

BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
Bellingham, Washington

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

DATE: March 7, 2024

SUBJECT: Ends Monitoring Report 2.1, Part 2

I am pleased to submit this Ends monitoring report to the school district's board of directors. Our process for reporting on Ends 2.1 during the 2023-24 school year began with the previously submitted Ends 2.1, Part 1 report at the February 22, 2024, meeting. This report is the second in sequence this year and focuses on evidence of student advancement toward on-time or extended graduation and reduction in drop-out rates as well as students' participation in post-secondary education and career preparation in comparison to peer districts. Our final Ends report for this year on the vision, mission and outcomes in The Bellingham Promise (Ends 1, 2 and 3) will be presented at the May 16, 2024, meeting.

Introduction

Section one of this report examines how Bellingham (BPS) students are faring in terms of on-time and extended graduation rates and draws our attention to trends in student drop-out rates overall and within identified student subgroups. We also include comparisons of Bellingham's' student graduation trends to those in comparable districts. The second part of the report examines college preparatory and career and technical preparatory course taking trends. The final section examines Bellingham students' post-secondary enrollment rates including a focus on post-secondary enrollments for Bellingham students in higher education, both two-year and four-year options.

We once again include comparisons with Bellevue, Olympia and Shoreline school district as the small group of high-bar peer districts whose populations of students eligible for free/reduced priced meals fall below those eligible in our district. Language included in the revised Ends 2.1 policy focuses us on comparing progress to districts that are demographically similar to Bellingham, as well as to districts whose students typically outperform our students on the standardized test. The Ends 2.1 policy follows:

STUDENT COMPETENCE

Ends 2.1: Consistent with the district Vision and Mission, all children of the Bellingham Public Schools community will attain high academic achievement, develop essential skills and attributes necessary for continuous growth in learning, and graduate from high school ready for participation in post-secondary education and career opportunities. All students will succeed and grow regardless of ethnicity, socio-economic status, English language proficiency or disabilities.

1. Every student's achievement, skills and attributes will show continuous significant growth, and measures will exceed the Washington state benchmarks and be high performing relative to similar students in demographically comparable districts, as measured by state assessments and other available data, as appropriate.
2. Gaps in achievement, skills and attributes between groups of students will close. For state or federally identified student populations, any gap in achievement will be eliminated, and annual achievement will be greater than that of similar students in demographically comparable districts.
3. Every student will make continuous advancement toward graduation. Measures of on-time and extended graduation attainment will be high performing relative to similar students in demographically comparable districts.
4. After graduation, student participation in post-secondary education and career preparation shall increase and exceed participation in comparison to demographically comparable districts.

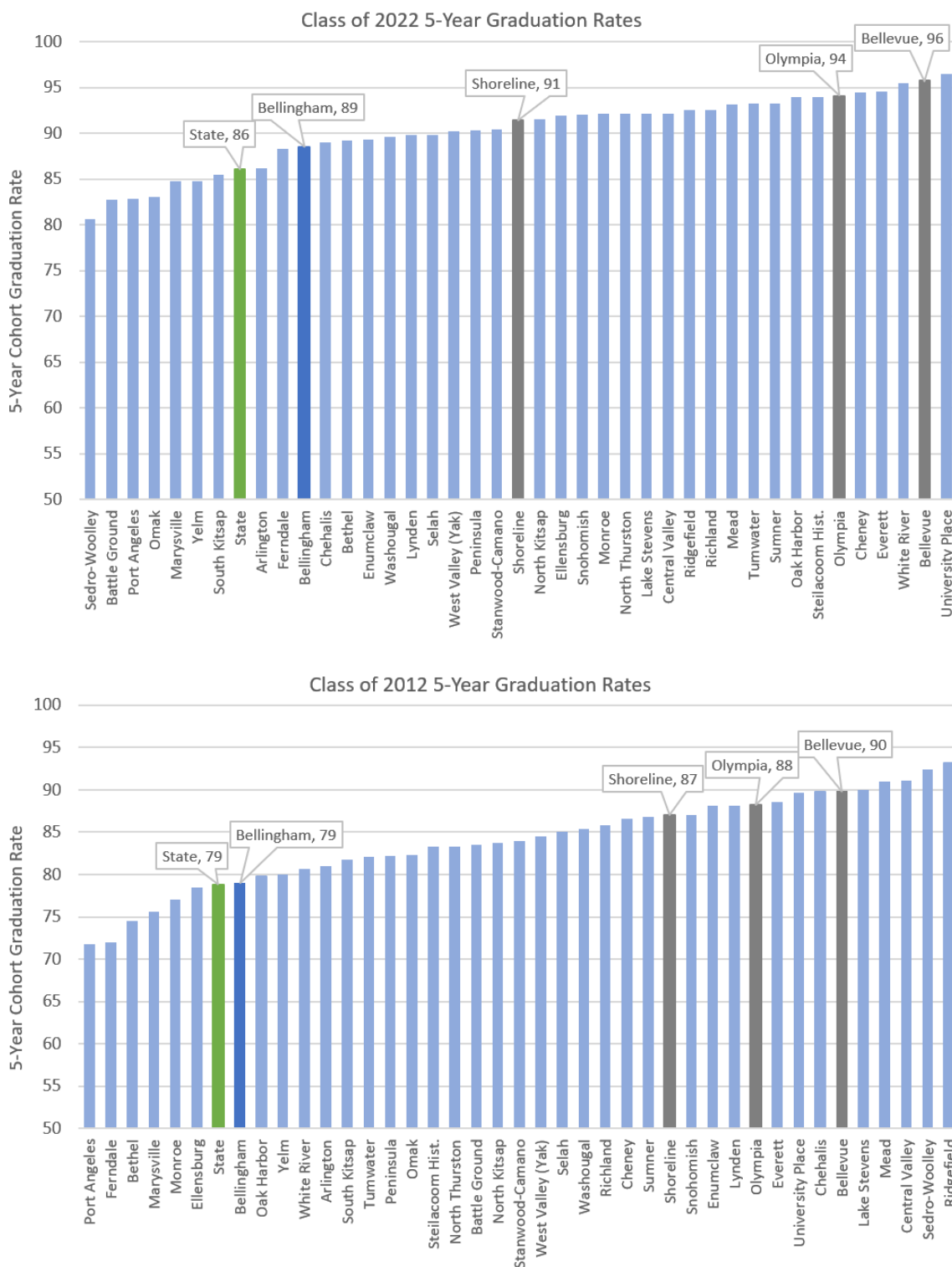
While being held accountable to our demographically comparable districts, we also continue to compare our progress to other district, state and national data that offer a more comprehensive view of student competence.

In this Part 2 report, we focus on numbers three and four above.

Section 1: High School Graduation Trends

Our analysis begins with the big picture looking at overall graduation rates of students in Bellingham over time, compared with other districts. Figure 1 displays the graduation rates for the five-year adjusted cohorts of the class of 2012 and class of 2022 for Bellingham and 39 demographically comparable or high-bar peer districts and Washington State. Over this period of a decade, graduation rates for Bellingham students increased from 79 percent in 2012, which was identical to the Washington statewide average at that time, to 89 percent in 2022 which puts our district 3 percentage points above the state average, and below high bar peer districts Shoreline (91 percent), Olympia (94 percent) and Bellevue (96 percent).

Figure 1. 5-Year Adjusted Graduation Rates for 2012 and 2022



We continue to track graduation rates for each cohort of students out into the seventh year of high school to assess the progress toward ensuring graduation for all students, regardless of timeline. Figure 2 displays the four-year and extended graduation rates for Bellingham, three high-bar peer districts and Washington state. The data highlights the continued progress to graduate more students

into the seventh year. Bellingham graduates a higher percentage of students in the seventh year than any of our high bar comparison districts, with the most recent seven-year cohort (class of 2020) attaining a 93 percent graduation rate. Our five-year rate improved by 1 percent in year-over-year comparison, while the six-year rate dropped a point in comparison to the prior year.

Figure 2. Trends in Graduation Rates for Districts and Washington State

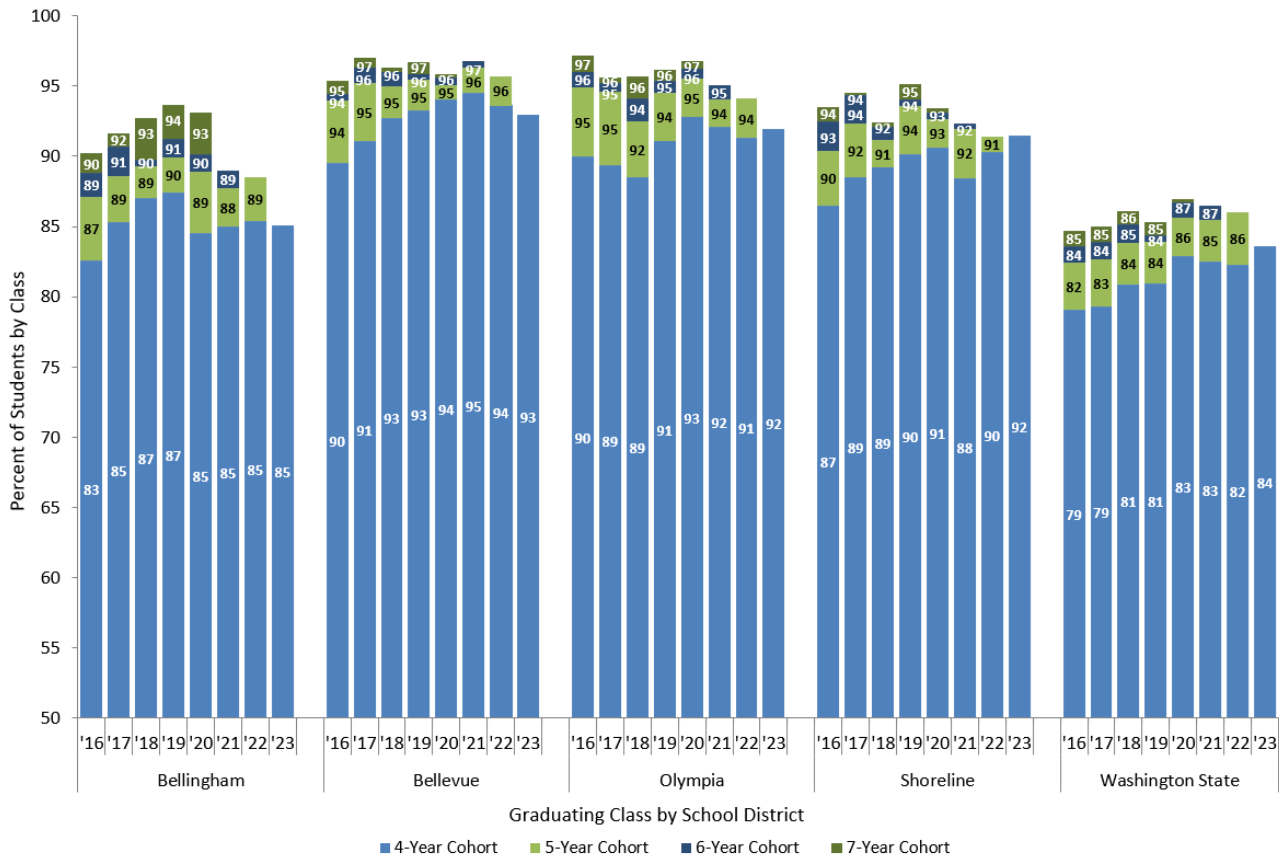
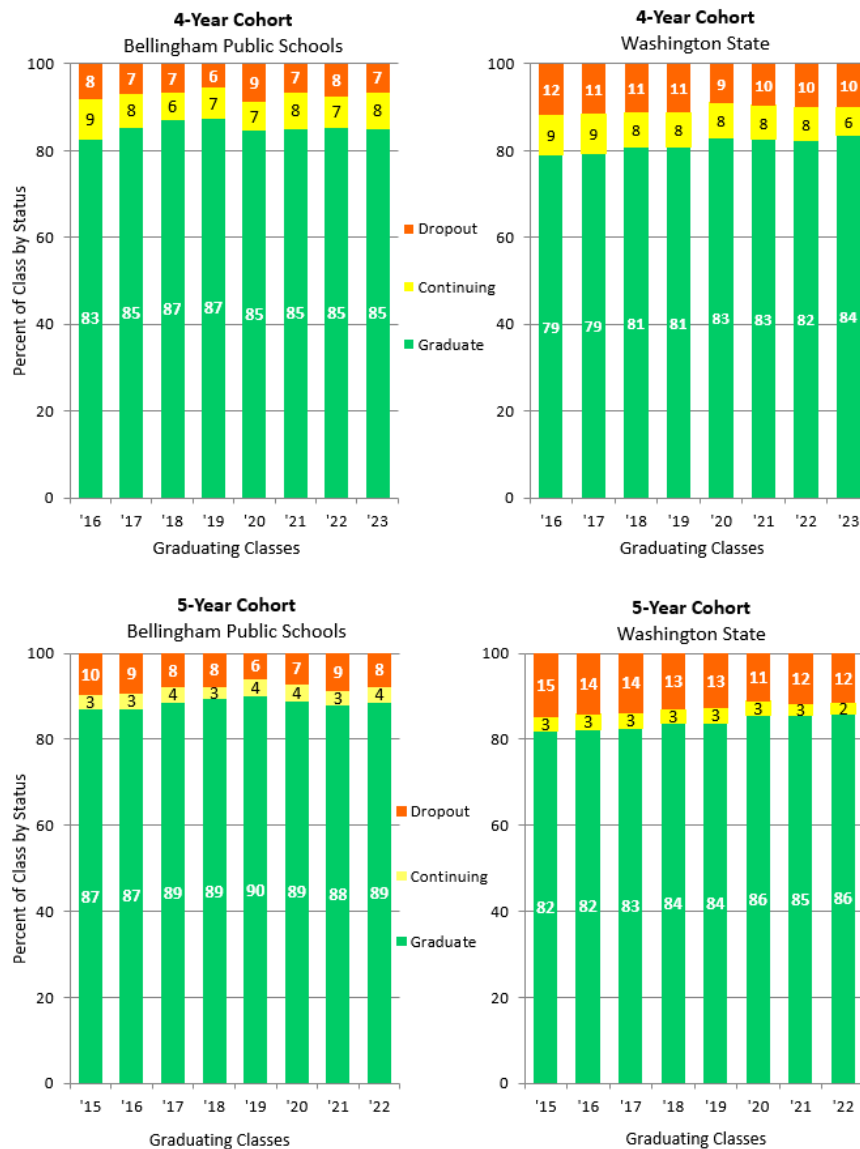


Figure 3 displays graphs of four-year and five-year cohorts' graduation rates, continuing rates and dropout rates over the past seven years for Bellingham and Washington state. The four-year graduation rate for Bellingham students held constant at 85 percent in year-over-year comparison, while the state average increased by 2 percentage points (from 82 percent in 2022 to 84 percent in 2023). Five-year rates for both the district and the state increased by a percent in year-over-year comparisons, while dropout rates decreased by a point in Bellingham, and held steady across the state.

Figure 3. Graduation and Dropout Rate Trends for BPS and Washington State



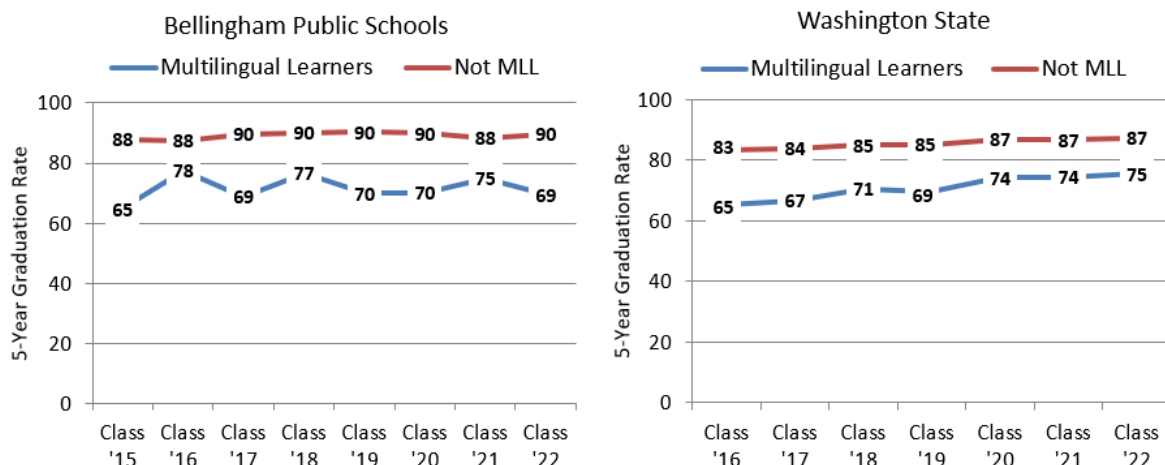
We also continue to examine the extended graduation trends for four major subgroups of Bellingham students. Figure 4 displays extended graduation rate trends over the past 11 years for Bellingham's multilingual learners (MLL), students identifying as Hispanic/Latinx, students with individualized education plans (IEPs) and students from low-income households. Four-year and six-year rates for multilingual students hit new highs this year. The rate for students with IEPs held constant at 90 percent with the most recent seventh-year cohort; the seventh-year rate for students identified as low income also held steady at 88 percent with the most recent cohort (class of 2020). Five-year rates (class of 2022) were up slightly for students who are Hispanic/Latinx (84 percent), student with IEPs (63 percent) and students from low-income households (84 percent).

Figure 4. Extended Graduation Rates Trends for Bellingham Student Subgroups



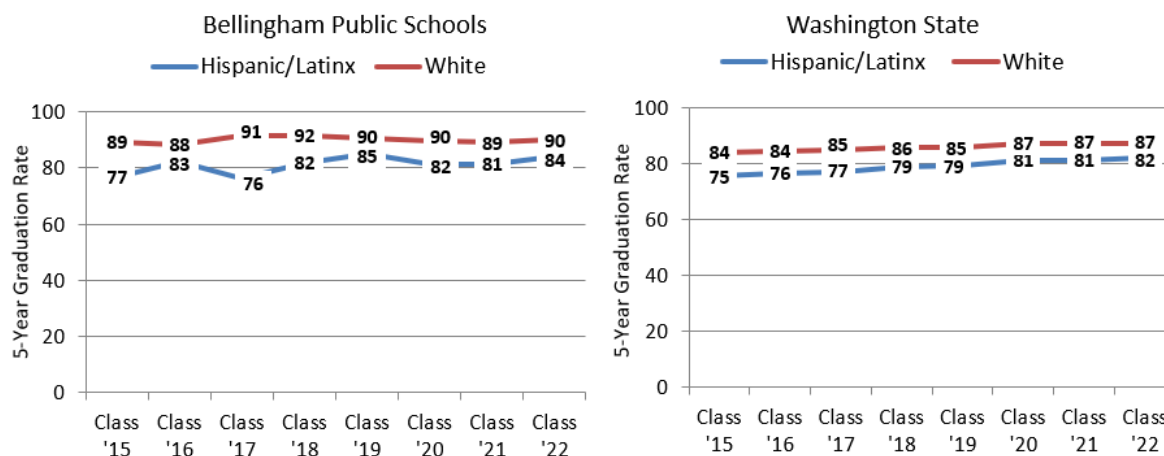
In addition to the internal comparisons over time, we also examined gaps between contrasting subgroups of students compared with the overall statewide picture. After narrowing significantly in last year's comparison, Figure 5 shows the graduation gap between Bellingham's multilingual and non-multilingual students increased in year-over-year comparisons, while the gap across the state closed slightly. Because of the smaller in size, the multilingual student subgroup's graduation

Figure 5. Gap Trends in 5-Year Graduation Rates – Multilingual vs. Non-Multilingual Students



rate has tended to fluctuate more widely at the local level than the overall state rate. So, while an increase in the gap between multilingual learners and non-multilingual student groups' graduation rates has our attention, we recognize that this gap has varied in year-over-year comparisons over the time we have been tracking these trends. The graduation gap between Hispanic/Latinx and non-Hispanic/Latinx Bellingham students (Figure 6) decreased to 6 percent from 8 percent in year-over-year comparison, while the state gap also decreased by a percentage point.

Figure 6. Gap Trends in 5-Year Graduation Rates – Hispanic/Latinx vs. White



The graduation gap between groups of Bellingham graduates identified as low income and non-low income narrowed by 6 percent in year-over-year comparison, while the gap also narrowed slightly across the state (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Gap Trends in 5-Year Graduation Rates – Low Income vs. Non-low Income

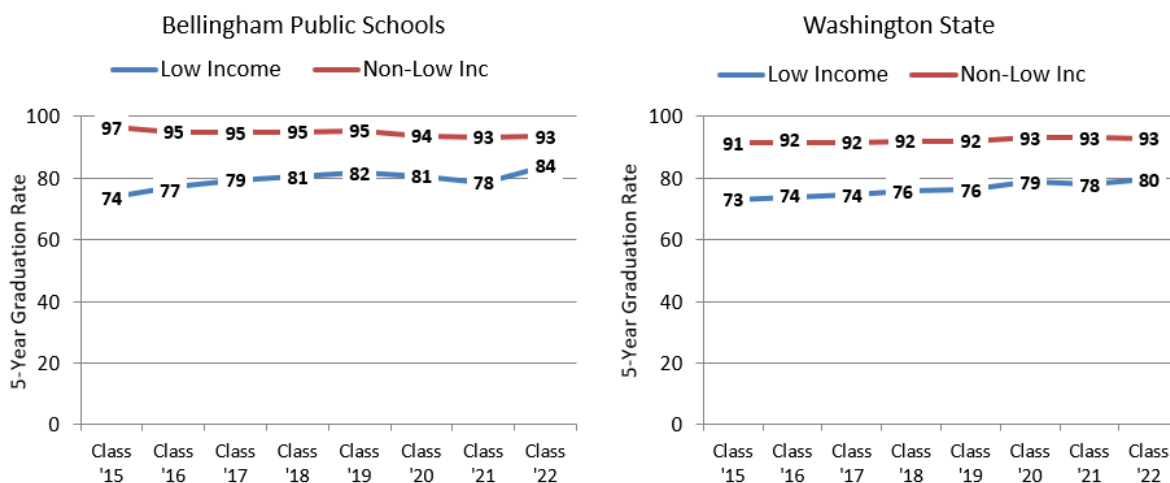
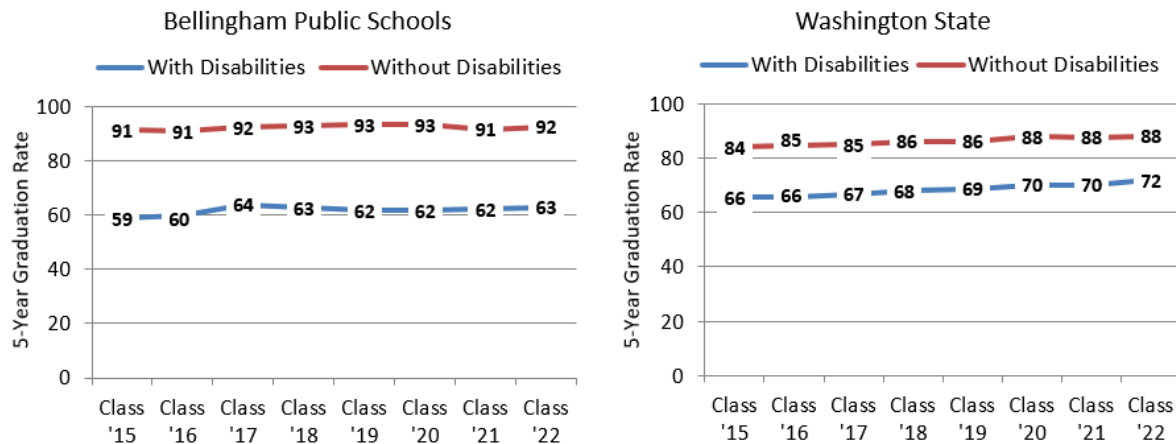


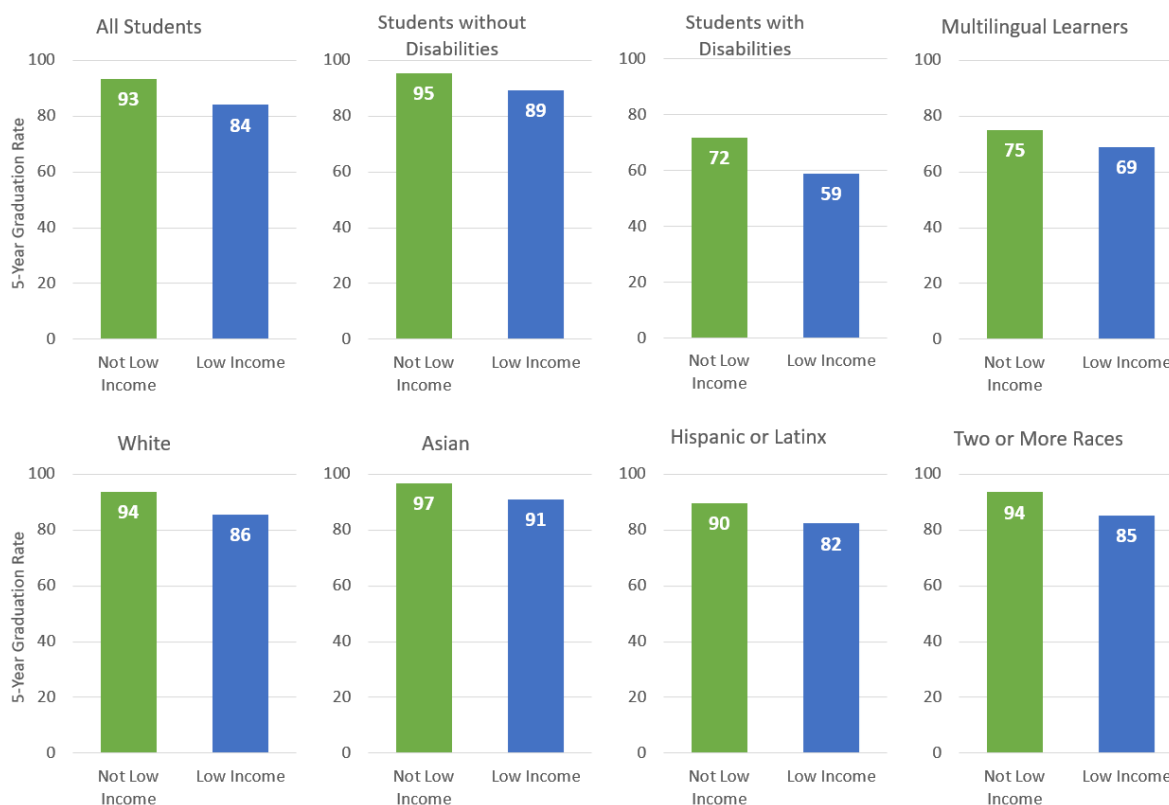
Figure 8 shows the graduation gap between students with disabilities and those without held steady for our students, while statewide, this gap narrowed slightly. While our five-year graduation rate for this subgroup is lower by comparison with the state, recall that our seven-year rate shows that 90 percent of this subgroup of students eventually graduated in our district in each of those last two seven-year cohorts.

Figure 8. Gap Trends in 5-Year Graduation Rates – With and Without Disabilities



Over the years we have observed the correlation between income levels and graduation rates, and Figure 9 once again displays five-year graduation rates for all Bellingham students (upper left) and subgroups identifying as Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, two or more races, White, students with disabilities, students without disabilities and multilingual students each broken down by low-income and non-low-income household identification. Data reveal that income gaps in graduation rates exist for all subgroups; if a student is from a low-income household, that factor alone has a tangible negative impact on graduation chances. As noted in Figure 9, overall, 93 percent of students identified as non-low income and 84 percent of students identified as low income graduated in 2022 in our district.

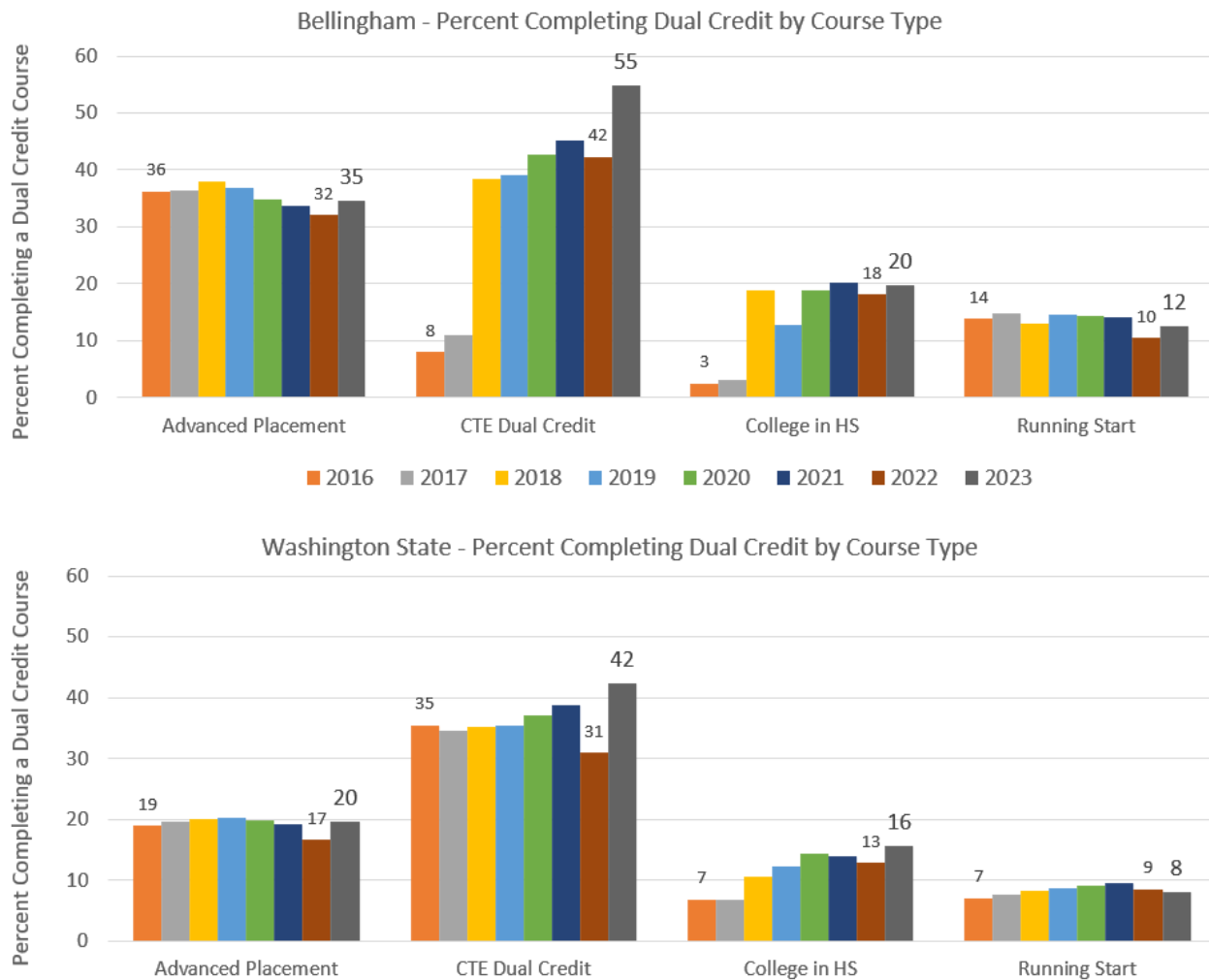
Figure 9. Impact of Income on 5-year Graduation Rates – BPS Student Subgroups 2022



Section 2: Preparation for Post-High-School Opportunities

Next, we turn to an examination of various ways students are preparing for post-high-school opportunities through completion of dual credit coursework that provides a head start into college and/or enrollment in career and technical coursework that could lead to additional schooling or career opportunities. Figure 10 displays the breakdown of dual credit course attainment by type of course - Advanced Placement (AP), Career and Technical Education (CTE), College in the High School and Running Start - for Bellingham and Washington state. Dual credit attainment in all categories trended up in year-over-year comparisons within our school district. Advanced placement course completion increased 3 percent between 2022 and 2023, CTE dual credit course completion increased by 13 percent, college in the high school course taking increased 2 percent and running start participation increased 2 percent for Bellingham students. Statewide trends examined also revealed gains in every course type except Running Start.

Figure 10. Percent Completing Dual Credit by Course Type



Given the sizeable increase in CTE course completion over the past several years, we have continued to examine the gender breakdown in CTE courses as one means of determining who is accessing these courses. Figure 11 shows the percentage of Bellingham students enrolled in CTE courses by gender for school years 2013-14 and 2022-23. Notable here are presence of increasing percentages of female student participation in courses like Commercial Construction Trades (6 percent), Manufacturing Foundations (8 percent); Precision Production Trades Foundations (13 percent) and Woodworking Foundation (21 percent). We have also for the second year reported on gender non-binary students' course taking in these CTE fields, and that is included as a column (labeled with an X) on the 2022-23 graphic in Figure 11. We are planning new additions to the CTE course line-up for the future, including Ceramics at the high school level.

Figure 11. BPS CTE Course Enrollments 2013-14 and 2022-23

2013-14 Bellingham Schools CTE Course Enrollments

F	M	Program	Course Name
0%	100%	Skill/Tech	Video Game Design/Comp Anim Design
0%	100%	STEM	Engineering Design 3
6%	94%	STEM	Robotics Foundations
12%	88%	Bus&Mar	Computer Programming
14%	86%	Bus&Mar	Webpage/Digital/Multimedia Info Design
17%	83%	STEM	Engineering Design 2
18%	82%	STEM	Engineering Design 1
24%	76%	STEM	Principles of Technology Applied
36%	64%	Bus&Mar	Office User Specialist
37%	63%	Skill/Tech	Photography and Video Foundations
41%	59%	All	Career Choices
45%	55%	Bus&Mar	Introduction Marketing
45%	55%	Bus&Mar	Business Math
47%	53%	Bus&Mar	Economics
50%	50%	F&C Sci	Sign Language Interpretation/Interpreter
50%	50%	Bus&Mar	Technical Communication
50%	50%	Skill/Tech	Visual Communications
52%	48%	Skill/Tech	Technical Theater/Design Tech/Technician
53%	47%	F&C Sci	Family Health
54%	46%	F&C Sci	Food Production and Services
55%	45%	Skill/Tech	Forensic Science Tech/ CSI
58%	42%	F&C Sci	Independent Living
62%	38%	F&C Sci	Sports Medicine
64%	36%	F&C Sci	Foods & Related Culinary Arts Foundation
71%	29%	Bus&Mar	Financial Math
78%	22%	F&C Sci	Housing, Interiors and Furnishings
80%	20%	Bus&Mar	Marketing Operations
80%	20%	Bus&Mar	Publishing
83%	17%	F&C Sci	Human Development

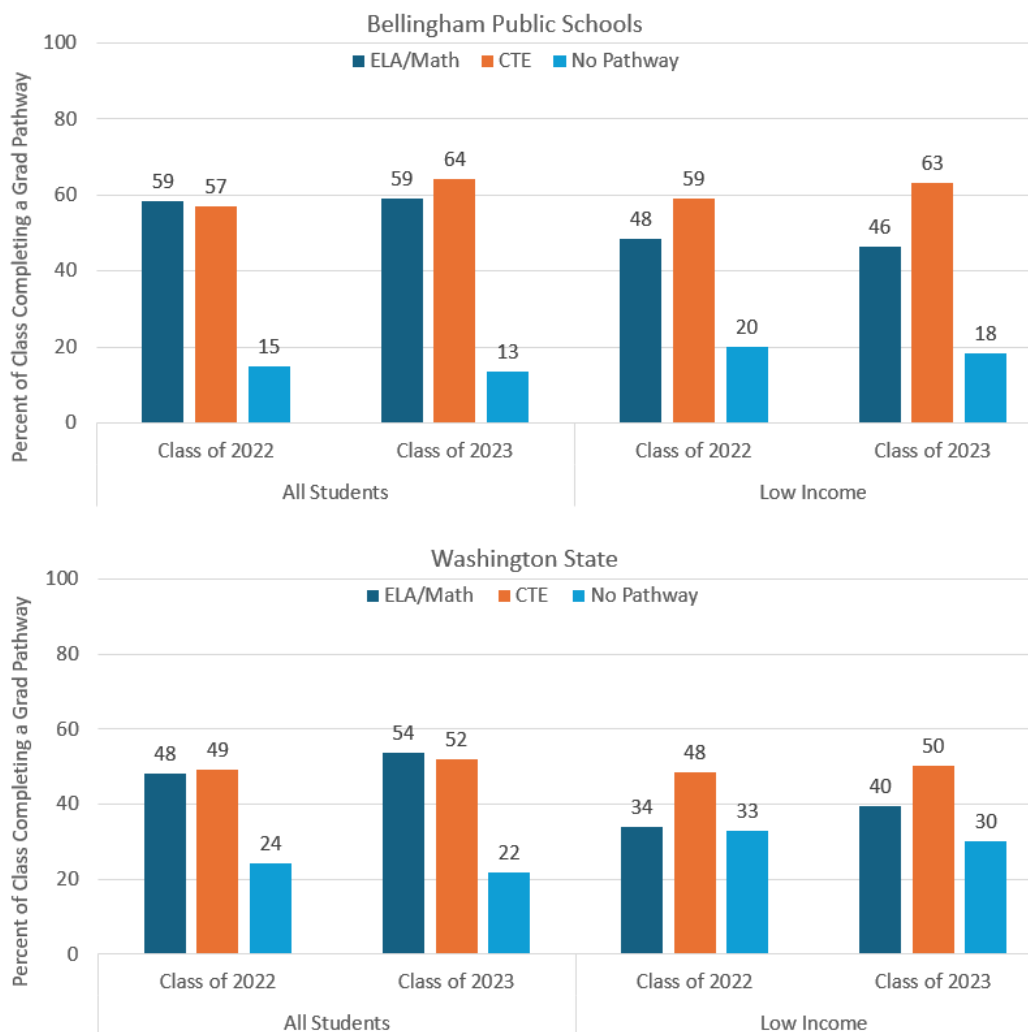
2022-23 Bellingham Schools CTE Course Enrollments

F	M	X	Program	Course Name
0%	100%	0%	Skill/Tech	Architecture and Construction Foundations
6%	94%	0%	Skill/Tech	Commercial Construction Trades
8%	92%	0%	Skill/Tech	Manufacturing Foundations
11%	89%	0%	STEM	Engineering Design 2
12%	88%	0%	Bus&Mar	Computer Programming
12%	86%	1%	STEM	Engineering Design 1
13%	87%	0%	Skill/Tech	Precision Production Trades Foundations
13%	87%	0%	STEM	Engineering Design 3
13%	84%	3%	Skill/Tech	Video Game Design/Comp Anim Design
16%	84%	0%	STEM	Robotics Foundations
16%	82%	2%	STEM	Intro to Computer Integrated Manuf
16%	82%	2%	STEM	Principles of Technology Applied
21%	77%	2%	Skill/Tech	Woodworking Foundations
26%	72%	3%	Bus&Mar	Technical Communication
30%	68%	2%	Skill/Tech	Photography and Video Foundations
34%	65%	1%	Bus&Mar	Introduction Marketing
37%	62%	2%	Bus&Mar	Marketing Operations
38%	62%	0%	Bus&Mar	Webpage/Digital/Multimedia Info Design
40%	58%	2%	Skill/Tech	Visual Communications Foundations
40%	58%	1%	Bus&Mar	Business Math
40%	50%	10%	Skill/Tech	Technical Theater/Design Tech/Technician
41%	59%	0%	Bus&Mar	Financial Math
42%	58%	0%	Bus&Mar	Business Law
43%	57%	0%	All	Career Choices
44%	56%	0%	Health	Sports Medicine
44%	55%	1%	Bus&Mar	Economics
46%	53%	1%	F&C Sci	Independent Living
46%	52%	2%	Bus&Mar	Office User Specialist
46%	52%	2%	F&C Sci	Foods & Related Culinary Arts Foundation
47%	51%	2%	F&C Sci	Family Health
47%	43%	9%	Agri Ed	Environmental Studies
51%	46%	3%	Skill/Tech	Forensic Science Tech/CSI
53%	46%	1%	Agri Ed	Environmental Science
54%	45%	1%	Skill/Tech	Graph Design/Commercial & Advertising Art
57%	38%	5%	Health	Medical Terminology
58%	40%	2%	F&C Sci	Housing, Interiors and Furnishings
58%	39%	4%	F&C Sci	Sign Language Interpretation/Interpreter
60%	40%	0%	F&C Sci	Interpersonal Relationships
60%	40%	0%	Health	Health Sciences Cooperative Worksite Exper
65%	31%	4%	Bus&Mar	Hospitality, Tourism & Rec Worksite Exper
67%	31%	1%	F&C Sci	Careers in Education
69%	29%	2%	Bus&Mar	Publishing
81%	15%	4%	Skill/Tech	Costume Design
86%	11%	3%	F&C Sci	Child Development/Parenting
96%	2%	2%	F&C Sci	Cosmetology
100%	0%	0%	F&C Sci	GRADS - Graduation, Reality and Dual Skills

As the board is likely aware in 2019 the Washington state legislature passed House Bill 1599 into law, which essentially decoupled statewide assessments from graduation requirements. In order to

graduate from high school in Washington state, students must complete: 1) a High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP); 2) the credit and subject area requirements; and 3) a graduation pathway option, along with any other local requirements. The graduation pathways options provide students multiple ways to show readiness for their individual education and career goals. The pathway a student completes must align with the student’s postsecondary goals as described in their HSBP. School districts decide which pathways to offer and are encouraged to offer as many options as possible. Over the past several years, Bellingham has increased the pathways available to students, and none more so than in Career and Technical Education (CTE). Figure 12 displays graduation pathways data from the last two years for all students and for those identified as coming from low-income households for our district and for the state overall.

Figure 12. Graduation Pathways Data for BPS and Washington State: All Students and Students from Low Income Households

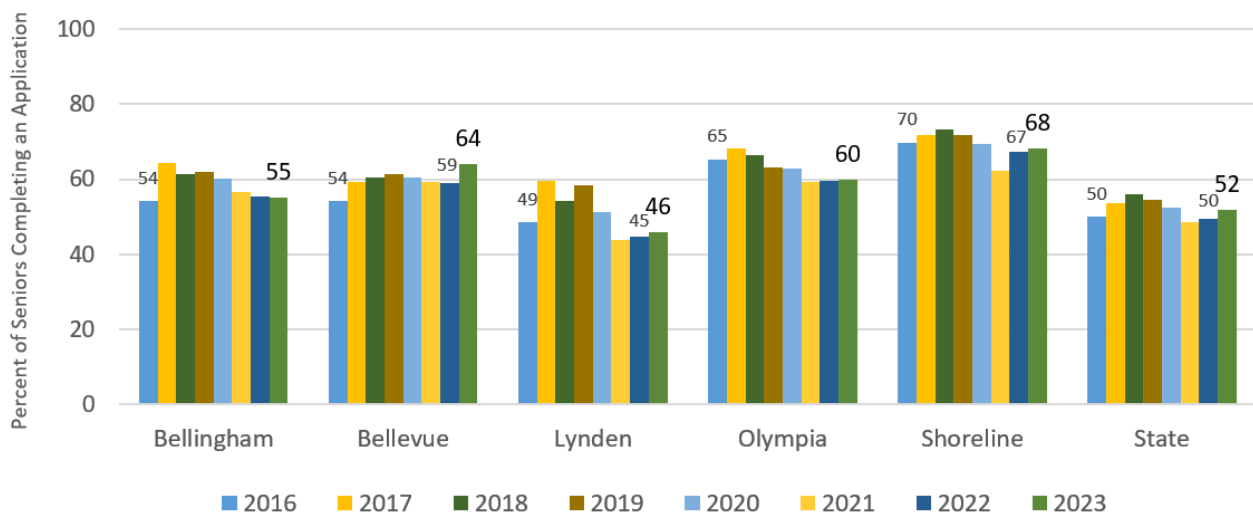


What these data reveal is that over the past two years, Bellingham students who are identified as low income chose a CTE graduation pathway at about the same rate as students overall. This was also true across WA state. During this two-year period, low-income students’ choice of English Language Arts (ELA)/Math pathways was well below the average of all students, at the same time the number of students with no identified pathway choice increased. This data caused us to reflect

on the decline in the high school Smarter Balance Assessment (SBA) proficiency data we presented in the first Ends report (2.1, part 1). Particularly in the case of students identified as low income, there appear to be fewer students accessing an ELA or Math pathway (which can be satisfied by a proficient score on the SBA), more choosing to demonstrate their readiness for graduation by completing a CTE pathway and more in the category of having made no pathway choice.

Another marker we track each year that helps to predict college-going rates is the percentage of students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application for student aid. Completion of the FAFSA is predictive of college attendance, and for some students this is a critical hurdle that jumpstarts their thinking about post-secondary options. Nationally, FAFSA completion dropped significantly over the pandemic and has not recovered to prior levels. Figure 13 shows the percentage of expected high school graduates from Bellingham, select districts and Washington state who completed a FAFSA application each year. Year-over-year comparisons held relatively steady for Bellingham, Lynden, Shoreline and Olympia, while participation bumped up by 5 percent in Bellevue.

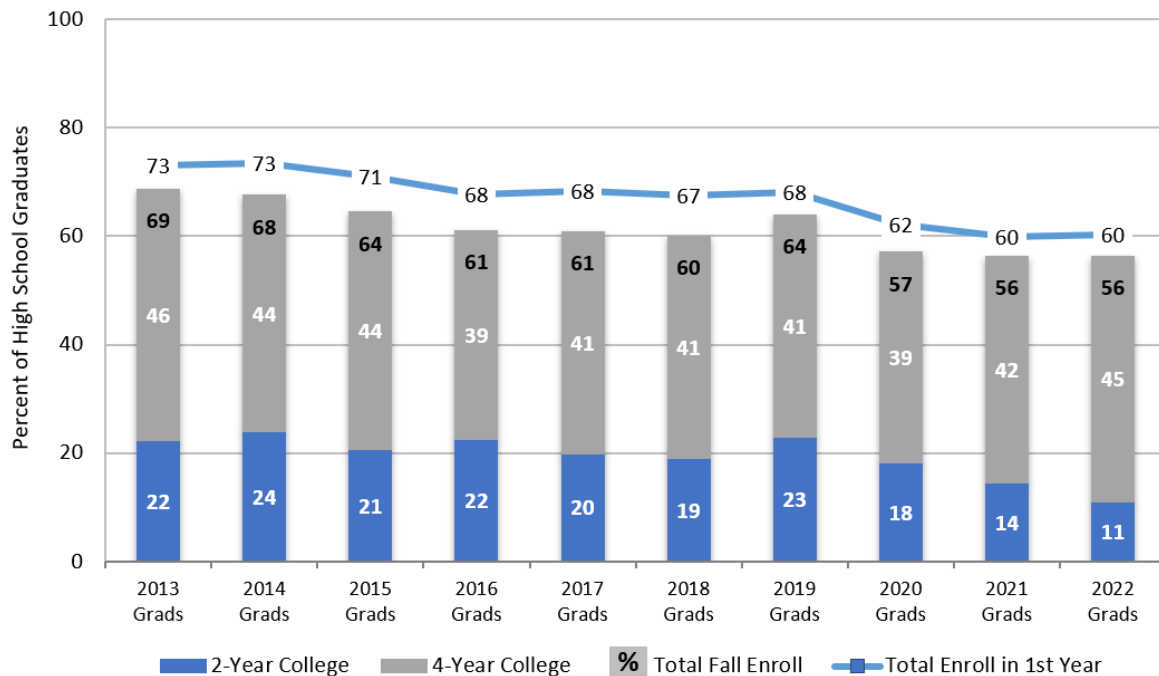
Figure 13. FAFSA Completion Rate for Districts and Washington State



Section 3: College Attendance and Perseverance

The final section of our report tracks the experiences of students once they leave our system and head into post-secondary institutions. Figure 14¹ displays a graphic representation of the 10-year trend in the percent of Bellingham students enrolled in two- and four-year post-secondary institutions during their first year after graduation. Bellingham graduates' enrollment in four-year institutions has held relatively steady over this period and trended a bit higher over the past two years (39 percent attending four-year schools in 2020 and 45 percent in 2022).

Figure 14. BPS Graduates' First Year Post-Secondary Enrollment by Institution Type

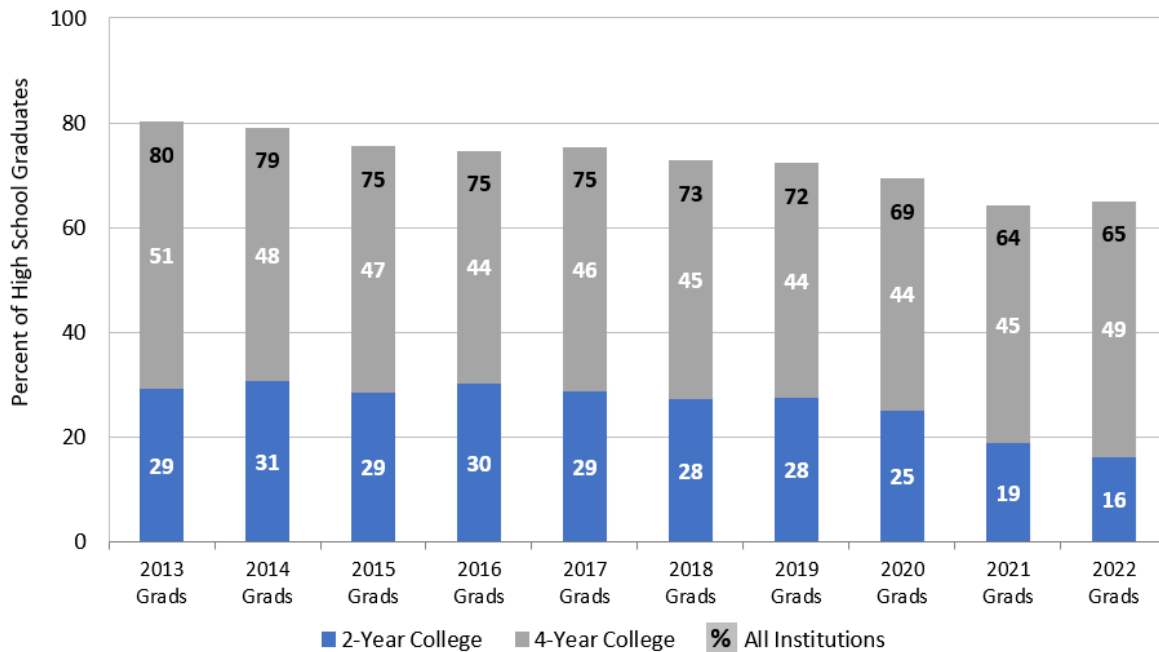


However, the community college rates have dropped during this same period, going from 23 percent of graduates enrolling in community college in 2019 to only 11 percent in 2022. It is also noteworthy that a small percentage of graduates do not enroll in the fall of their first post-secondary year but do enroll at some point during the remainder of that first year. For the class of 2022, for example 56 percent of graduates enrolled in either two- or four-year options in the fall after their graduation, and another 4 percent joined at some point during the first year.

Figure 15 displays the percentage of Bellingham students enrolled in two- and four-year post-secondary institutions two years after graduation. We observed four-year college-going rates increase slightly (45 percent for the 2021 class to 49 percent for the 2022 class), and a slight increase in the percentage of students enrolling in college at any time during the first two years out of high school.

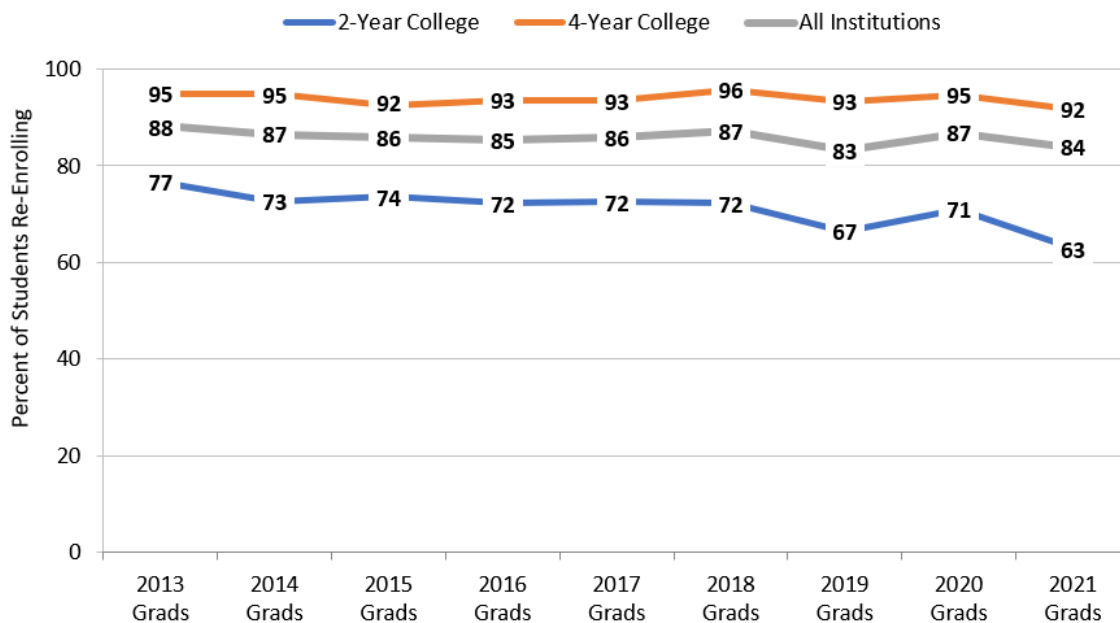
¹ Note: At the time of the writing of this report, the National Student Clearinghouse has not yet updated their database with 2023 information. So, Figure 14 does not include information for the 2023 graduating group.

Figure 15. BPS Graduates' Enrolled in College at Any Time During the First Two Years After High School by Institution Type



We also track the extent to which our graduates who enroll in either two-year or four-year schools after high school persist in college into their second year. Trends in persistence in college enrollment shown by the percentage of students returning for a second year of college are displayed in Figure 16. Bellingham graduates' persistence into a second year of post-secondary

Figure 16. Percent of BPS Student Who Enrolled in College the First Year After High School Graduation and Returned for a Second Year



schooling decreased overall and at both two-year and four-year schools. 84 percent of our graduates from 2021 who enrolled in either two-year or four-year colleges persisted into a second year. Consistent with the observed drop in two-year college enrollment, the biggest decrease in persistence came in the population of our graduates who enrolled in two-year colleges.

Given the continuing decrease in enrollment of our graduates into community college over the past couple of years, we were curious to see where students were heading for college and how that looks now compared to a few years ago. Figure 17 displays the top 10 most attended two- or four-year schools by Bellingham graduates for the years 2019 and 2022. Whatcom Community College (WCC) ranked as the number one school enrolling the highest number of our graduates in each of these years, but as the data reveal WCC enrollment of our graduates in 2022 was literally half of the number enrolled in 2019, pre-pandemic. This is consistent with the data reported earlier demonstrating the continued decline in two-year college attendance by Bellingham graduates.

Figure 17. Top 10 Post-Secondary Institutions by Enrollment of BPS Graduates for 2019 and 2022.

Institutions	2022		2019	
	Rank	Enrolled	Rank	Enrolled
Whatcom Community College	1	93	1	196
Western Washington University	2	90	2	87
University Of Washington - Seattle	3	47	3	42
Washington State University- Pullman	4	29	5	24
Bellingham Technical College	5	28	4	39
Montana State University - Bozeman	6	15	22	4
California Polytechnic State University	7	9	--	--
San Diego State University	8	9	--	--
Central Washington University	9	7	7	9
Gonzaga University	10	6	9	6
Oregon State University	--	--	8	8
Skagit Valley College	--	--	6	10
Seattle University	--	--	10	6

Finally, Figure 18 displays trends in post-school activities for Bellingham and Washington state students with IEPs in their first year after leaving high school over the years 2018-2022. It is important to understand that this data display is built on phone survey data of graduates and non-graduates who were served with an IEP during their time in school. Respondents are drawn from those who left school at the end of a school year and thus are from different graduation year cohort groups. As such, the data displayed here is drawn from across multiple cohorts of students and does not correspond to cohort graduation data for students with IEPs presented earlier. That said, as in prior years, we include these data because they are collected systematically and help with understanding the post-secondary experiences of students who were served with IEPs during their time with Bellingham schools.

Figure 18. Trends in Engagement in the First Year After High School for BPS and Washington State Students with IEPs

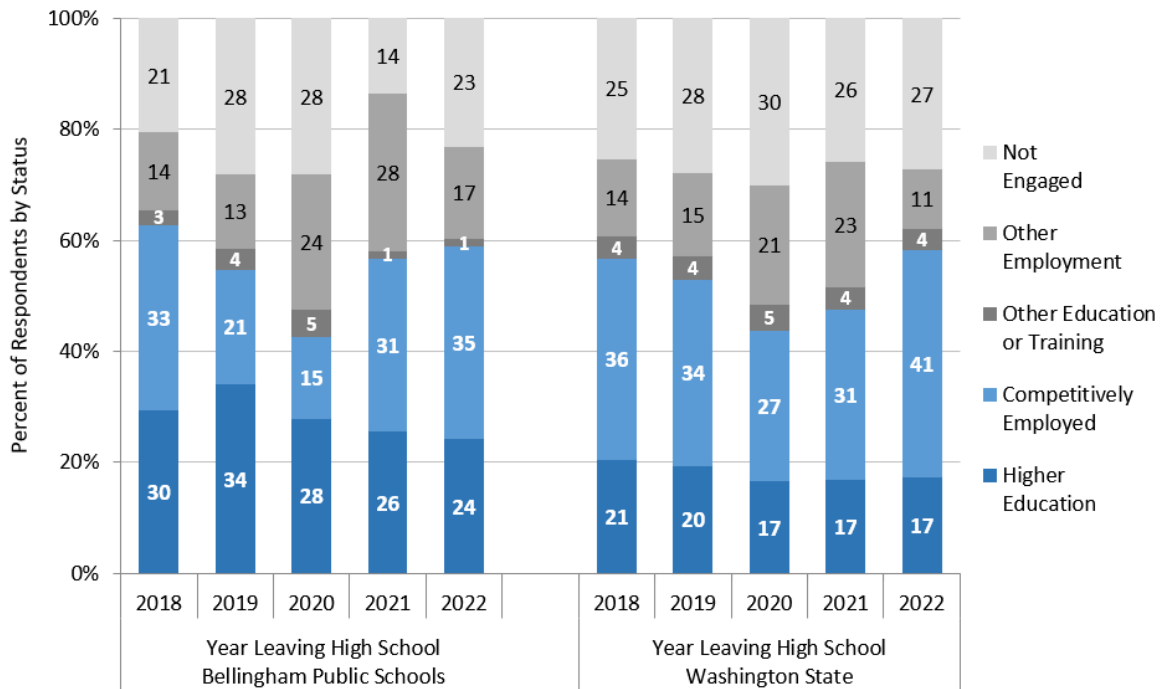
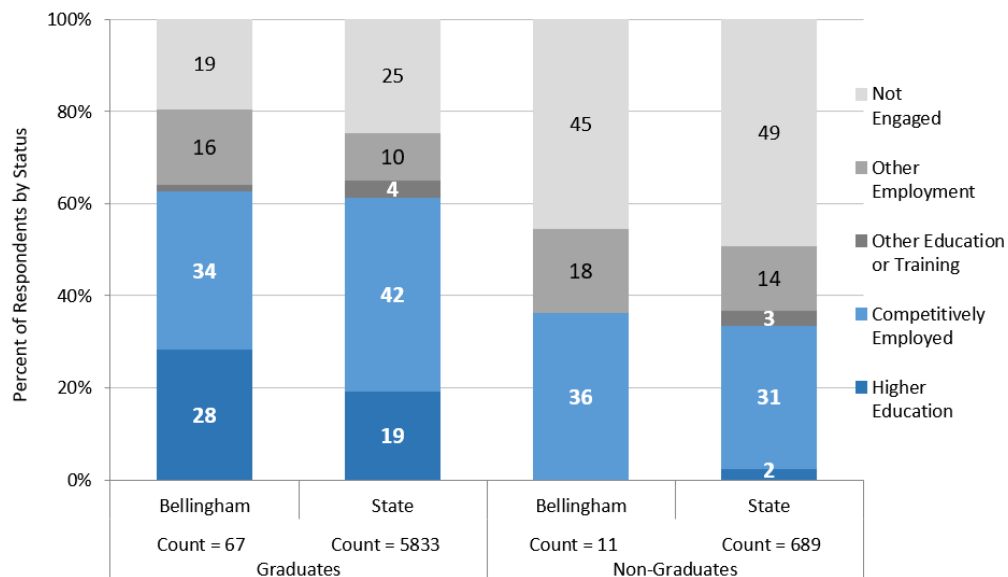


Figure 19 displays the district and state data for graduates and non-graduates with IEPs; notably non-graduates included in the Bellingham sample numbered only 11 in the 2022 cohort. A higher percentage of our graduates with IEPs entered higher education settings than the state average, and a smaller percentage of our Bellingham graduates with IEPs end up in the “not engaged” category than the state average.

Figure 19 Graduates and Non-Graduates with IEPs Engagement in First Year After Leaving School in 2022 in BPS and Washington State



Summary Discussion

Ensuring that students graduate from our schools continues to be a foundational goal, and over the decade from 2012-2022, graduation rates for Bellingham students increased from 79 percent to 89 percent. Below are some summary challenges from our Ends 2.1, part 2 analysis, along with some of the positive highlights:

Challenges:

- Community college-going rates have dropped, going from 23 percent of graduates enrolling in community college in 2019 to only 11 percent in 2022. Whatcom Community College continues to be the top percentage choice of our graduates, but this enrollment has dropped by half since 2019.
- Bellingham graduates' persistence into a second year of post-secondary schooling decreased overall and at both two-year and four-year schools. 84 percent of our graduates from 2021 who enrolled in either two-year or four-year colleges persisted into a second year.
- For students from low-income households, across all subcategories we tracked, that factor alone continues to have a tangible negative impact on graduation chances.

Positive Highlights:

- Bellingham graduates a higher percentage of students in the seventh year than any of our high bar comparison districts, with the most recent seven-year cohort (class of 2020) attaining a 93 percent graduation rate.
- Five-year rates for district graduates increased by a percent in year-over-year comparisons, while dropout rates decreased by a point.
- Five-year rates increased slightly for students who are Hispanic/Latinx, student with IEPs and students from low-income households.
- The graduation gap between Hispanic/Latinx and non-Hispanic/Latinx Bellingham students decreased to 6 percent from 8 percent in year-over-year comparison.
- The graduation gap between groups of Bellingham graduates identified as low income and non-low income narrowed by 6 percent in year-over-year comparison.
- 90 percent of our students with disabilities graduated by the end of their seventh year of high school in the most recent cohort.
- Advanced placement course completion increased 3 percent between 2022 and 2023, CTE dual credit course completion increased by 13 percent, college in the high school course taking increased 2 percent and running start participation increased 2 percent for Bellingham students.
- We noted increasing percentages of female student participation in CTE courses like Commercial Construction Trades (6 percent female), Manufacturing Foundations (8 percent female); Precision Production Trades Foundations (13 percent female) and Woodworking Foundation (21 percent female).
- More students are choosing a CTE graduation pathway, and percentages appear to be relatively similar between non-low income and low-income students.
- A higher percentage of our graduates with IEPs entered higher education settings than the state average, and a smaller percentage of our Bellingham graduates with IEPs end up in the "not engaged" category than the state average.

This second installment of the Ends 2.1 monitoring report, in combination with the earlier Part 1 report, is offered as evidence of a reasonable interpretation of Ends 2.1 that aligns with our vision, mission and outcomes, and is supported by data that demonstrates progress toward achievement of these Ends. I appreciate and value the direction provided by the school board to focus on the development of exceptional students with strong character, a passion for learning and graduates who are ready for the widest range of educational and vocational options to support a diversity of life choices.