

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent
DATE: March 19, 2026
SUBJECT: Monitoring Report 2.1, Part 2

I certify that the following is accurate as of March 19, 2026.

Policy Type: Ends
Policy: Ends 2.1
Last Updated: 5/18/2022

Introduction

I am pleased to submit this Ends monitoring report to the school district's board of directors. This report 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 14, 2026, meeting.

The first section of the report once again explores the graduation rates of Bellingham students, both on time and extended, highlighting trends in overall student drop-out rates as well as those within specific subgroups. We also compare the graduation trends of Bellingham Public Schools (BPS) with those of 38 demographically similar districts. The second section reports on trends in college preparatory and career and technical preparatory course enrollments. The report's final sections focus on Bellingham graduates' post-secondary enrollment rates, examining their participation in higher education, including both two-year and four-year institutions.

The revised Ends 2.1 policy focuses us on comparing progress to districts that are demographically like Bellingham, as well as to three high bar peer districts (Bellevue, Olympia, Shoreline) whose populations of students eligible for free/reduced priced meals fall below those eligible in our district. The inclusion of these comparisons per Ends 2.1 policy are aspirational, providing a sense of whether performance is approaching or closing the gap with these districts that typically out-perform us on the metrics we track in these reports. 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 Ends 2.1, Part 2 report, we focus on numbers three and four above.

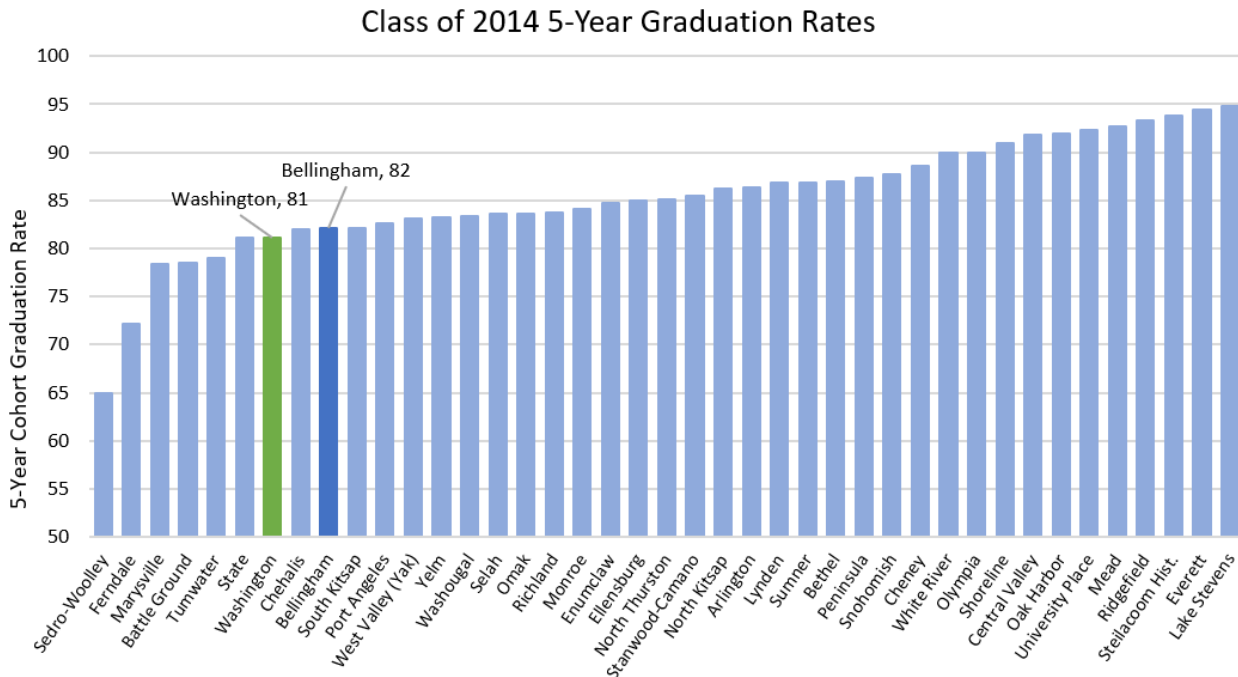
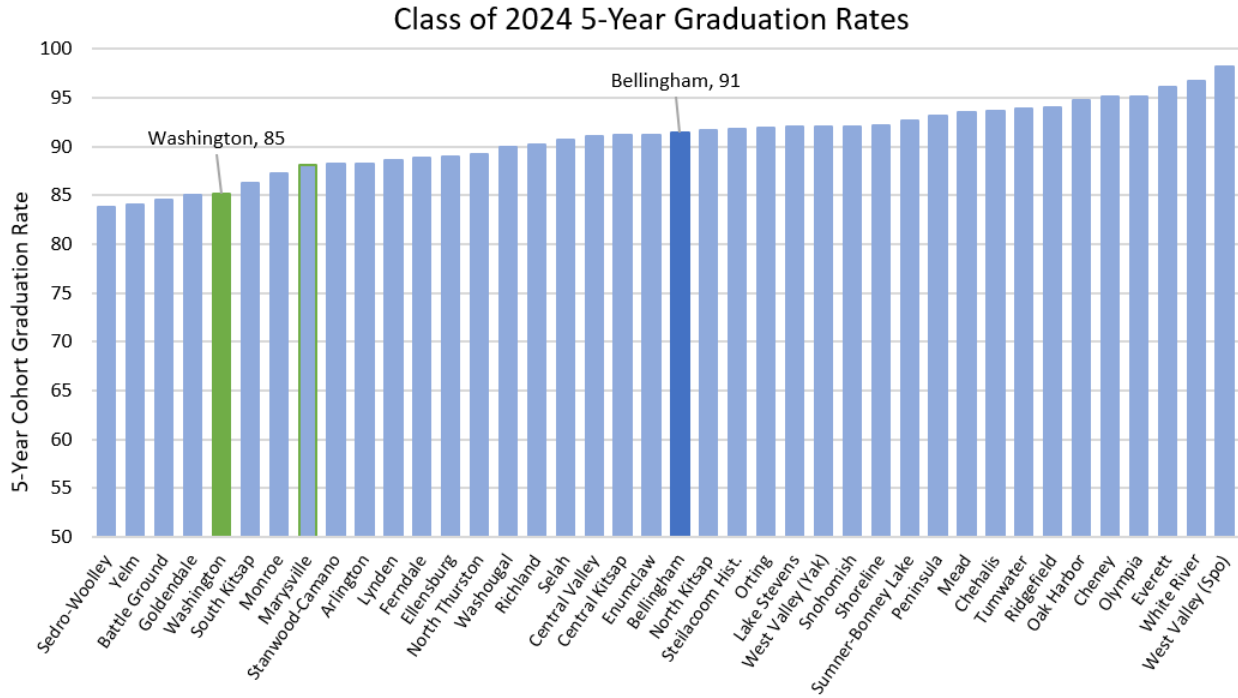
III. High School Graduation Trends

Figure 1 displays overall graduation rates of students in Bellingham over time, compared with other districts. Specifically, this graph displays the graduation rates for the five-year adjusted cohorts of the class of 2014 and class of 2024 for Bellingham and 38 demographically comparable or high-bar peer districts and Washington state. This is the same group of comparable districts we relied on for comparisons in the report on Ends 2.1, Part 1 earlier this year.

Tracking steady progress over the last decade, graduation rates for Bellingham students increased from 82 percent in 2014 to 91 percent in 2024. This figure puts our district 6 percentage points above the state average and above the midpoint of the 38 comparable districts.

We continue to track each cohort of students out into the seventh year of high school to assess the progress toward ensuring graduation for all, regardless of timeline. Figure 2 displays the four-year and extended graduation rates for Bellingham, our three high-bar peer districts and Washington state. The most recent seven-year cohort (class of 2022) attained

Figure 1. 5-Year Adjusted Graduation Rates for 2014 and 2024



a 92 percent graduation rate, an increase of 1 percent above the cohort before. As noted above, our five-year rate improved by 1 percent in year-over-year comparison, from 90 to 91 percent. The six-year rate also improved by 1 percentage point in comparison to the prior year, moving from 90 to 91 percent.

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

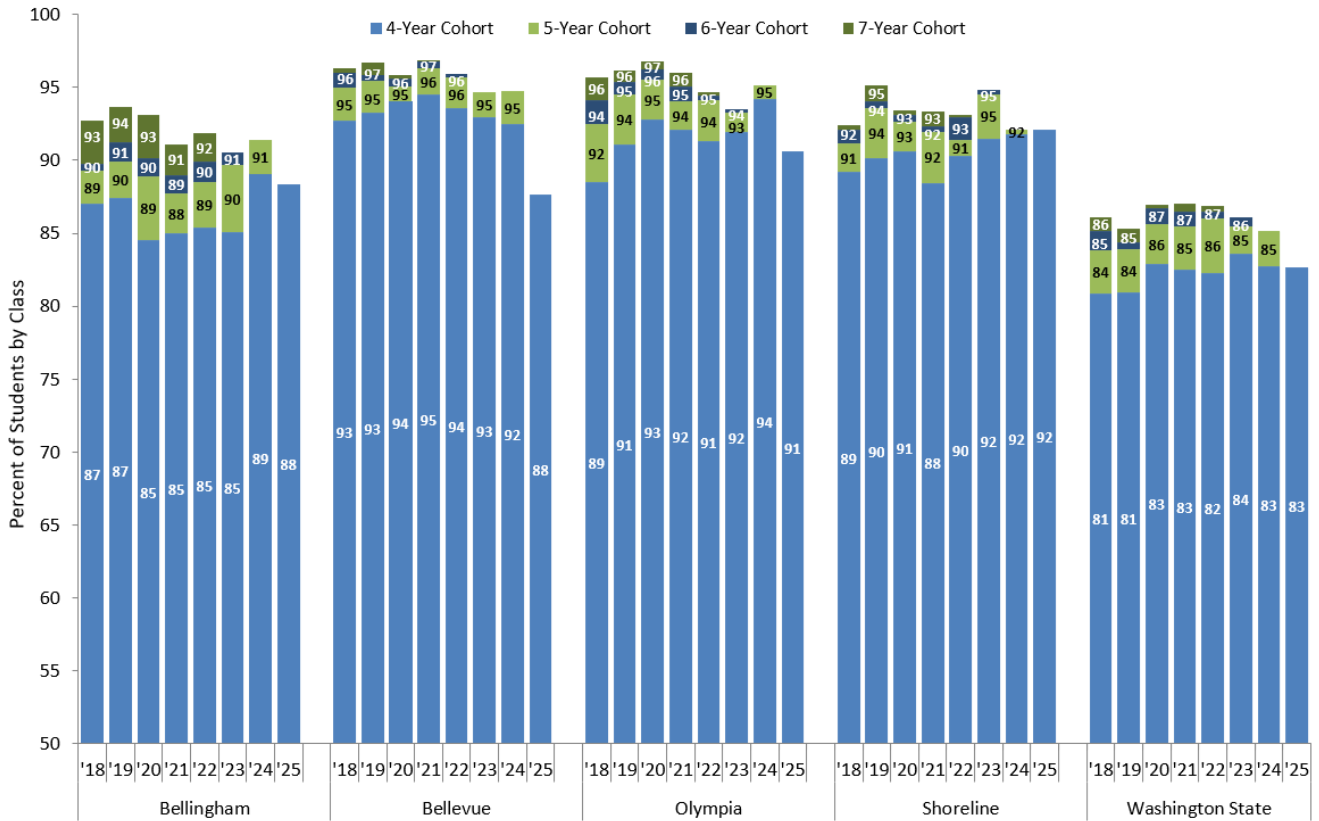
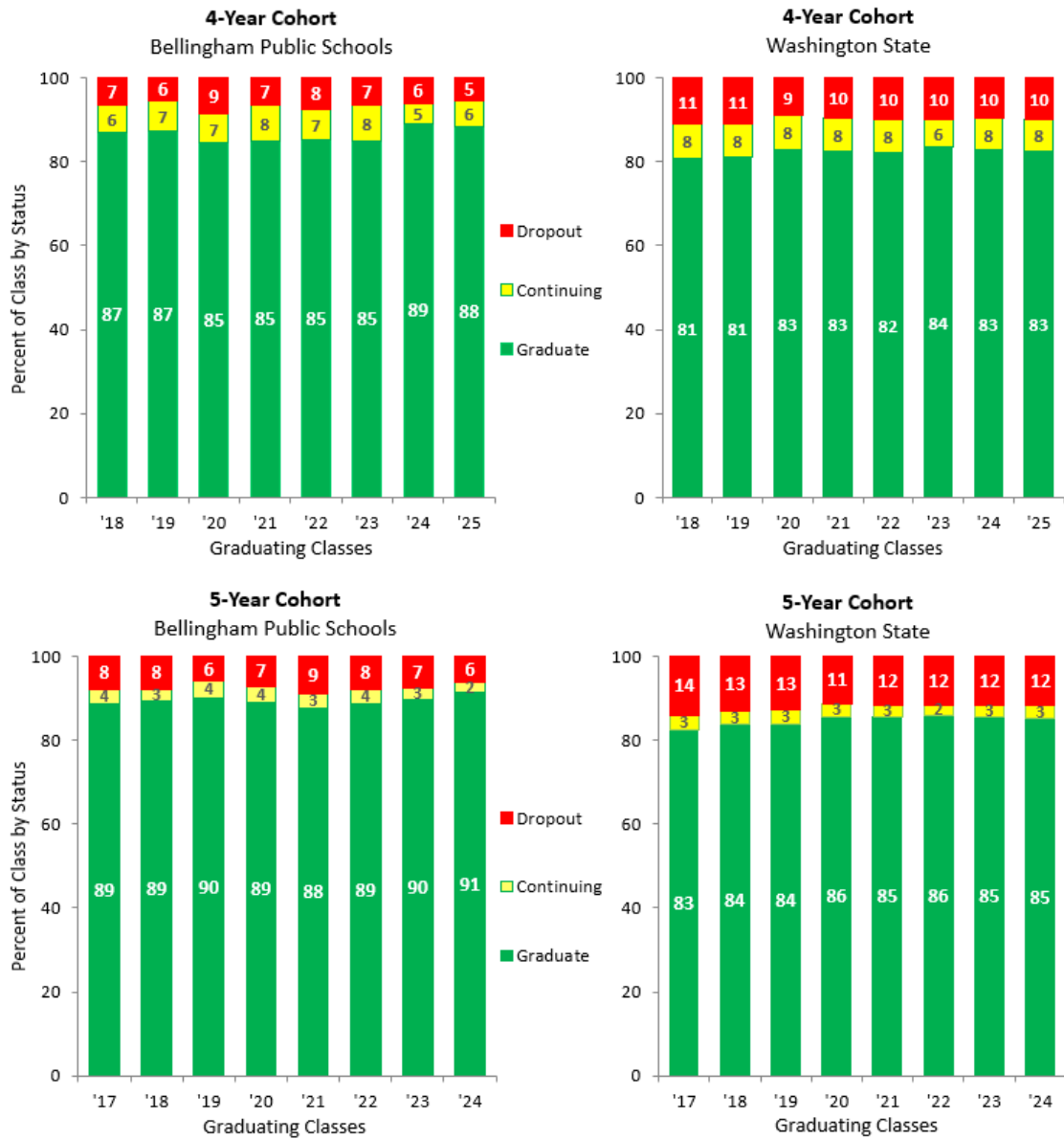


Figure 3 graphs four-year and five-year cohorts' graduation rates (green), rates for students continuing progress toward graduation (yellow) and dropout rates (red) over the past seven years for Bellingham and Washington state. The four-year graduation rate for Bellingham students was 88 percent, down 1 percent in year-over-year comparison, while the four-year state average held steady at 83 percent compared with 2024. Last year in this report, we noted that starting with the class of 2025, the Graduation Requirement Emergency Waiver (GREW), the special two credit waiver put in place by the Washington State Board of Education in response to the pandemic is no longer available. We wondered about impact on graduation rates as a result, given the reliance on those two credits in a number of student cases. While the four-year rate did dip by 1 percent, we were pleased that there was not a precipitous drop off in graduation rates overall.

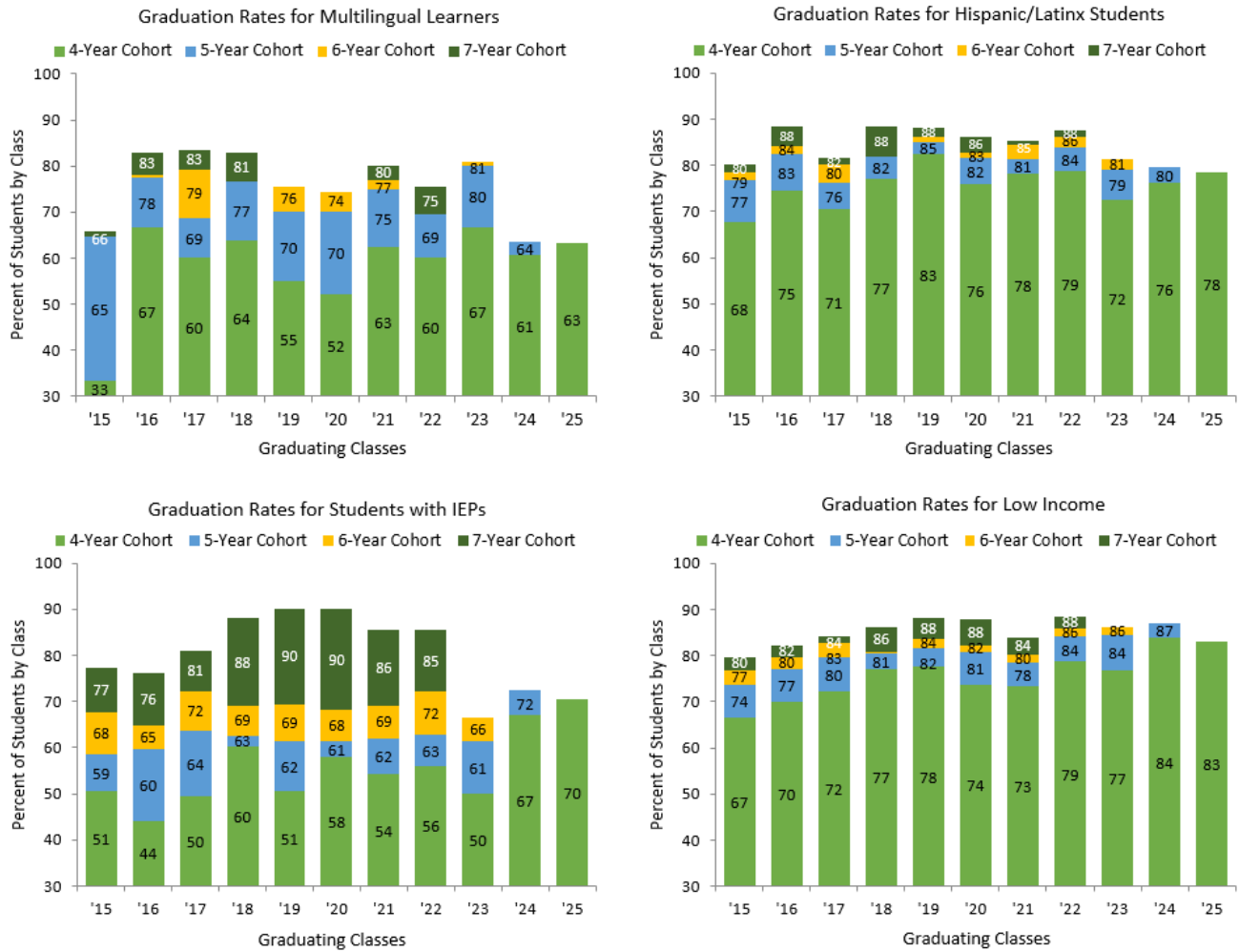
The percentage of students who dropped out of high school hit an all-time low of 5 percent with the 2025 four-year cohort, with another 6 percent continuing on with their high school education past the four-year mark. As noted earlier, the five-year graduation rate in Bellingham increased another percentage point in year-over-year comparisons moving from 90 percent to 91 percent, while the five-year rate for the state held steady in year-over-year comparisons. The year-over-year dropout rate for the five-year cohort also decreased by a point in Bellingham and held steady across the state. Higher graduation rates correspond with these trends that show a shrinking percentage of students dropping out of our high schools over time.

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



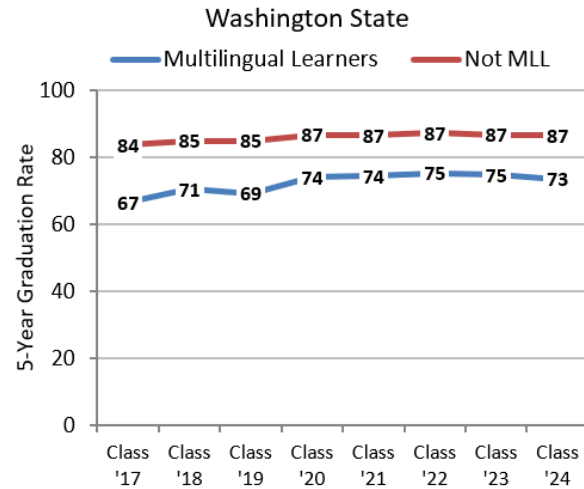
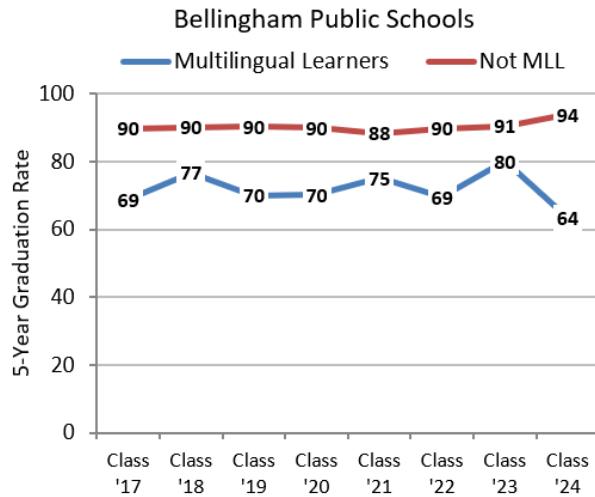
Examination of graduation trends for four larger Bellingham student subgroups also revealed some positive news. Figure 4 displays extended graduation rate trends over the past 11 years for Bellingham's multilingual learners (ML), students identifying as Hispanic/Latinx, students served in special education with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and students from low-income households. Four-year graduation rates for multilingual students, Hispanic/Latinx students and students with IEPs all trended up with this past year's cohort. The four-year rate for students with IEPs hit an all-time high of 70 percent. Higher five-year graduation rates were observed for Hispanic/Latinx students, students with IEPs and students identified as low income.

Figure 4. Extended Graduation Rates Trends for Bellingham Student Subgroups



In addition to the internal comparisons over time, we examined gaps between contrasting subgroups of students compared with the overall statewide picture. Figure 5 shows the graduation gap between Bellingham’s multilingual and non-multilingual learners. After a significant decrease in the gap was observed last year (9 percentage point separating ML and non-ML students), the gap widened quite significantly this year, while the gap across the state remained flat. As we noted in last year’s report, while it was great to observe a dramatic decrease in the multilingual graduation gap as we saw in the analysis a year ago, we recognize that, given the relatively small *n* size of our Bellingham ML population, this gap tends to vary widely in year-over-year comparisons. With this year’s cohort we observed a significant widening comparison even as the Hispanic/Latinx average graduation rate popped

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



back up to 80 percent. The average gap across the state between these two groups held steady at around 6 percent.

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

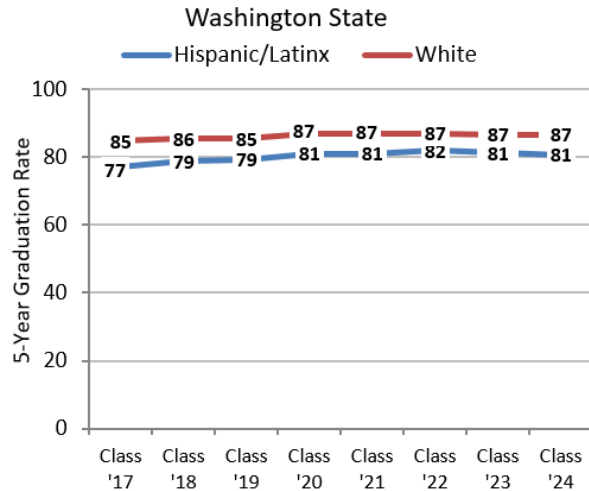
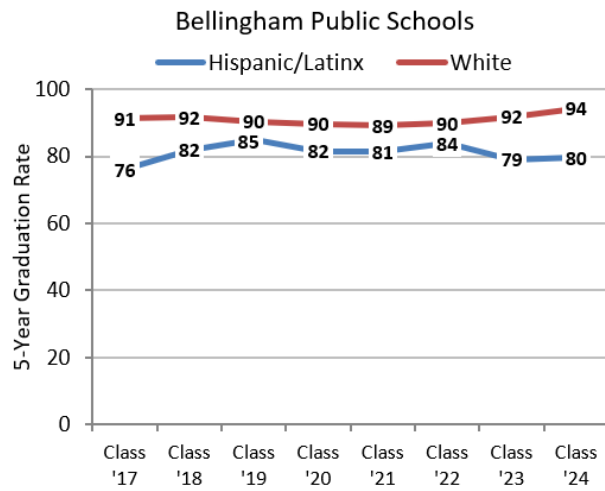


Figure 7 shows that the graduation gap between groups of Bellingham graduates identified as low income and non-low income decreased to 9 percent in year-over-year comparison, while the gap remained approximately 13 percent across the state.

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

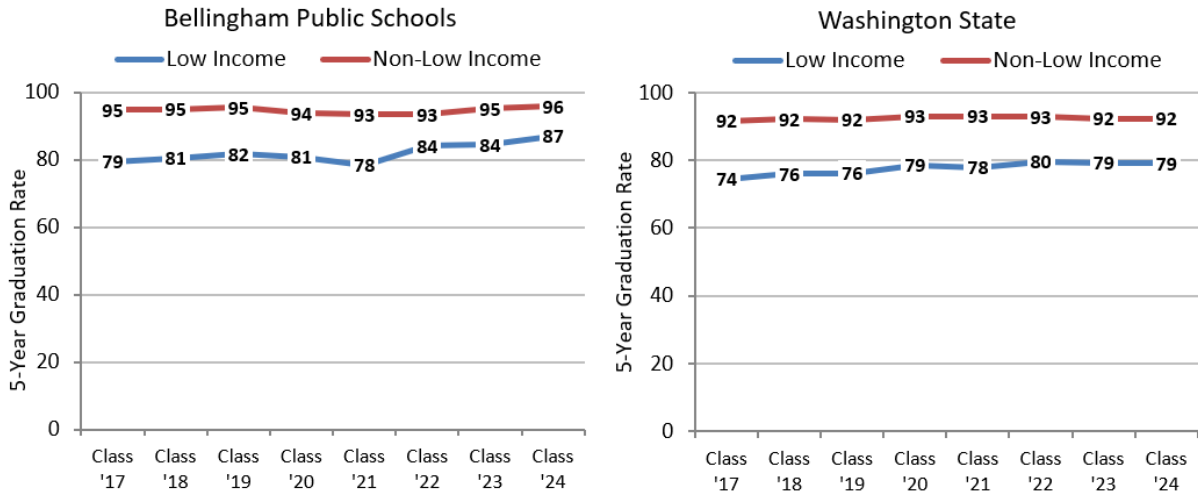
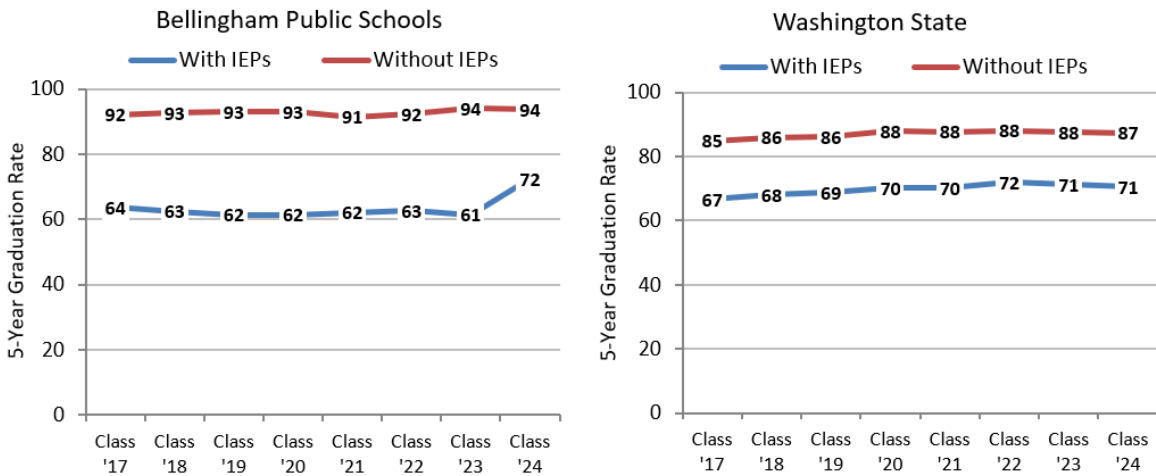


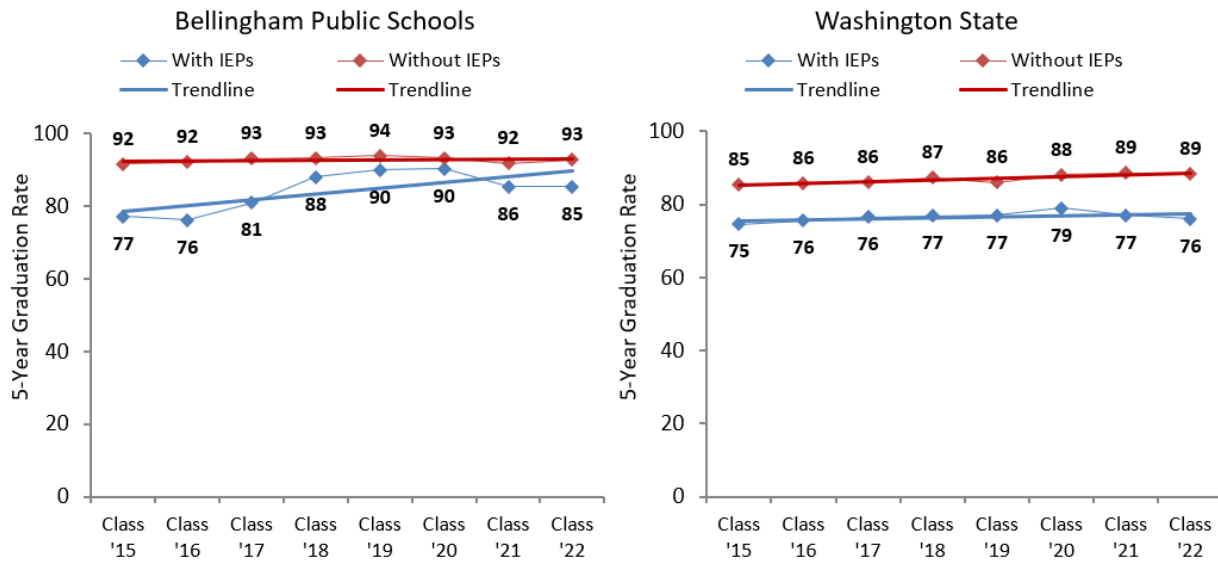
Figure 8 shows the graduation gap between students served in special education and those without narrowed significantly in year-over-year comparisons from 33 percent to 22 percent among our students in the class of 2024, while statewide, this gap held relatively constant at about 16 percent. It was positive to observe the five-year gap decrease locally here in Bellingham for this 2024 cohort subgroup of students.

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



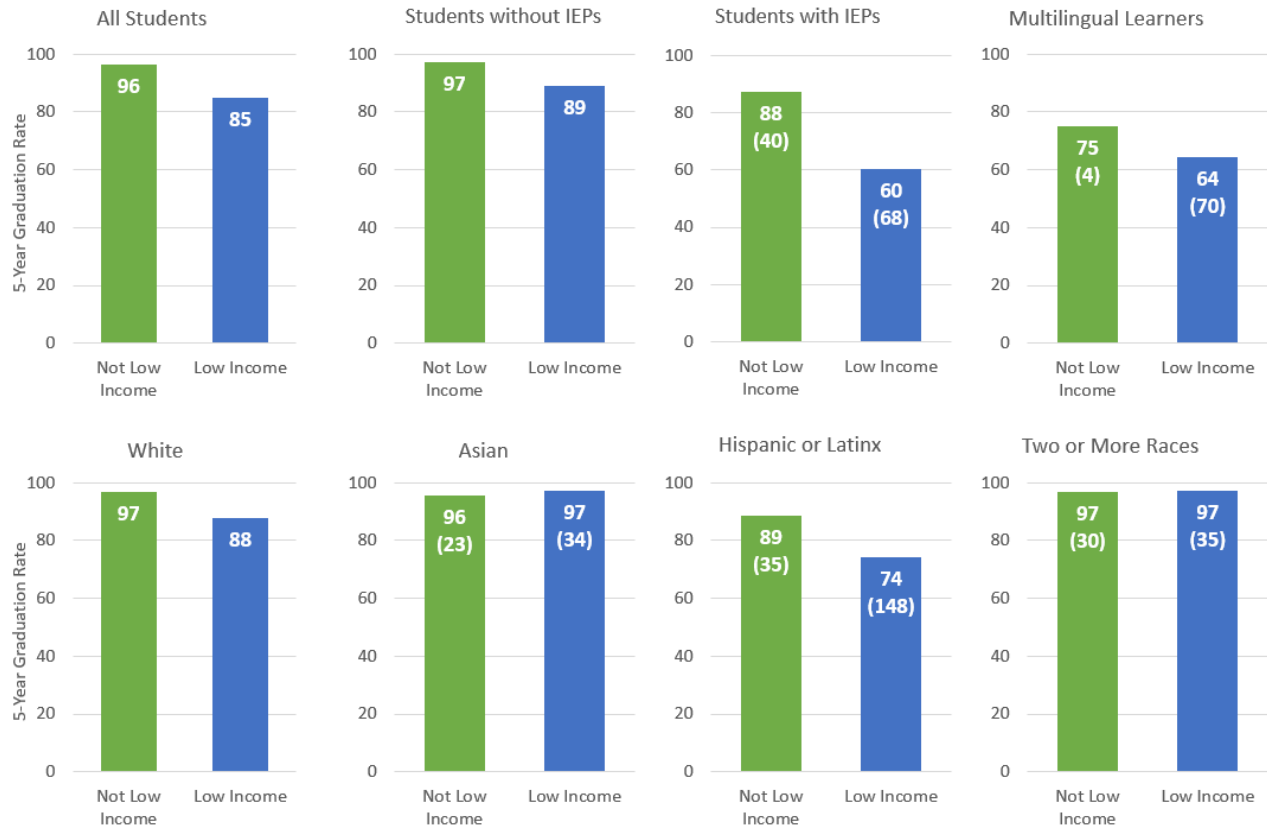
Recall the data on the four-year graduation rate for students served in special education noted positive results, again hitting another new high. Last year’s four-year graduation rate of 67 percent for the class of 2024 was the highest noted for any cohort of students with IEPs in the last 10 years, and this year’s rate hit the 70 percent mark, which was again a new high-water mark. Also notable is the fact that our seven-year graduation rate for students served in special education once again held above 85 percent. We ran a simple regression analysis on the seven-year gap data that visually represents how Bellingham’s gap between these two groups has been gradually closing over the past eight years, while the state gap has widened slightly. Figure 9 shows the trend data overlaid with the regression lines.

Figure 9. Gap Trends in 7-Year Graduation Rates – With and Without IEPs



We again assessed the impact of the intersection of income level on graduation rates for the various student cohorts. Figure 10 displays five-year graduation rates for all Bellingham students

Figure 9. Intersection of Income with 5-year Grad Rates – BPS Student Subgroups 2024

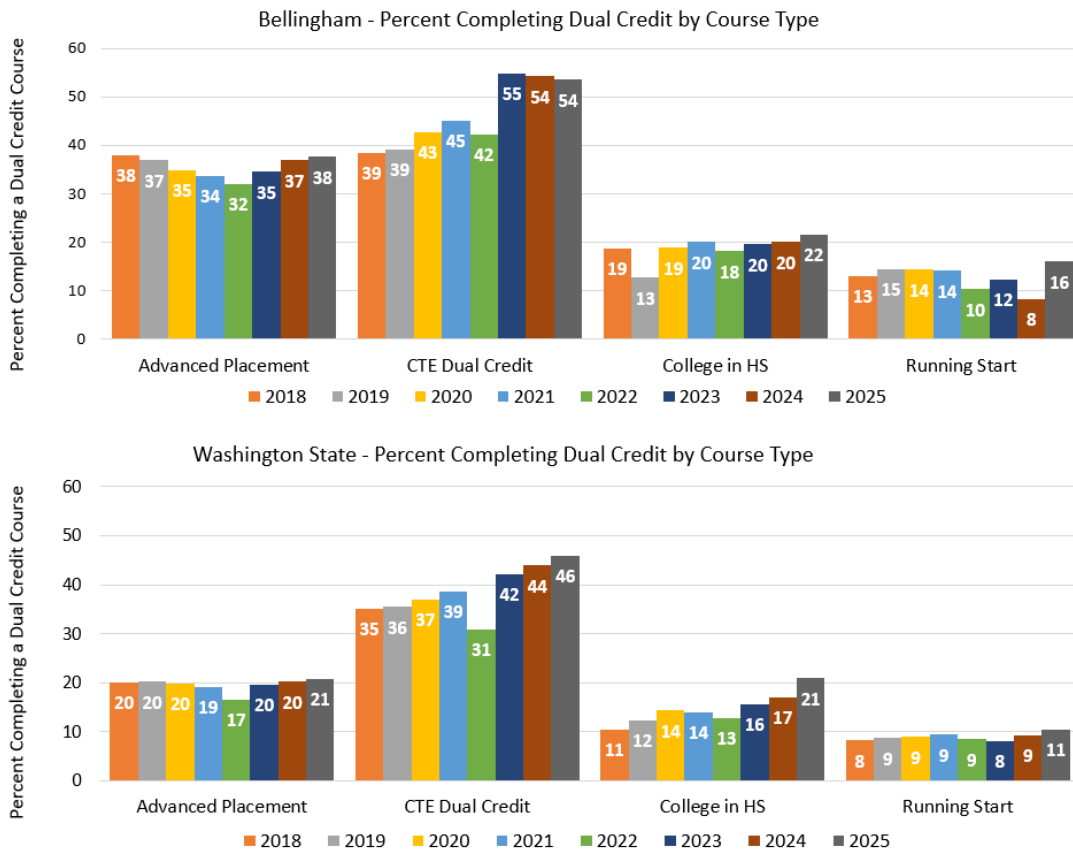


(upper left) and subgroups identifying as Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, two or more races, White, students served in special education, students not served in special education and multilingual learners each broken down by low income and non-low-income household identification. As with prior year analyses, data reveal that income gaps in graduation rates exist for most subgroups; if a student is from a low-income household, that factor alone has a tangible negative predictive impact on graduation chances for most groups. As noted in Figure 10, overall, 96 percent of students identified as non-low income and 85 percent of students identified as low income graduated in 2024 in our district. Data from two of these comparisons again stood out as not following this trend, students comprising the Asian and Two or More Races subgroups, both of which are relatively smaller *n* size groups.

IV. Preparation for Post-High-School Opportunities

Ways students prepare for post-high-school opportunities include 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 11 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 (CIHS) and Running Start - for Bellingham and Washington state.

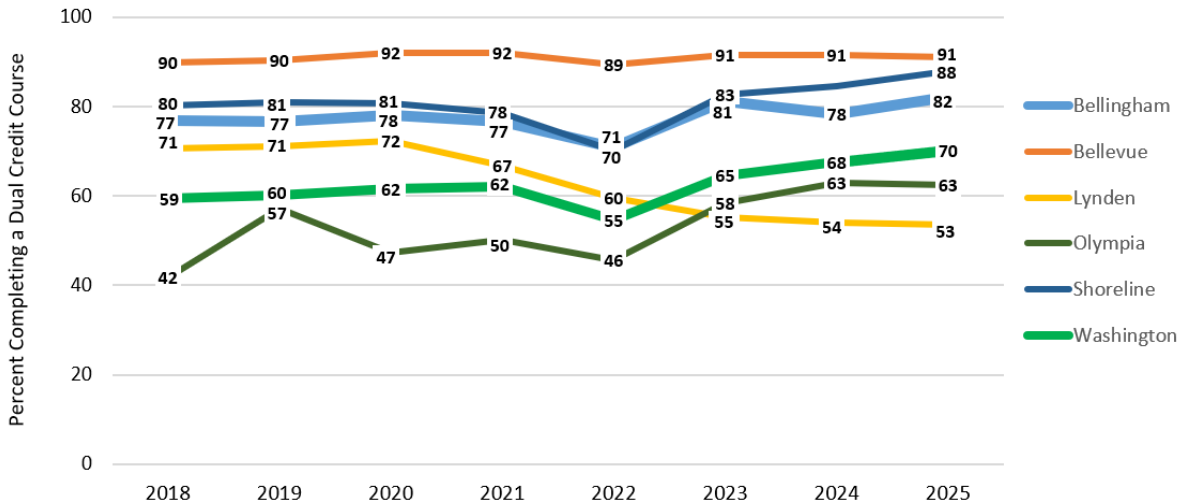
Figure 11. Percent Completing Dual Credit by Course Type



For Bellingham students, Advanced Placement (AP) course completion increased 1 percent between 2024 and 2025, the fourth annual year-over-year increase we have observed in a row in that category. Students completing a Career and Technical Education (CTE) dual credit course remained constant at 54 percent, while the percentage of students completing a College in the High School (CIHS) course increased to 22 percent year-over-year. Running Start course participation increased by 8 percent as well in year-over-year comparisons.

As a district, our students' completion of dual credit courses, as noted in Figure 12, places us above the state and peer districts Lynden and Olympia and below Bellevue and Shoreline.

Figure 12. Trends in High School Students Completing Dual Credit Courses



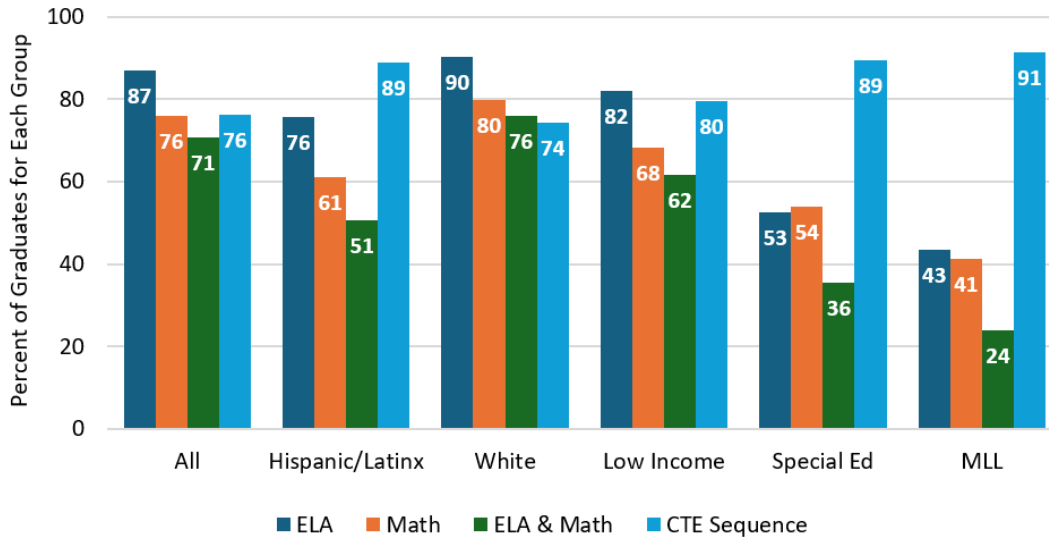
The eight-period schedule that has been implemented in the high schools over the past several years has created greater opportunity for additional access to CIHS, AP courses and CTE dual-credit courses. With the impending change to a seven-period schedule, we believe the opportunities will remain plentiful. However, we will continue to track these numbers as we move into the new schedule, which will offer one fewer available course slot per semester.

Last year we reported for the first time on Bellingham students' high school pathways data. Students' choice of pathways must align with their postsecondary goals as described in their High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) and provide students with multiple avenues to show readiness for their individual education and career goals. Figure 13 displays graduation pathways data from Bellingham's graduating class of 2025, broken out for all students and four major student subgroups. Data displayed show whether a student completed the English Language Arts (ELA) pathway, the Math pathway, both the ELA/Math pathways combined CTE or a CTE course pathway. Data are presented by percentage in categories for students overall and for student subgroups.

The ELA and Math pathways include students who either met standard in ELA or Math through state testing, dual credit courses, and/or AP, SAT or ACT tests. The combination of ELA and Math includes the percentage of students who completed any combination of both ELA and

Math options. The CTE sequence shows the percentage of students who completed a two-credit sequence of a CTE pathway. As the data reveal, the CTE course sequences provide very important pathway options for all students, and particularly those who are ML, have IEPs, are from low-income families or who identify as Hispanic or Latinx. In addition, while not represented on the graphic below, a small percentage of Bellingham students, fewer than 1 percent overall, complete their graduation pathway by taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) exam.

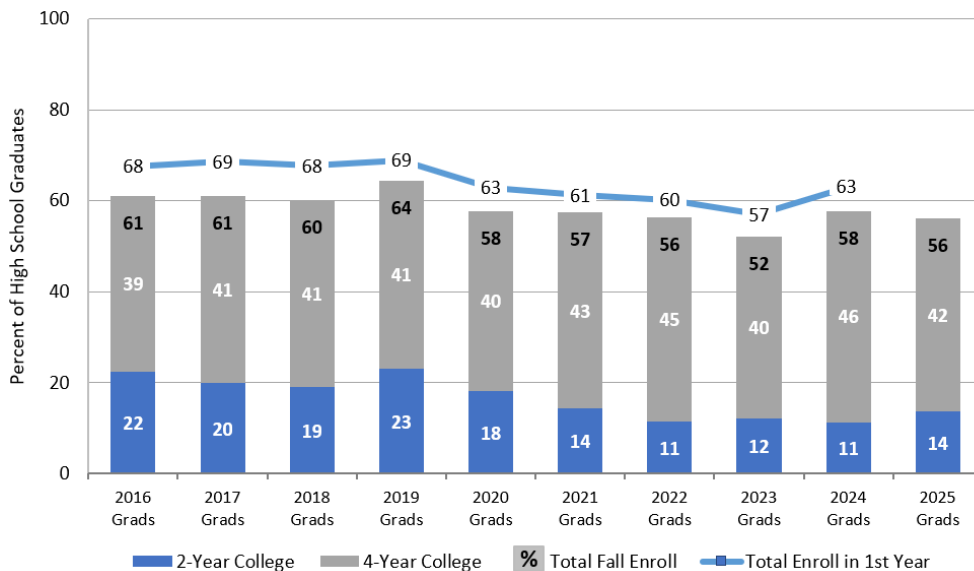
Figure 13. 2025 Graduation Pathways Completed by 2025 Bellingham Student Graduates



Section 3: College Attendance and Perseverance

We report annually on students who graduate from our school district and head into post-secondary institutions. Figure 14 displays a graphic representation of the 10-year trend in the

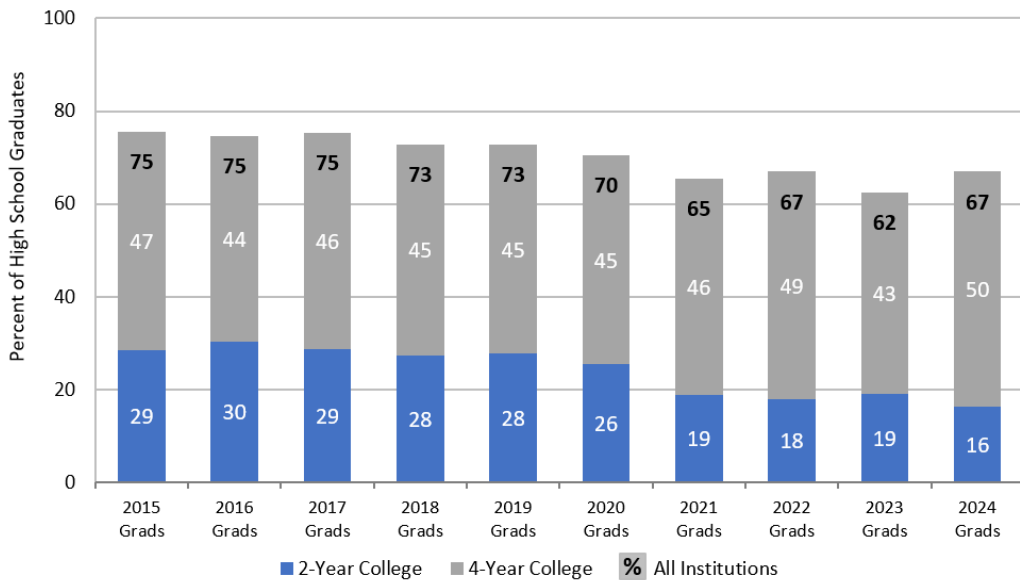
Figure 14. BPS Graduates’ First Year Post-Secondary Enrollment by Institution Type



percentage of Bellingham students enrolled in two- and four-year post-secondary institutions during their first year after high school graduation. Bellingham graduates’ overall total enrollment in post-secondary institutions dropped slightly in year-over-year comparison from 58 percent in 2024 to 56 percent total fall enrollment in 2025. Notably, there was an overall rise in two-year college enrollment (from 11 percent to 14 percent) while four-year college enrollment dipped from 46 percent to 42 percent of Bellingham graduates overall. Post-secondary going percentages remain lower than the pre-pandemic high point of 64 percent in 2019. Also note 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. The 2025 final enrollment number is not yet known (students will continue to enroll into the spring term) but this number for 2024 was an increase of 6 percent from 2023, up from 57 percent to 63 percent overall.

Figure 15 displays the percentage of Bellingham students enrolled in two- and four-year post-secondary institutions two years after graduation. Overall, these numbers are up for the class of 2024 to a total of 67 percent of graduates enrolled in college at any time during their first two years after high school. We observed four-year college-going rates increased (43 percent for the 2023 class to 50 percent for the 2024 class), while the percentage of students enrolling in a two-year college dropped 3 percent (19 percent for the 2023 class to 16 percent for the 2024 class).

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 school after high school persist in college into a 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 schooling remained at 94 percent overall with a slight increase in the percent persisting in two-year schools and 1 percent dip among those persisting in four-year schools.

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

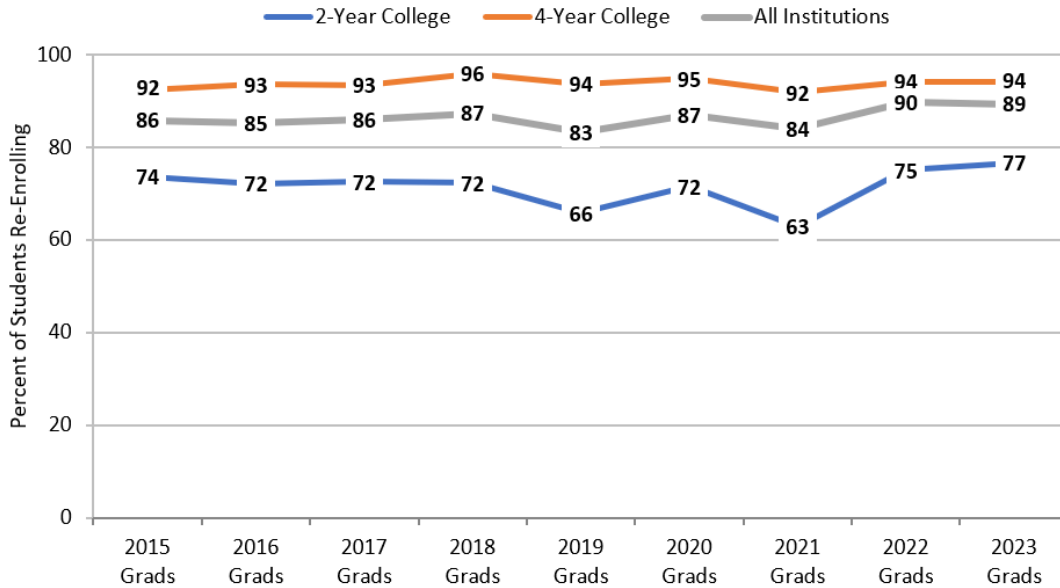


Figure 17 displays some data about where our graduates matriculate. The top 10 most attended two- or four-year schools by Bellingham graduates for 2025 ranked Western Washington University (WWU) as the school enrolling the highest number of graduates from the most recent graduating class, with Whatcom Community College (WCC) enrollment ranked number two. The University of Washington (UW) has consistently ranked in third place over the past five years, followed by Bellingham Technical College (BTC) at number four.

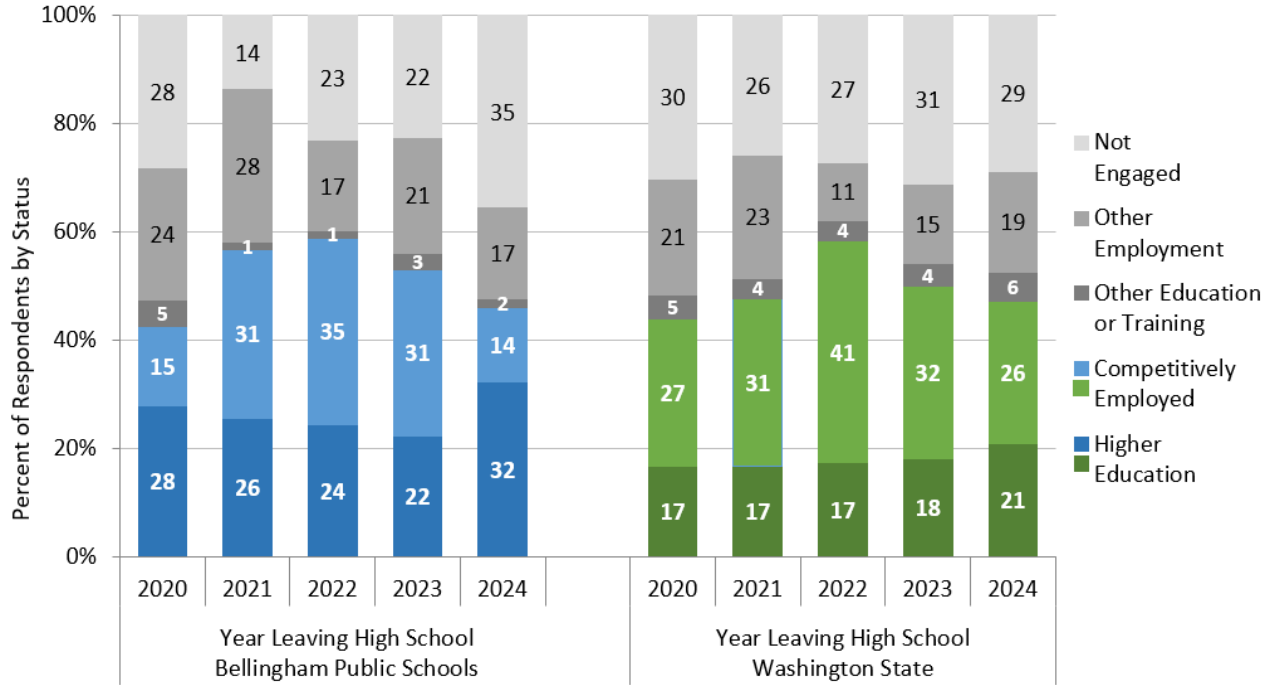
Figure 17. Top 10 Post-Secondary Institutions by Enrollment for BPS Graduates

Rank	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
1	Western Washington University	Whatcom CC	Whatcom CC	Whatcom CC	Whatcom CC
2	Whatcom Community College	Western	Western	Western	Western
3	University Of Washington	U of Washington	U of Washington	U of Washington	U of Washington
4	Bellingham Technical College	Bham Tech	Bham Tech	Bham Tech	Bham Tech
5	Washtington State - Pullman	Washington St	Washington St	Washington St	Washington St
6	Montana State - Bozeman	Montana State	Oregon State	Montana State	Gonzaga
7	Oregon State University	Central	U of Montana	Cal Poly	Oregon State
8	University Of Utah	Oregon State	Gonzaga	San Diego State	Cal Poly
9	Central Washington University	U of Utah	Montana State	Gonzaga	U of Portland
10	Gonzaga University	Gonzaga	Skagit Valley	Central	Montana State

Finally, Figure 18 displays trends in post-school activities for Bellingham and Washington state students served in special education in their first year after leaving high school over the years 2020-2024. The data display for this chart is built on phone survey data of graduates and non-graduates who were served in special education 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.

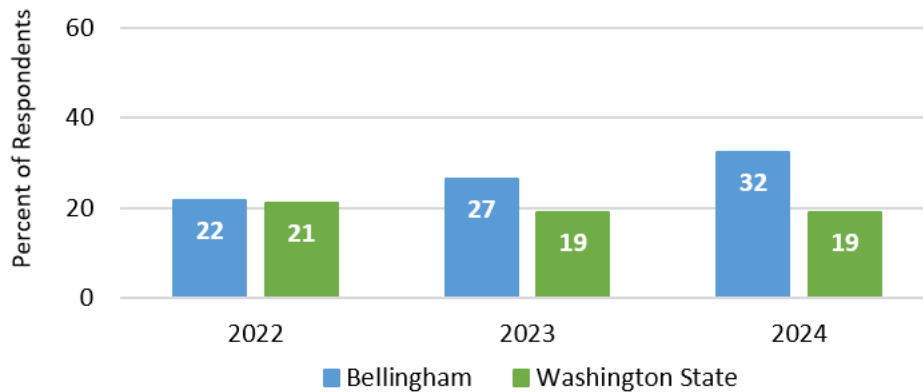
Figure 18. Trends in Engagement in the First Year After High School for BPS and Washington State Students with IEPs



As in prior years, our students report they are engaged at higher levels in higher education than the state average. This year’s survey saw a drop in reported engagement in competitive employment, other education or other employment than state averages. This drop was somewhat confounding, particularly when reflecting on the higher graduation percentages of students with IEPs we reported earlier. As well, this year’s data suggests a higher percent of our students reported as “not engaged” compared to state averages.

Given this, we have also included some data on agency connections after leaving high school for students who have been served on IEPs. Figure 19 displays the percentage of respondents who connected with an adult service agency in the first year since exiting high school. Agencies may include the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) as well as other disability support services. As the data reveal, this percentage increased among our students in each year since 2022.

Figure 19. Agency Connections with First Year after Leaving High School



Summary Discussion

We continue to observe graduation rates as an area of strength for our district. This foundational goal continues to show increasing success over the past decade. Below are some summary challenges or concerns remaining from our Ends 2.1, Part 2 analysis, along with some of the positive highlights.

Challenges/Concerns:

- Four-year graduation rate dipped from 89 percent to 88 percent (possible impact of GREW waiver expiration).
- Year-over-year widening of the multilingual vs. non-multilingual graduation gap.
- Income remains a strong negative predictor of graduation likelihood for most student subgroups.
- Some subgroup graduation-rate fluctuations are influenced by small cohort sizes, complicating trend interpretation.
- First-year post-secondary enrollment dropped from 58 percent to 56 percent (still below the 2019 pre-pandemic high of 64 percent).
- Four-year college enrollment decreased from 46 percent to 42 percent for the most recent class.
- For graduates two years after high school, two-year college enrollment decreased by 3 percentage points.
- Students with IEPs reported lower competitive employment, other education and other employment rates compared with state averages this year.

Positive/Strengths:

- Overall five-year graduation rate rose from 90 percent to 91 percent.
- Seven-year graduation rate reached 92 percent.
- Dropout rate hit an all-time low of 5 percent for the 2025 four-year cohort.
- Continued year-over-year decreases in dropout rates for extended graduation cohorts.

- Students with IEPs reached an all-time high four-year graduation rate of 70 percent, and the five-year graduation gap for students with IEPs compared to those students without IEPs decreased notably (33 percent to 22 percent).
- Low income vs. non-low income graduation gap narrowed (to 9 percent).
- Several subgroups (ML, Hispanic/Latinx, IEP) showed increases in four- or five-year graduation rates.
- AP completion increased for the fourth straight year. CIHS completion increased to 22 percent.
- CTE pathway completion continues to provide strong graduation options—especially beneficial for ML students, students with IEPs, students from low income families and Hispanic/Latinx students.
- Two-year college enrollment increased from 11 percent to 14 percent for first-year graduates.
- Two-year persistence improved; overall college persistence remains strong at 94 percent.
- Two-year overall post-secondary enrollment (within two years after graduation) increased to 67 percent in total for the class of 2024.
- Four-year enrollment within two years increased significantly (43 percent to 50 percent).

We believe this second installment of the Ends 2.1 monitoring report, with the earlier Part 1 report, serves as compelling evidence of progress that is aligned with our vision, mission and desired outcomes. We appreciate the direction provided by the school board in prioritizing the development of exceptional students with strong character and a genuine passion for learning. Our aim remains to ensure that our graduates are thoroughly prepared for a wide range of educational and vocational opportunities, empowering them to make diverse life choices with confidence.