vision and mission and work on one of our 17 Promise outcomes – effective communicators.

For several years, the Columbia team has been working hard to learn more about what it means to be an inclusive school. This means evaluating teaching practices and making shifts that lead to more equitable outcomes. With a lens for inclusion, the Columbia community has broadened ideas of what it means to be an effective communicator and has taken steps to help all staff and students learn that communication has different forms, and how tools of various kinds enrich the experience in classrooms for all students. These tools, as the following paragraphs detail, include core boards, social/emotional communication and differentiation strategies for increased access to learning.

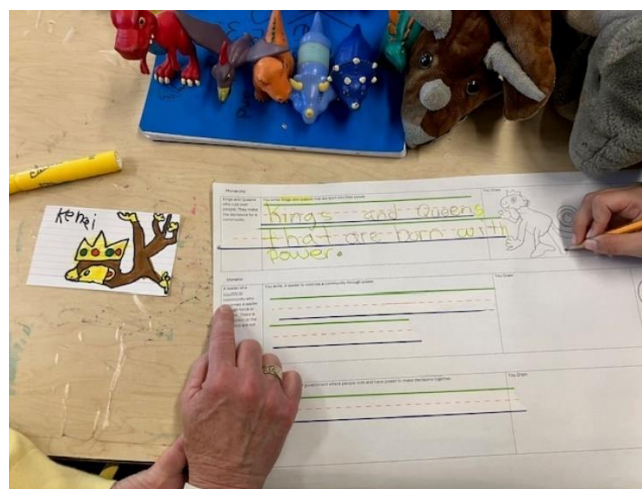
A core board is a tool that allows verbal and non-verbal students a way to communicate thoughts, feelings and needs. The core board includes symbols and single words that can be used alone or in combination to communicate for a range of purposes. Students will point, touch or eye gaze at these symbols to communicate. To create greater belonging, Columbia has embraced the idea of teaching all students how to use a core board. They have seen partnerships and friendships develop that would have never been possible in previous years.



Inclusive communication also means explicitly teaching pro-social thoughts. Columbia has focused explicitly on teaching regulation strategies to all. Columbia teachers have gone beyond the core curriculum to include social and emotional lessons that provide concrete visual representation to understand thoughts we say and thoughts we keep inside. This is helping all students in the Columbia community develop positive social skills to create lasting friendships.



As do all our schools, Columbia has students whose access to learning in a general education setting has been limited due to the complexity of their academic needs. Teachers are learning how to differentiate to create more access points for all students. This allows them to be in a classroom, with their peers and learning the same grade level concepts. This means intentionally designing activities where students can communicate through pictures, modified writing or use of writing tools.



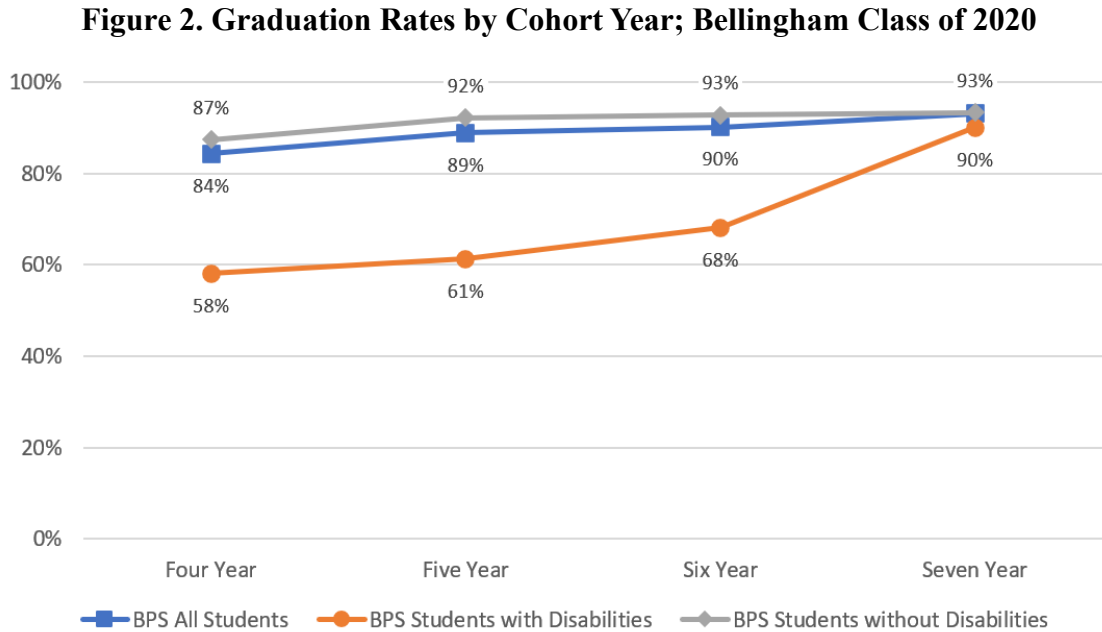
This one small example at Columbia Elementary provides a snapshot of how staff and students are engaged every day in improving opportunities for learning and using communication skills in service of preparing children for the widest range of educational and vocational options to support a diversity of life choices. As a school district we have embraced the staffing challenges and the task of figuring out how to sustain this work, even through a period of declining budgetary resources. This is intense work for staff and involves changing systems and reimagining teaching practices. We believe in our teachers and their abilities; in exploring and learning instructional strategies for greater inclusion in elementary, middle and high schools, we see examples all over the system where teachers are learning new ways to provide support (emotional, behavioral and academic) to students with disabilities and are observing strong and supportive peer interactions.

On a broader scale, another means for measuring how well we are doing in fulfilling *The Promise* vision and mission is to track our rates of graduation; students' successful graduation from our schools, ready for what comes next, is an important marker. Figure 1 shows graduation trend data for four student subgroups that we track over time. This past year our five-year graduation rate for Hispanic/Latinx students bumped back up to 84 percent and our four-year rate

Figure 1. Extended Graduation Rates for Bellingham Students



for multilingual learners returned to a high of 67 percent. The graduation rate for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) once again hit 90 percent by year seven. Seventh year of high school graduation rates are above the state, and the gap in graduation rates between students without disabilities and those with disabilities narrows to 3percent by that seventh year of high school. Figure 2 displays the district/state comparison by cohort year.



We remain committed to the vision and mission of The Promise ensuring that all the children we serve 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. Specific efforts to support the learning of all students are alive and well with our work on inclusion across P-12, and in the evidence that tracks graduation success over time.

II. Ends 2.0: Knowledge Outcomes

Ends 2.0 focuses on seven outcomes centered on achievement and growth. Below 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 below highlight specific people and places across our entire system of schools, and in a few cases link to further details.

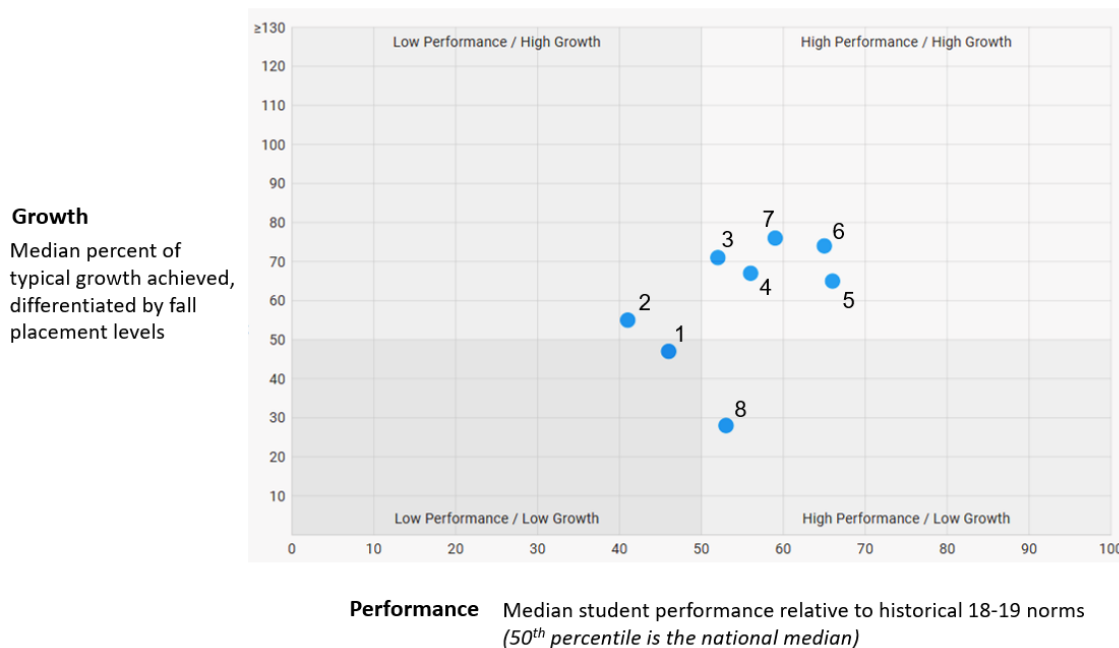
Readers and Writers

- Early grades classrooms continued the implementation of *Really Great Reading* as our K-2 adoption and added a literacy component, *Morpheme Magic*, to support foundational skills in grades 3-5. We also expanded our decodable reading texts for students in grades K-3.
- Bellingham’s percentage of students meeting standard on the state Smarter Balance Continued implementation of common K-8 i-Ready reading assessments and MyPath curricular supplement. Student usage of the resource has expanded, and we will continue the partnership with i-Ready in subsequent years. Figure 3 shows the student growth by grade level for 2023-24 fall to winter assessments. Six of the eight grade levels scored

above the median in growth and six of eight were above the median in performance.

Figure 3. Bellingham Grade Level Growth on i-Ready Assessments in Reading

2023-24 Reading - District's Student Growth on i-Ready From Fall to Winter
Comparison of Median Student Performance and Median Percent of Typical Growth by Grade Levels



- Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) in grades 3-5 improved slightly from 2022 to 2023 to 47 percent meeting standard overall. The percentage of Bellingham students meeting standard in grades 6-8 also improved to 52 percent. High school scores dropped slightly in ELA. All grade levels are still below pre-pandemic levels.
- Fairhaven Middle School (FMS) students Julia Wolgamot, Eliza Nelson-King, Jonna Gilham, Kera Lam, Mildred Nims and Iona Reimer-Varga all were recognized and published in a “Forest of Words” poetry contest. Their published work will be distributed to all libraries in the county. Also on April 24th, many FMS students and families attended and participated in the annual “Fairhaven Reads” event where students discussed and reflected on the book “The Labors of Hercules Beal” by Gary D Schmidt. This was competed with a strong partnership with Village Books in downtown Fairhaven.
- Bedtime with Books is a school community event hosted by some of our elementary schools. This year, Sunnyland and Roosevelt Elementary School hosted families to come to school in the evening in their "cozy clothes" to listen to stories read aloud. Readers are a variety of staff members/PTA parents/community members (and sometimes students). Literacy specialist and district literacy TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment), Melissa Peterson, shared that teachers often send books home with students at the conclusion of the event. At Roosevelt, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) purchased books for students to take home. Sunnyland incorporated a book swap (bring a book, take a book) in addition to new books recently donated to the library.

Scientists and Mathematicians

- Data from the 2023 state SBA assessment revealed that 41 percent of Bellingham students met standard in math, a 2 percent increase overall from 2022. While a modest gain, this was a welcome post-pandemic improvement in math scores. Our students' assessment scores placed us above the state, with slightly better year-over-year performance than average, and about in the middle of the group of comparable districts.
- Bellingham student growth in grades 4-8 math, as measured by SBA scores, was well above the median. Bellingham students' growth percentile ranked at the high end of a spectrum of thirty-eight comparable districts. Math test scores still lag 2019 levels, but this was another hopeful sign that test scores are starting to improve post-pandemic.
- We have expanded the availability of *i-Ready* math instruction, including the self-directed *My Path* toolkit, to the middle level. In addition, Director Tom Gresham has done a comprehensive inquiry into mathematics instruction at elementary schools, interviewing over forty teachers and principals and observing math instruction across this level. Findings from the work will be essential for development of a five-to-seven-year plan for math learning in our elementary schools.
- To develop math skills and readiness, our middle school program prioritizes Math 8 for most students prior to heading into high school, and most students take the "on grade level" course. We also recognize that some students may be interested in and motivated to take Compacted Math 8/Algebra 1 in eighth grade, which is a class that earns high school credit. To support these students, the Online Bridge to Compacted 8/Algebra 1 class is available during the second semester. This online course is optional and independent, and students take it in addition to their current math course. Students who successfully complete Online Bridge to Compacted 8/Algebra 1 will be eligible to take Compacted Math 8/Algebra 1 in eighth grade. 117 students across the middle schools successfully completed this Bridge course this spring.
- In fall 2023, elementary special education teachers began implementing *Connecting Math Concepts*, a print and digital curriculum resource designed to support students in building procedural and conceptual understanding in mathematics. Elementary special education teachers report that the materials are effective in supporting student growth in mathematics and appreciate this added instructional toolkit as they prepare specially designed instruction for students who receive special education services in math.
- High School Construction Academy students applied skills and knowledge from their program to design and build large garden sheds for schools throughout the district.
- Data from the spring 2023 state SBA revealed that Bellingham students scored at approximately 53 percent proficient overall in science, a 2 percent increase overall from 2022. This was welcome news to see science scores trending up, and back to within about 4 percent of where our student's scored pre-pandemic in 2019. Our students' assessment scores for science in 2023 placed us well above the state average, with slightly better year-over-year performance than average and in the top third of the group of comparable districts.
- Work is happening to enhance outdoor learning experiences for students in elementary schools. For example, recent efforts to develop mini-lessons and professional development to integrate the salmon release experience with expanding outdoor learning, *Next Generation Science Standards* (NGSS) and *Since Time Immemorial* (STI) standards was supported with a \$36,000 Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) outdoor learning grant.

- Mountain school experience for fifth graders usually conducted in partnership with North Cascades Institute (NCI) was truncated this year due to the impacts of a wildfire closure in the fall of 2023. NCI accommodated seven of our elementary schools with a three-day, two-night experience this spring. To provide an outdoor experience for the other seven schools, we added a three-day, two-night trip to Camp Kirby, located on Samish Island. This experience is of high value and offers a meaningful outdoor experience in addition to NCI. The focus for the Camp Kirby experience centers on marine wildlife and beach habitat.
- Sustainability, science and *Since Time Immemorial* (STI) instructional resources came together with an outdoor learning grant funding from OSPI to develop innovative curriculum resources and professional learning. Working with first grade teachers, Lummi and Nooksack storytellers joined with RE Sources staff in creating a unit that includes the STI Storytelling pathway, Salmon in the Classroom connections and opportunities for local stream stewardship. All elementary schools and Bellingham Family Partnership Program participated in raising and releasing 350 chum salmon.

Historians and Global Thinkers

- Work on common units of inquiry continues in elementary schools. Units blend history, social studies, writing, reading and research skills. Instructional coaches working in collaboration led the development of new units of inquiry at various grade levels in the elementary program this year. Examples include:
 - *STI and Treaty Day (4th Grade)*: Unit goals call for students to be able to define tribal sovereignty and describe why we commemorate Treaty Day, including learning about the significance of treaties in our communities and their importance today.
 - *Our Skin - Race and Anti-Racism (Kindergarten)*: Unit goals celebrate student identities and the diversity in our communities and the world. Kindergarten students will be learning about skin tone, melanin, genetics and heritage. This lesson also supports common core curriculum standards such as “comparing and contrasting the experiences of characters” and “talking about myself and some of my identities.”
- Bellingham’s students once again engaged by invitation with the *Children of the Setting Sun Productions* film festival at Mount Baker Theater.
- Supported district-wide use of STI resources was the focus of a community celebration at Whatcom Community College on April 24, 2024, that celebrated the use of the curricular resources and honored the family of Senator John McCoy, the original sponsor of this curricular resource. The celebration attended by approximately three hundred people from Bellingham and across the region, featured student speakers, tribal speakers and musicians and displayed work from students in Bellingham schools, along with various community providers and artisans including Lummi and Nooksack native artists.
- Roosevelt Elementary completed both the development and teaching of every IB Unit in their Program of Inquiry. Through this work, both students and classroom teacher had in depth learning of the STI curriculum. These curriculum standards are foundational in specific units and woven through parts of other units of inquiry. For example, in second grade work on the central idea, “Understanding perspectives can create connections over time,” students are learning about the history of our local community starting with knowing

the history of our local Indigenous people and developing a timeline of the history of Whatcom County to present day.

- Sunnyland Elementary's first graders completed a knowledge unit on ancient civilizations that included efforts to connect the structures and systems of the ancient world with the things we have locally. Principal Dustin Heaton reported it was, "Amazing to see the young learners explain the connections."

Artists and Performers

- High school groups and middle school groups engaged in a multitude of community performances of various kinds. These included large and small group festivals, public music performances, senior center performances in the winter and tours to the feeder elementary schools.
- More than 30 student musicians from high schools competed in the annual WIAA/WMEA Solo and Ensemble Contest in Ellensburg, Washington. State-level soloists and ensembles from Bellingham High School included: Aliya Otto, clarinet; Genevieve Blum, viola; Blum and Ami Purdue in the Martinu Duet, small string ensemble; Oliver Strand, tenor; and Jenna LaMont, soprano. From Sehome High School, state soloists and ensembles included: Sehome Chamber Orchestra, large string ensemble; Zander Tran, cello; Kaden Schmidt, string bass; Maria Horja, piano; and Lucy Naiman, harp; Erin Lin, oboe; The O'Bows, small woodwinds ensemble; and TBD (To Beat Drum), a small percussion ensemble. Squalicum High School musicians competing at state included: Rowan Lorio, bass clarinet; Will Volle, multiple percussion; SQHS Shock Factor, large percussion ensemble; Antonio Malpica, tenor; Hannah Milnes, alto; Mel King, soprano; and The Chamber Sisters, small vocal ensemble.
- Collaborative shows and performances that involved high school music, art and drama students this year included *Puffs* (BHS), *The Sound of Music* (BHS); *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* (SHS), *Wind in the Willows* (SHS-upcoming this spring), *Guys and Dolls* (SQHS) and *A Series of One Act Plays* (SQHS – upcoming this spring). Sehome's upcoming musical production of *Wind in the Willows* will feature the first-ever "relaxed performance." All patrons are welcome to enjoy the show in the way that is most comfortable for them. Principal Sonia Cole reports the show will be, "Perfect for our youngest audience members, those looking for a more casual experience, and individuals with sensitivity concerns or disabilities. For more information, go to <https://www.sehomedrama.com/content>. It is a pretty cool option for families and adults with disabilities!"
- When the 5th grade strings program was redesigned in 2015, it was with the intent to have it available to all students in keeping with the Bellingham Public Schools [Project Free Education](#) philosophy. The program continued into a ninth year in 2023-24, and every student receives a trimester or semester of strings, typically twice a week, along with their regular music curriculum. The school district provides instruments for students with broad support from private donors and local businesses who have stepped up to help to the tune of \$40,000 to enable instrument purchases, including one anonymous donor contributing \$20,000 through the Whatcom Community Foundation. Generous nonprofit supporters include the Bellingham Symphony Orchestra, Bellingham Festival of Music and PTA organizations for another \$27,000. Read more here:

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/09/27/project-free-education-5th-grade-strings/>

- Cross district concerts by middle school musicians included north/central schools in collaborative band and orchestra concerts, each with close to 200 musicians performing and cross-district MS choir club concerts.
- Artwork created by students from across our schools is on display on many walls at the district office as the new building opened.
- Wade King Elementary School music teacher, Angela Mazur, developed a before school choir opportunity for our students. They meet two days a week before school. This year, the Wade King choir has performed at the Veterans Day Assembly, MLK Jr. Assembly and sang in traditions from various cultures at the school's December Sing-along. The group also performed as a part of the San Juan Music Educators Association (SJMEA) Honor Choir and at a Sehome HS baseball game. Additionally, they auditioned (along with 140 other schools) to sing the National Anthem at the Mariner's Game in Seattle, was selected and will perform on May 10th at T-Mobile Park in Seattle.
- Promise kindergarteners and kindergartners participated in a three-week pottery focused arts integration, in which they created pinch pots revising their shapes and glazing choices over time, with the help of district TOSA, Andrea Quigley, who is also a potter in her spare time. Schools involved this year include Wade King, Columbia and Happy Valley. Students learn how clay changes over time, how a kiln fires, using underglazes and glazes as well as the steps to make a pot. Some students displayed their finished pieces in the May 2024 Children's Art Walk.
- During August of 2023, 40 music educators from around our region participated in a week of learning facilitated by WWU professor Patty Bourne, hosted at Parkview Elementary School on [World Music Drumming](https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/09/11/music-educators-learn-world-music-drumming-through-summer-workshop-experience/). This drumming curriculum focuses on student-centered music-making, social-emotional learning with strategies to include all students in the process. It is based on historical, social and theoretical principles of West African, Latin and Caribbean drumming and song. Training will assist Bellingham music teachers in making even better use of the class sets of drums provided in the elementary music program. Read more here: <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/09/11/music-educators-learn-world-music-drumming-through-summer-workshop-experience/>
- Lowell Elementary School second graders learned about operas and performed an operetta, written by music teacher, Gail Ridenour, for the community.

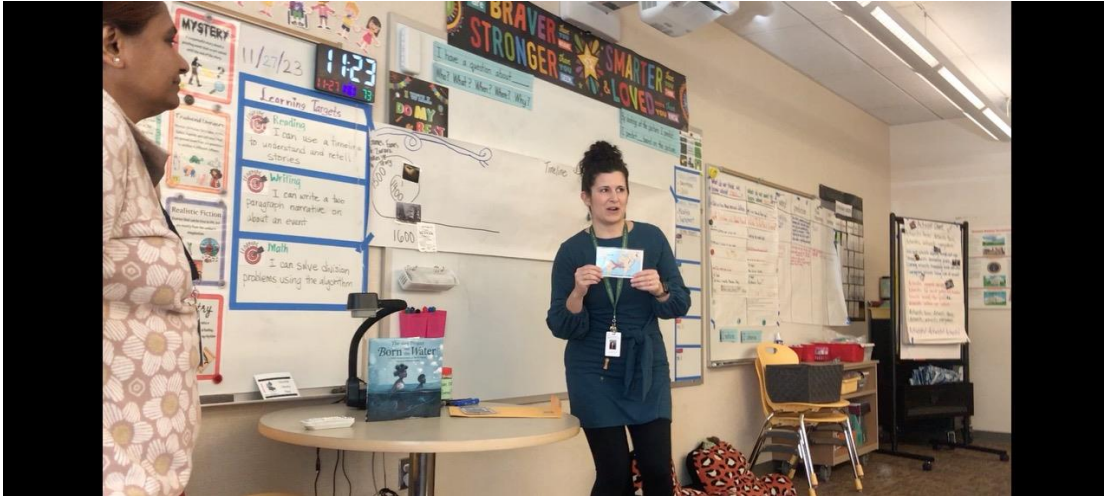
Artisans and Technicians

- Congratulations to Sora Dionne and Rylan Beal who represented Bellingham High School at the International Bridge Competition at Kent State University in Ohio on Saturday, April 27th. For the first time ever, Bellingham celebrated an International Champion with Sora placing first overall; Rylan also placed second overall. Sora also brought home the Architectural Award recognizing both design and craftsmanship. Sora's bridge carried 4800 times its weight and Rylan's carried 4717 times its weight. Both Bellingham bridge builders' results were far above their competition.
- The Sehome art department students displayed their ceramics artwork at Good Earth Pottery in Fairhaven and in the Jensen Art Center in Lynden.
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and pathways in robotics, aerospace and manufacturing classes at Bellingham, Options, Squaticum and Sehome high schools and

STEM classes at middle schools are growing and thriving. Work-based learning expansion included students placed in the transportation shop, who are gaining experience with bus/vehicle maintenance issues and the district print shop where print shop operator, Victoria Hendricks, supports students learning aspects of the printing trade.

Multilingual Readers and Speakers

- Squalicum High School student-led club, *Latinos in Action* led an assembly at every high school during Hispanic Heritage Month for the first time in our school system's history.
- Whatcom Middle School's (WMS) multilingual learner (ML) population has grown to approximately 10 percent of the student body, and this is prompting shifts in teaching practice and student learning. Led by ML teacher, Erin Sebby, Whatcom has done an amazing job of welcoming ML newcomers, running English Language Development (ELD) classes, and co-teaching/supporting ML students throughout the day. All WMS teachers have attended professional learning around Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies that Erin and other ML staff have led to gain new skills to develop students' reading, writing and speaking skills. Students are accessing their learning in both English and their home languages as appropriate for their learning. WMS plans to continue this journey next year to ensure all teachers continue to grow in their knowledge and use of SIOP strategies.
- At Cordata Elementary School over a third of students are multilingual learners. As the school welcomes frequent English-language newcomer students to the school, they are working hard to make strategic moves to support inclusive and engaging classrooms. This year the Cordata team developed a collaborative approach to supporting students who have just entered our country and school and are acquiring English language. This has involved hosting ongoing newcomer groups facilitated by multilingual paraprofessional Kanwaljit Gill during the school's intervention blocks at each grade level. This accomplishes two goals by giving students a chance to grow language peer relationships/learning and engaging in this at a time of the day that does not exclude them from core academic instruction.
 - Cordata's multilingual teachers are also engaged in co-planning and co-teaching with general education teachers so that curriculum, instruction and assessment approaches are responsive to our multilingual learners. Finally, the school has also been strategic about matching multilingual staff with multilingual students. This means that throughout their day students are frequently able to communicate with teachers in their home language as they are learning. Within the classroom strategic partnering with language peers is a common practice which has led to greater inclusivity, belonging, engagement and joy. Below is a photo of ML specialist Sarah Ferris and fifth grade teacher, Ruwani Brohier.



- Ruwani Brohier (who, incidentally, was recognized with the district's Promise Award for great teaching this year!) attended the six-day Guided Language Acquisition Instruction (GLAD) training offered in November 2023. Sarah Ferris, and instructional coach Michelle Hornof joined Ruwani for side-by-side coaching and co-planning. Through ongoing collaboration integrating and creating GLAD strategies into units of study this year positive effects in classroom culture and student engagement were observed.
- To support a different approach to teaching world language model, a team of Roosevelt Elementary School staff built a mini dual language model that integrates Spanish into the International Baccalaureate (IB) Units of Inquiry. Through co-learning and collaboration, grade-level teams co-teach language lessons to students in the classroom. Both teachers and students are language learners together and inquire into the science and social studies content through both Spanish and English language. This mini dual language model has led to high engagement and retainment of language, and we are seeing evidence of students transferring new language vocabulary across contents and pursuing more language learning outside of school. This work has also elevated the status of Roosevelt's first language Spanish speakers in the classroom where they become the experts in the language.
- As part of Principal Micah Smith's entry plan work at Birchwood Elementary School, staff identified areas of inequitable outcomes and are using that to explore access for families and students. Birchwood's inquiry began with an exploration of reading data and is spreading that out to leadership/job opportunities, attendance and planned for classroom-based measurements next year.
- Fifty-two students have qualified for the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy so far this school year. The Seal of Biliteracy was established to recognize public high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more world languages in addition to English. Students receive a medal and a notation on their high school diploma and high school transcript indicating that they have earned the seal.

Skilled Users of Technology and Information

- Student sound technicians engaged in CTE classes are supporting performances in our high schools; other CTE classes involve designing with architects and learning how to plan functional spaces.
- High school students ran the 2023 graduation technology that included streaming graduation ceremonies on YouTube so that families and relatives far from Bellingham could experience graduation along with those present for the ceremonies at Civic Field.
- Alderwood Elementary School second-grade classes have partnered with Western Washington University's Instructional Technology department. Phase 1 includes a Tech Club offered free of charge after school for Alderwood students, where they learn how to use technology tools and toys in innovative ways. Phase 2 includes Paula Dagnon, professor of instructional technology at Western, teaching one of her courses (an Instructional Technology for education course) in Alderwood's second-grade classrooms one day a week during the school day. The idea was to leverage learning that kids were doing in the fall Tech Club and bring it into the classroom. Her students came one day a week and helped our students to use a program called *Book Creator* to write nonfiction books and coding along with *Maky Maky* invention kits to write poetry. This works is incorporated into Alderwood's second grade IB unit "How We Express Ourselves."

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

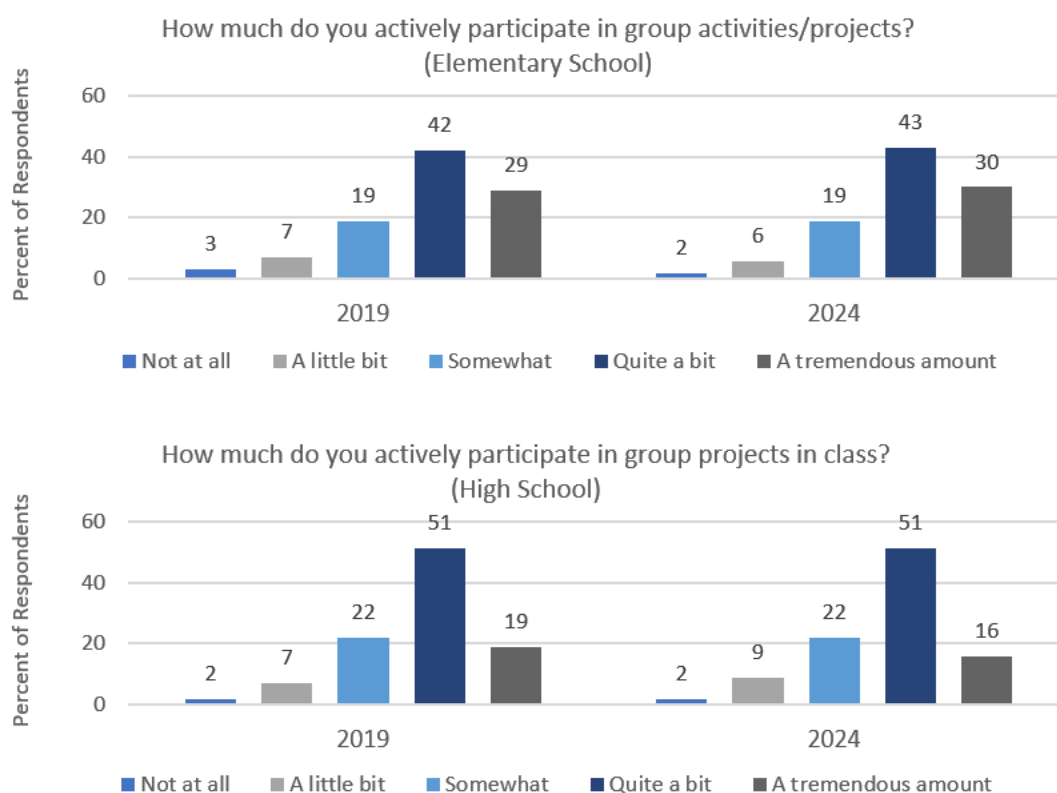
- As we heard during a school board visit to Squilicum High School, student union affinity and leadership groups were highly engaged in planning events, learning opportunities and assemblies, including:
 - *Latinos in Action* student-led assemblies at every high school this year, Hispanic Heritage night (over 600 attended), multicultural assembly, multicultural evening, fundraiser, Birchwood tutoring and a hygiene drive.
 - *Latinos in Action* club won a Gold Award at the *Latinos in Action* state conference.
 - Students at SQHS started a Native American Student Union (NASU).
 - SQHS Leadership class planned assemblies, heritage months, spirit weeks and a schoolwide kindness initiative.
 - Video Productions student leaders created Instagram posts for communication, and broadcast "Eye of the Storm" news.
 - Health Alliance club planned presentations teaching healthy relationships with substances at middle schools.
- Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) sponsors the Just Play Fair! recognition to promote sportsmanship. Every year, activities/athletics coordinators recognize two student-athletes from respective schools for the award. This year's winners in Bellingham Public Schools are: Chayse Flick-Williams (volleyball/track and field) and Kaleb Payne (cheer/cross country/track and field) from Bellingham High School; Marcella Leita (cross country/track and field) and Kieran Roxas (unified basketball/boys

swimming/unified soccer) from Sehome High School; and Caitlyn Richardson (basketball) and Colby Lewis (football) from Squalicum High School. Read more at:

<https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/12/11/six-bps-student-athletes-recognized-with-wiaa-sportsmanship-awards/>

- Bellingham High School plans to add a *Latinos in Action* class to their schedule next year and have enough students registered to offer two sections of Leadership class. The school will offer 90 seats in classes whose sole purpose is to develop leaders through courses in LINK Crew, Leadership and *Latinos in Action*.
- Middle school students from three of the four schools participated in the 2023-24 Association of Washington School Principals' leadership camp.
- Geneva Elementary highlighted their student leadership jobs program during a school board visit this year; student leaders spoke about their job responsibilities, their school and led tours into classrooms.
- Annual student survey results this spring on questions gauging students' levels of active participation in group activities or projects remained about on par with pre-pandemic 2019, with a slight uptick in elementary school data (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Bellingham Students Participation in Group Activities or Projects

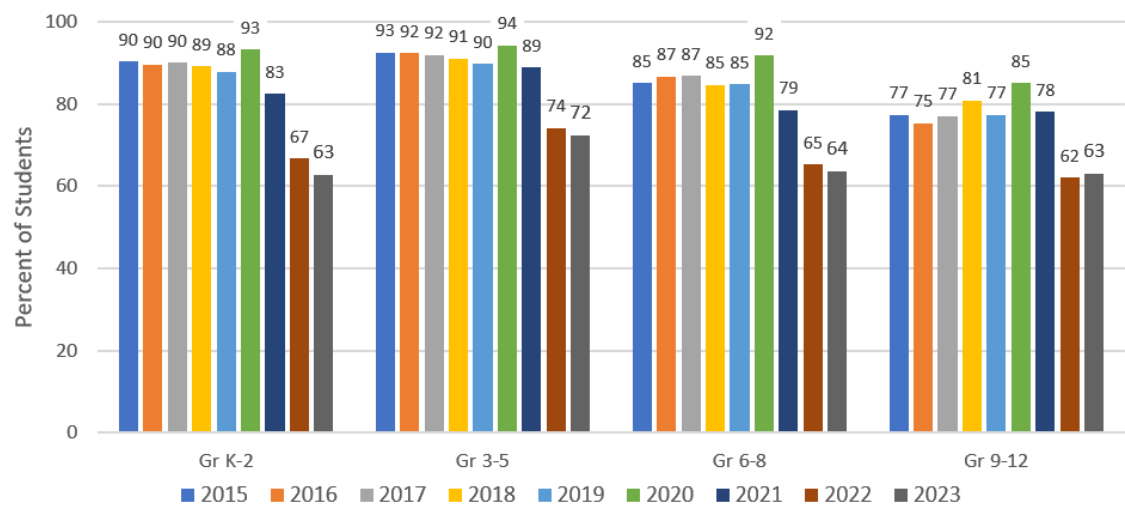


Dependable and Responsible People

- One of the measures we track that is highly focused on developing dependable and responsible people is school attendance. We reported last year 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

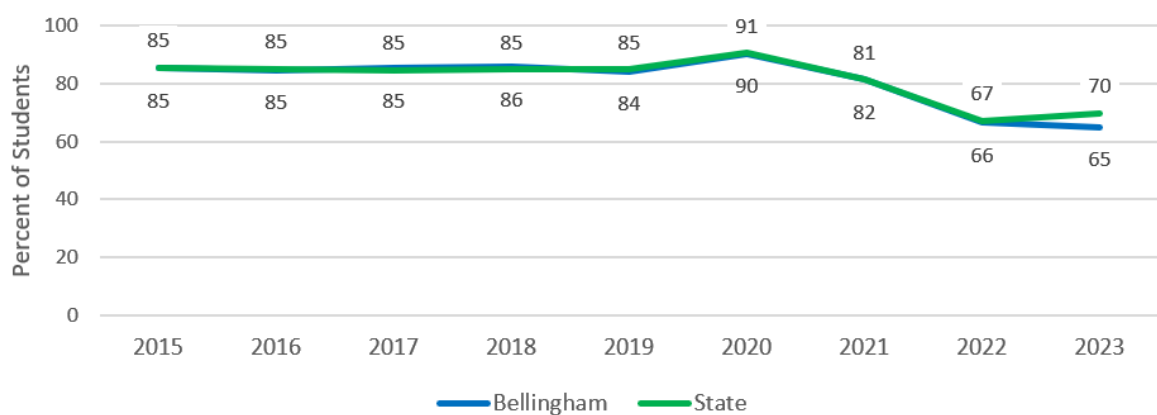
two absences a month, declined significantly in all grade levels. Unfortunately, that trend has continued into the 2023-24 school year in grades K-8, with a slight improvement in high school. Figure 5 provides a visual representation of attendance rates over time.

Figure 5. Percent of Bellingham Students with Regular Attendance



We also noted that attendance trends for Bellingham students did not reflect the same uptick seen in the overall state average (see Figure 6). We are encouraging schools to dig into their attendance data to learn more about what factors may be contributing to these trends.

Figure 6. Percent of Students with Regular Attendance for All Grades Bellingham and Washington State



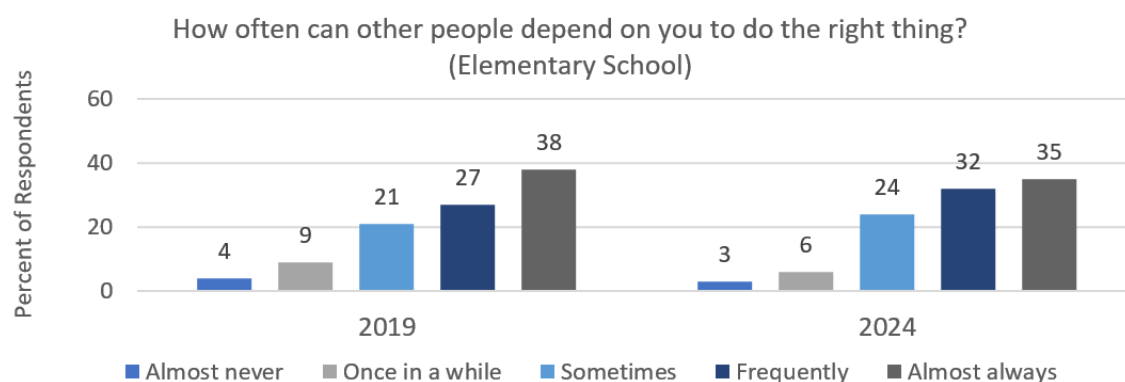
Attendance matters for learning, and we expect these percentages to rise quickly over the next couple of years.

- Our students are participating in Work-Based Learning (WBL) which is a state program designed to introduce high schoolers to various kinds of careers. Career exploration can come in different forms, including the class itself, a guest speaker from a particular profession visiting a class, a field trip to a local employer, job shadowing or even an internship or apprenticeship, either paid or unpaid. Students can also gain experience

through school-based experiences, such as working in their school store or at a sporting event through the sports medicine practicum associated with the CTE Sports Medicine class. WBL teaches valuable 21st-century skills for future employment and post-high school education paths such as working in a team, developing attention-to-detail skills, managing time and following directions, skills employers value in their employees. On-the-job experience is one of the best ways for young workers to learn dependability and responsibility.

- Annual elementary school student survey results this spring included questions about dependability and responsibility and revealed a higher percentage of students scored themselves in the top three categories as compared with data 2019. See comparison chart embedded as Figure 7.

Figure 7. Bellingham Elementary Students “Doing the Right Thing” 2019 vs. 2024



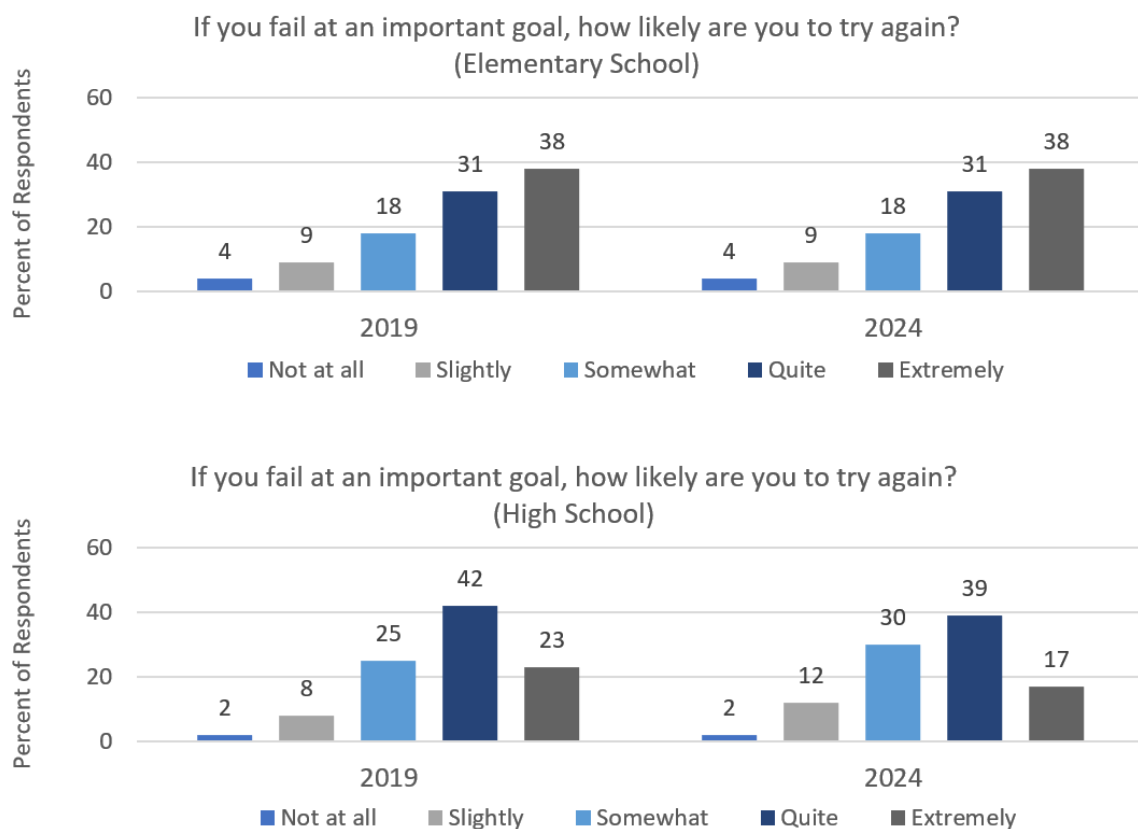
Confident Individuals Who Continually Challenge Themselves

- Community Transitions (CT) students have been engaging in mock interviews in preparation for entry into the job market. This is a spring project that happens during the Job Skills Class. Students prepare their answers to common interview questions and practice here at school with teachers and paras before their mock interviews. The job coaches and CT teacher, Dominique Lantagne, schedule mock interviews with community members for CT students to get practice with their interview skills and more. About 50 students participated and some of the community partners included Allied Arts, WorkSource, Ragfinery, REI, The Garden Spot, Central Kitchen, Peace Health, Ferndale Food Bank, BPS Central Office and Bellis Fair Mall.
- Stories of students who have benefitted from our work on inclusive practices and reduction of placements in less inclusive special education settings are being revealed in various places. Silver Beach Elementary School called out examples of two students who have made amazing growth in accessing general education learning spaces and interacting with peers successfully, showing amazing progress on IEP goals. Stories such as these tell us that when kids are challenged and provided with strong support, they very often will rise to meet new expectations.
- Bellingham Family Partnership student, Colbie Buck, participated in the “Master Chef Junior: Home for the Holidays” cooking competition show that aired on Fox and Hulu. Colbie claims her secret ingredient is love. While she did not win the competition, she made

great friends and loved the experience. Also, apparently Chef Gordon Ramsay is nicer in person.

- Co-teaching partnerships in various schools challenge our teachers to redefine their practice. This year examples from Shuksan Middle School with the partnership of teachers Alexa Tucker and Anna Burns helped our entire leadership team see the possibilities inherent in these kinds of powerful teaching partnerships.
- Sehome High School continues to move for greater inclusion through efforts to grow co-teaching partnerships and has been a leader in our district for more than a decade. Sehome places all students in general education classes to the greatest extent possible. All ninth graders started in general education classes with their peers this year. Teachers use universal design for learning to meet the needs of each student. The biggest celebration is the connection to peers and developing a sense of belonging and connection to peers.
- 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 8.

Figure 8. Bellingham Students' Perseverance Through Failure 2019 vs. 2024



Respectful and Compassionate Humans

- Across our schools, students are engaged in giving back to the community by engaging in activities that support identified needs. Activities this year included multiple coat drives to collect donated coats and sweatshirts for those in need; food drives that gathered canned and dry food for the Bellingham Food Bank; pet drives that supported the collection and donation of pet supplies and food. In addition, students supported the collection of personal care items

to support needs at the Family Resource Center (FRC). Executive Director Isabel Meaker reports that students take ownership and, “do the drives and deliver to FRC.”

- Our district has engaged with a community local nonprofit [Animals as Natural Therapy \(ANT\)](#) which recently received a grant that has allowed them to reduce costs for school visits. ANT's mobile programs educate students about kindness, empathy, animal body language & communication, and provide comfort and anxiety relief, in addition to promoting confidence and respect in social-emotional interactions. Visits to schools are one hour in length, can be tailored to the needs of each classroom, and provide an age-appropriate curriculum through hands-on activities with ANT's animals. School leaders report that students have benefited from the ability to engage with visiting animals through ANT.
- The research-based program called [Roots of Empathy](#) is being implemented in our schools. Neighborhood parents with their babies visited twelve classrooms across five elementary schools: Columbia, Cordata, Lowell, Sunnyland and Wade King. In 2023-24, the program expanded into two additional schools, Parkview and Roosevelt. Read more about this program at <https://promise.bellinghamschools.org/2023/10/04/roots-of-empathy-program-enhances-social-and-emotional-learning-curriculum/>
- Sehome High is experiencing success with a new dedicated space, The Cove. This space is available for all students as a place to go to meet with an adult to regulate, get academic support and find connections. The school launched this space for the second semester and students are learning increasingly how to utilize the space to take care of their needs and to get the support they need from an adult. Students are learning specific strategies for emotional regulation.
- Birchwood Elementary did a review of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum *Caring Schools Community* implementation and developed building-wide agreements for consistent implementation of key lessons for common language, routines, and student support. The school is using student survey feedback, parent input and an additional survey to make progress on building-wide goals for student compassion, empathy, belonging and pride.
- Bellingham High School Leadership and Associated Student Body (ASB) students, along with Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Club students have been exceptional this year in supporting all students with opportunities to find belonging at school. Principal Marty Atkins reports that these groups, “have improved our acknowledgement of monthly cultural recognition and have grown our opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities that honor and protect their place at BHS.”
- Cordata Elementary is focusing on the theme of “you belong, and you are loved” in daily rituals and imbedded in schoolwide activities. The school continued this focus this year, and celebrated with a community night, May 2, 2024, attended by over two hundred from the Cordata community.

Honest and Ethical Individuals Who Act with Integrity

- Kids looking out for each other is one way we have observed ethics in action. Director Keith Schacht reported that we have several “tips” on our district tipline regarding students who are worried about their friends- including concerns about drug use, suicide ideation, and homelife situations.
- High school students from our district are engaged with Whatcom County Planned Parenthood Teen Council. Teen Council is a peer education program that equips young people to be effective sexual health educators and social justice advocates in their

community. Teen Council participants receive training that prepares them to go into high school first-year classes and teach sexual health lessons.

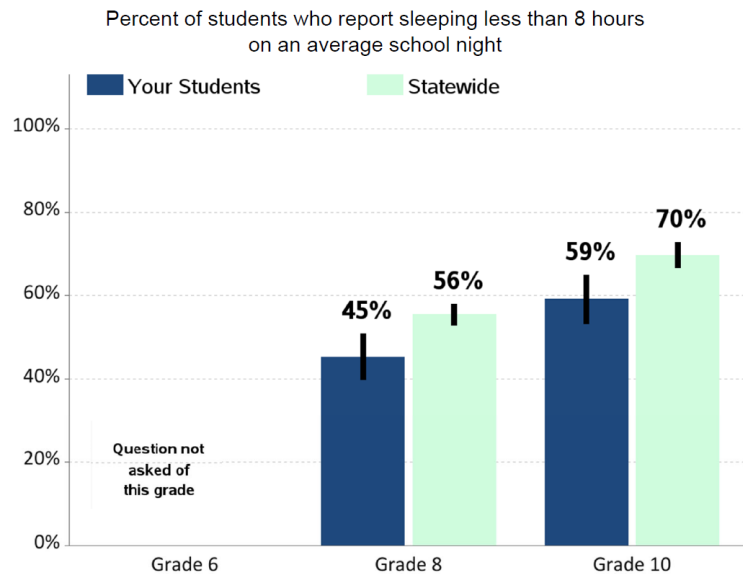
- Lowell third graders engaged in a unit of inquiry about how “Pioneers take risks, and their actions influence the world” and as a culminating project found something they were passionate about to take action.
- One of the learner profile attributes taught in the IB program is being principled. Northern Heights Elementary School has been engaged in IB for many years, and Principal Pam Pottle offered some examples that reflect well on Northern Heights students’ acting in a principled manner: Pam wrote:
 - A team of fourth graders have taken it upon themselves to hold the door open for all our families and learners as they get out of their cars in the morning. A second grader has recently started standing alongside me to say hello and good morning to the kids as they get out of their cars. While not about ethics, this demonstrated action being taken for the good of others.
 - Just last week we had some graffiti on the wall in our girls’ bathrooms. I spoke with our Grade 3 and 4 classrooms sharing that we needed help to solve a problem. I provided the context of what was happening, its impact on Mr. Mark, our custodian, and that this person would not be in trouble, but we would want them to help solve the problem. Later that afternoon, I received a note from a third-grade learner that said, “*Dear Mrs. Pottle I didn’t write the bad words, but I did draw a heart in the bathroom near the lunchroom. I am so so so sorry.*” *She promptly took action to wipe down the bathroom stalls even though the graffiti was already cleaned up.*
- The entire eighth grade class at Fairhaven Middle School participated in dialogue and learning with Dr. William Jackson, the 2024 Washington State Principal of the Year, which included a focus on leadership and becoming change agents in high school and beyond.
- The board learning session with the GSA student group at Whatcom Middle School provided a great example of students who took a risk to honestly share their truths about experiences in our school district; this session created a powerful learning opportunity for all who participated.

Healthy, Active Individuals

- The percentage of Bellingham’s sixth, eighth and 10th grade students who report three or more hours of screen time on an average school day was below state averages. Activities counted in this data included time spent in front of a TV, computer, smart phone or other electronic media watching shows or videos, playing games, accessing the internet or using social media. This data does not count time spent doing schoolwork.
- Hundreds of families and students attended the first-ever districtwide *Winter Blast* from 5-8 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 23, 2024, at the Civic Sportsplex. The evening included free ice skating on the ice rink and a variety of games on the Sportsplex fields. In between all the activities, attendees enjoyed free hot dogs, pizza slices and hot cocoa. Read more about the event here: <https://bellingshamschools.org/news/chase-away-the-winter-blues-at-winter-blast-2024-friday-feb-23/>.
- The percentage of Bellingham’s eighth and 10th graders who reported sleeping less than eight hours on an average school night was below the state averages. While our Bellingham students appear to be doing a better-than-average job of getting a full eight hours, the data are

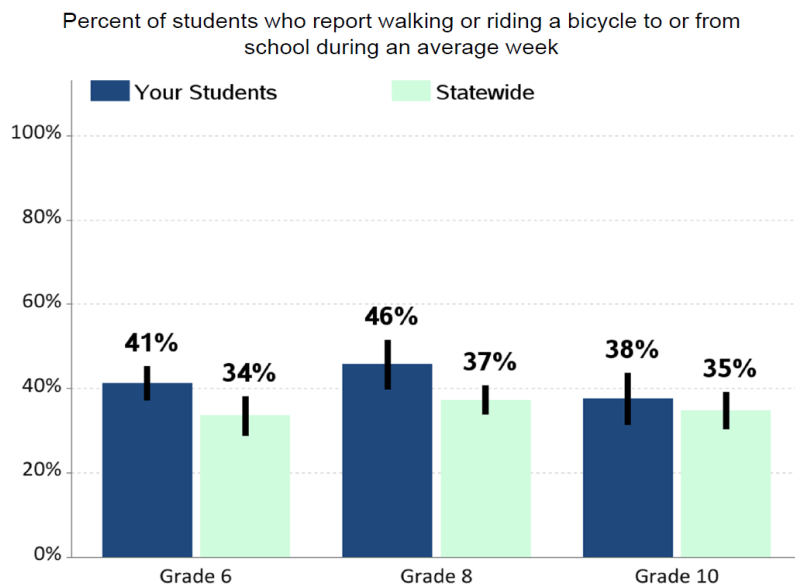
striking in the high percentage who report fewer than eight hours. Figure 9 displays the comparisons.

Figure 9. Bellingham Students' Sleep on a School Night -- 2023



- On average, more Bellingham students in Grade 6, 8 and 10 reported eating breakfast than those across the state in 2023. And more of our students walk or bike to school than across the state on average. Figure 10 shows the walking/biking comparison for 2023.

Figure 10. Bellingham Students Who Walk or Bike to/from School -- 2023



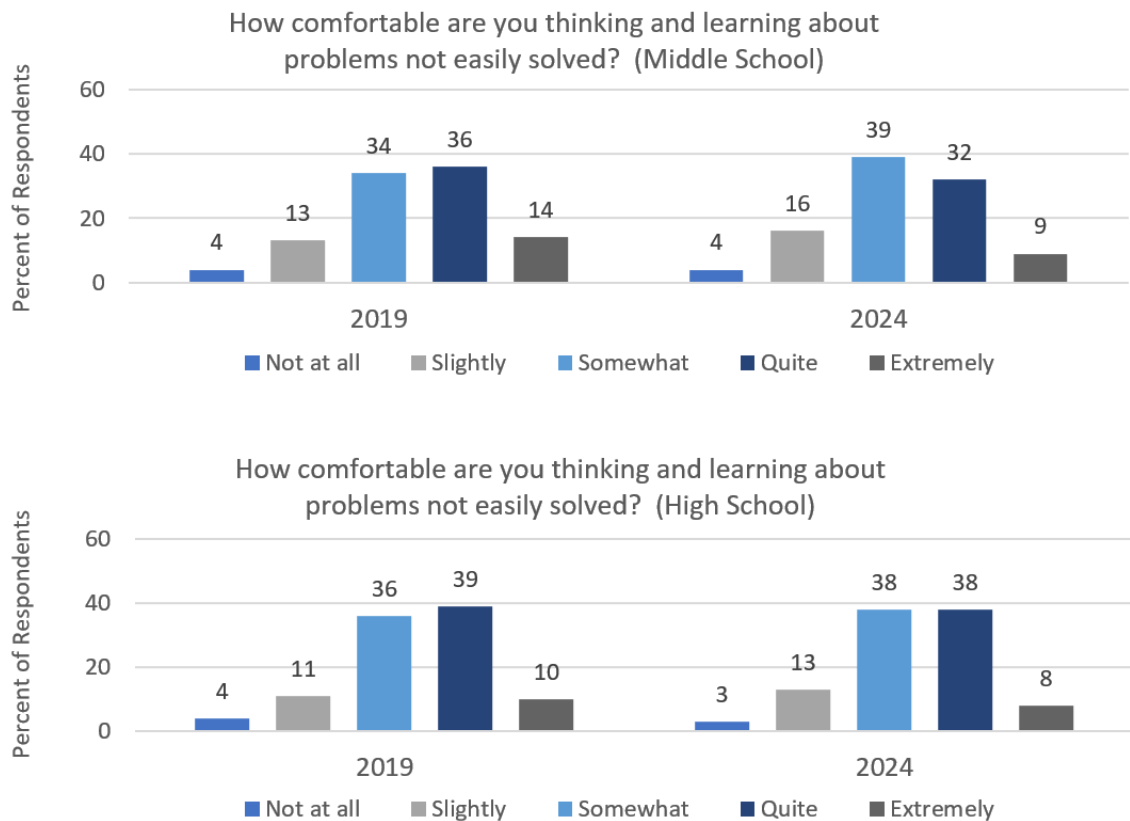
- The percentage of Bellingham students in Grade 8 and 10 who reported drinking sugar sweetened drinks two or more times per day was below state averages. This data does not include diet, sugar-free or drinks with artificial sweeteners.

- We are continuing the plans for a school-based health center housed at Options High School. Through the sustained work of our grant writers, we obtained two years of grant funds from the Washington State Department of Health to support this effort. We believe 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.
- The percentage of students in high schools and middle schools engaged in school sports is strong; 2023-24 participation numbers for high school are 1,732 and 1,479 for middle school.
- High school physical education classes continue to offer a wide variety of classes that encourage participation and activity. These include Yoga, Walking & Hiking, International Games and Lifetime Activities.
- Squaticum senior Bella Phillips won a state championship in wrestling this year. See more in this story about Bella from the Cascadia Daily News: <https://www.cascadiadaily.com/2024/feb/14/squaticum-girls-wrestler-is-32-0-heading-into-upcoming-state-tournament/>.
- Construction is underway on the new turf field on the south side of the Kulshan Middle School campus. Kulshan is the first of our middle schools to receive a turf field, and our hope is that turf fields can be installed in more middle schools over the next several years.

Critical Thinkers and Problem-Solvers

- Highly Capable Learners (HCL) family night was held at Geneva Elementary School on April 17, 2024. The evening event featured a variety of learning stations hosted by district personnel where families could engage in thinking and problem-solving activities.
- The previously mentioned International Bridge Building competition with two BHS students attending in Philadelphia involved a high level of critical thinking and problem solving.
- Annual student survey results this spring on questions regarding students' comfort with thinking and learning about problems not easily solved suggest students feel slightly less comfortable in 2024, compared with pre-pandemic year 2019 data. See comparison chart embedded as Figure 9.

Figure 9. Bellingham Students' Comfort with Problem-solving 2019 vs. 2024



Effective Communicators

- We discussed the use of core boards at Columbia in the opening paragraphs of this report. Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, such as core boards, are in use in many schools and we are making a push to incorporate such tools in more universal ways. Funded by a Digital Equity and Inclusion grant from OSPI, Assistive Technology Specialist, Amy Connolly, provided two professional learning series for speech/language pathologists, special education teachers and paraeducators. These training courses focused on tiered support for AAC and comprehensive literacy instruction for students with complex disabilities. As a result of this training, the Bellingham universal core board (one of the tiered supports) is becoming available to all schools, district wide, thus expanding access to visually supported communication. In addition, we've had an increase in students accessing robust AAC. Staff are demonstrating a growing capacity for using these resources to support communication across all environments. Our newest elementary school playgrounds, for example the one recently installed at Silver Beach, have included core boards in the posted displays that students are able to access.
- Students speaking at the Since Time Immemorial Family and Community Night held at Whatcom Community College on April 24th, 2024, exemplified confidence and successfully embraced the challenge of presenting their work and understanding of issues such as tribal sovereignty, the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott and the Boldt decision. Included were Happy Valley Elementary students Naomi Tanzil, Mahati Gundlapally, Penelope Tennyson, Celia Podorean, and Simone Longmire, Fairhaven students Morgan Giddens, Veronica Jordan,

Margo Smith, Henry Allen and Will Parnow, and Squalicum student Tony Malpica along with ELA teacher and NASU club advisor Riley Fitchett.

- Raul Morales (SQHS) got first place on a short film he produced and second place on a writing piece at the *Latinos in Action State* Conference and received two scholarships.
- Carl Cozier Elementary School engaged with Dykeman architects in planning for new playground equipment and student panels who weighed in were adamant in stressing need for inclusion and wheelchair access to enable all students to enjoy the new equipment. Dykeman met with student representatives from each classroom in grade level teams. Students were effective communicators, sharing at every grade level (unprompted by adults) the importance of a more inclusive playground and equipment. They gave examples of their friends needing access to equipment and effectively communicated the changes they would like to see for the Carl Cozier playground.

Innovators and Creators

- District-wide robotics competitions with all four high schools represented; competitions take place all year long with a culminating competition in March (see next bullet). Robotics courses for CTE credit feeds student interest in this area.
- Robotics annual spring competition was hosted at BHS with many schools from the region participating in robotics challenges. Students designed and programmed robots to accomplish feats of overcoming obstacles or scoring points by putting balls or other objects into goal nets. One Bellingham School District high school team participated in the World Competition in Dallas.
- Middle School Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) classes/clubs large group of middle school students also competed at the state Technology Student Association (TSA) competition in Seattle.
- We have continued our district-wide emphasis to ensure a play-based environment in early learning classrooms.

Well-rounded Community Members Engaged with the Broader World

- As we've discussed in numerous ways above, *Latinos in Action* is a new, year-long elective class offered for the first time this year at Squalicum High School, with a goal to expand to other schools in the future. The class is part of a [national program](#), empowering Latino youth to lead and strengthen their communities through college and career readiness. This is accomplished by focusing on four pillars: leveraging personal and cultural assets, excelling in education, serving the community and developing leadership skills. *Latinos in Action* also hosted a Hispanic Heritage Night on Saturday, Oct. 14, 2023, at Squalicum High School. Students, families, staff and community members enjoyed an evening of cultural richness, entertainment and delicious food along with a live mariachi band, dance performances, a quinceañera fashion show and more.
- The entire FMS seventh grade attended the Treaty Day Film Festival at the Pickford Film Center watching and discussing the film "Frybread Face & Me" in January 2024, along with middle schoolers from across the system. Fairhaven eighth graders participated in Law Day by going on a field trip to the courthouse where they were able to watch a trial in action. It was a perfect opportunity for them to participate in discussions about the law and its role in society.

- The third annual Bellingham Public Schools Back-to-School Block Party was hosted at Bellingham High School on Saturday, Aug. 19, 2023, with dozens of staff, volunteers and community partners on hand to support students and families in preparation for the upcoming school year. The block party continues to grow each year, with nearly 2,000 students and family members attending during the four-hour event. The annual event reflects the collective commitment to Bellingham’s children, evidenced through the widespread support and enthusiasm of the day. It also highlights the One Schoolhouse Approach as one of six key Promise strategies, stating that we “focus on taking care of each other” and that we “provide an equitable distribution of resources and services to ensure excellence for students.” The Family Engagement team, headed by Executive Director Isabel Meaker, and BPS volunteer coordinator Jennifer Gaer, lead an immense amount of planning and logistics coordination for the block party.

IV. Summary Concluding Statement and A Look Ahead

The evidence presented above does not approach an exhaustive list of the work done in service of accomplishing the 17 *Promise* outcomes. However, we hope these small bites, anecdotes, data arrays and stories from across the system do provide the school board with a satisfactory sense of the scope of our work as a school system. 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. 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.