



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Directors

**THROUGH:** Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

**FROM:** Dr. Michael Copland, Deputy Superintendent

**DATE:** February 6, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Ends Monitoring Report 2.1, Part 2

We are pleased to submit this Ends monitoring report (End 2.1, Part 2 – Post-Secondary and Career-Ready Course Participation) to the school district’s Board of Directors. Monitoring reports are intended to provide members of the school board and the community we serve with a snapshot in time of our progress toward the mission, vision and outcomes defined within our district’s strategic plan, *The Bellingham Promise*. As per school board request, our process for reporting on Ends 2.1 during the 2014-15 school year will take place over a series of meetings, beginning with the previously submitted Part 1 report at the December 11, 2014 meeting, and continuing with Part 2 for the February 12, 2015 meeting.

Ends 2.1, Part 1, explored student performance in reading, mathematics, writing and science and compared our progress to comparable high-performing districts. Part 2 takes an in-depth look at student participation in post-secondary and career-ready courses. This focus includes information about high school credits earned in middle school, college credits in high school, as well as technical and career ready coursework, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and other advanced learning opportunities. We have also analyzed student participation and comparisons in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) testing trends relative to our comparable high-performing districts. Where possible, we’ve examined comparisons of Bellingham School District student trends to those in comparable high-performing districts.

By way of reminder, this Ends monitoring report is intended to serve as both an analytic and evaluative tool that allows us to:

- demonstrate a reasonable interpretation of Ends 2.1, focusing specifically on data and evidence in reading and mathematics that includes comparison to comparable, high performing districts,
- identify areas where our interpretation does not align with our mission and outcomes,
- use data to demonstrate progress toward achievement of these Ends and
- review our Ends to ensure they remain relevant and inspire meaningful work throughout the organization and community.

## Introduction

Consistent with Part 1 of the Ends 2.1 report, this Part 2 report represents a somewhat different approach to presenting data and evidence than previous years' Ends reports. As with the earlier report, we have chosen to include representations of the experiences of individual students who embody the ultimate reason we do any of this work, in this case in relation to the preparatory and advanced courses they have taken.

The Ends 2.1 policy follows:

**E - 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. 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 exceed: (a) the Washington State benchmarks and (b) similar students in comparable high performing districts, as measured by state assessments and other available data, as appropriate.
2. Every student's achievement, skills and attributes will show continuous significant growth relative to similar students in comparable high performing districts as measured by state assessments and other available data, as appropriate.
3. Every student with a gap in achievement, skills and attributes will close the gap. For state or federally identified student populations, any gap will be eliminated and annual progress will be greater than that of similar students in comparable high performing districts.
4. Student participation in post-secondary and career-ready courses shall increase and exceed participation in comparable high-performing districts. This shall include high school credits in middle school, college credits in high school, technical and career ready coursework, Advanced Placement, and other advanced learning opportunities.
5. All children of the Bellingham Public Schools community shall make continuous advancement toward on-time graduation or extended graduation, thereby reducing Bellingham Public Schools' drop-out rates.

This report, Part 2, focuses specifically on the *fourth point* listed above – student participation in post-secondary and career-ready courses. We've relied on the same methodology for identifying the comparable high performing districts that was used in Part 1, so for purposes of brevity, we will not recount that here.

### ▪ **Bellingham Public Schools Dual Credit Opportunities and Trends**

Page 1 of the data set reveals 2012-14 trends of Bellingham student enrollment in all dual-credit courses offered within the system. Dual credit programs allow students to take rigorous college-level courses while still in high school. Students may become eligible for college credit based on test scores obtained in year-end examinations or by course grade, depending on the type of dual credit program.

Types of such courses are arrayed in the table on the top of page 1. These include:

- *Advanced Placement (AP) Courses.* These are courses that are nationally normed by the College Board and include assessments that are common, regardless of the district or state in which the course is taken. Students who take an AP courses are encouraged to take the associated AP exam, which is scored on a five-point rubric. Students scoring at a level 3, 4 or 5 are often able to claim credit for the high school AP course when enrolling in a college or university post-high-school graduation.
- *College in the High School (CHS) Courses.* CHS courses offer students the ability to earn college credit by taking an equivalent course while still enrolled in high school.
- *Running Start Courses.* Running Start is a state-sponsored program that offers students enrolled in high school to co-enroll in college level courses and earn dual credit. Students taking high numbers of Running Start courses can, for example, earn the equivalent of an Associate of Arts (AA) community college degree concurrent with the completion of high school.
- *Tech Prep Courses.* Tech Prep courses are advanced courses that can lead to certificates of study within technology related fields.

In addition, we have included evidence focused on other types of courses that represent advanced learning or opportunities designed to enhance or promote college and career readiness. These include:

- *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Courses.* AVID data is included here, not specifically as an advanced course, but as a program that some Bellingham schools have implemented that is designed to increase school-wide learning and performance. The mission of AVID is to ensure that all students, and most especially the least served students capable of completing a college path, will succeed in a rigorous curriculum, will enter mainstream activities of the school, will increase their enrollment in four-year colleges, and will become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society.
- *CTE Completers Data.* We have also included data on the numbers of students completing career and technical programs of study that offer specialized career and technical pathways.
- *HS Credits in the Middle School.* Our current program of study in the Bellingham School District offers middle school students some opportunities to earn high school credit prior to beginning high school. These course credits come forward with the student and enable them to get a jump start on high school completion.

As the data trends on page 1 reveal, Bellingham students are increasing in both the number of dual credit courses attempted, as well as the number of students earning dual course credit. The graphic in the middle of page 1 offers a picture of these trends from 2012-2014 with regard to overall dual credit course attempts, Advanced Placement course attempts, and those course attempts associated with Running Start and Tech Prep. As the data reveals, the overall trend showing students taking advantage of any dual credit course/opportunity is heading in a positive direction. The percentage of students taking Advanced Placement courses continued to rise year-over-year from 2012-2014.

While these trends are heading in a positive direction overall, we also analyzed these trends within some of our most challenged student demographic groups. The graph at the bottom of page 1 reveals that, overall, Hispanic and low-income student populations are engaging in dual credit opportunities at a rate that is far less than the overall average student trends. Tech prep courses stand out as one area where students in these sub-populations are experiencing similar or even greater representation in course-taking trends.

Page 2 reveals specific trend comparisons with our highest performing comparable district, Bellevue School District. These trends suggest that Bellingham's low income student population is performing at about the same level as Bellevue's comparable student population with regard to dual credit representation. English Language Learner (ELL) dual credit earning for Bellingham appears to be far less than Bellevue, but this data can be deceiving, particularly when one considers that the trends focus only on students that remain in the ELL program. As our Ends 2.1, Part 1 report revealed, Bellingham students exited from the ELL program score at a rate that is higher than the overall student population, and we are experiencing success in helping students to progress to a point of exiting these services. Special education comparisons reveal that Bellingham students who are receiving special education services are far less well-represented than the comparable population of students in Bellevue, in terms of their dual credit participation. Special education leaders in Bellingham are currently engaged in exploring factors that may provide greater insights into explanations for these trends.

- **Overall College Preparatory Courses and Testing Trends Comparison to Comparable High Performing Districts**

The ability to compare the performance of our Bellingham students with that of students in comparable high performing school districts is limited by the availability of data on course-taking trends that are observed in common. Common experiences with College Board-sponsored courses and tests provide one area where we can make relatively good comparisons with our comparable high-performing district peers. The table and graph on the top of page 3 of the data set offers some overall comparisons to comparable high performing districts (Bellevue, Olympia, Shoreline) regarding trends in Advanced Placement course-taking. The number of Bellingham students taking AP courses still pales in comparison to Bellevue School District, which has had AP course-taking for all students in the high schools as a strong focus for more than twenty years. However, Bellingham AP course-taking trends are increasing across the district, prompted by the focus on increasing AP course offerings for all students at each of our comprehensive high schools. Squalicum High School, in particular, has made AP course-taking a standard emphasis for all students; course offerings and courses taken are also increasing at both Bellingham and Sehome. Bellingham School District, overall, also compares favorably to both Olympia and Shoreline School Districts in terms of numbers of students taking AP tests, the total number of AP exams given and the number of students passing the AP exams at a 3, 4 or 5 level (required for college entry credit, in many universities).

We are also able to compare trends in both test-taking and mean scores on the SAT, which is a required assessment as part of an application for many colleges and universities. As shown via the table and graph on the bottom of page 3 of the data set, comparing 2013 to 2014 data, we see an increase in the number of Bellingham students taking the SAT overall and increases in the

overall mean scores in both reading and math. The writing mean score trend for Bellingham test takers remained flat over the two years. Bellingham student performance on the SAT also is similar to our comparable high-performing district peers, with Bellevue's student performance leading the four districts on all three subtests for 2014, but Bellingham running in second place in both reading and writing, and a close third in math.

- **School Level Comparisons with Comparable High Performing Peers**

As with our approach to the Ends 2.1, Part 1 report, we took a deeper dive into comparisons between one of our comprehensive high schools, and one from each of the comparable high performing peer districts. Page 4 of the data set includes a demographic comparison of our Squalicum High School, which has made AP course-taking a strong focus over the past few years, with high schools from each of the other three comparable high-performing districts. Specifically, we looked for schools with similar demographics to Squalicum, in order to set the stage for comparisons that were school-specific. The three most similar high schools identified were Sammamish High School from Bellevue, Olympia High School from Olympia, and Shorecrest High School from Shoreline. Both Olympia and Shorecrest have significantly smaller populations of students who are receiving free or reduced-price meals. Olympia and Shorecrest also have smaller populations of students receiving special education services, and students who are transitional bilingual. Given this, we chose to focus in on comparisons between Sammamish High School (Bellevue) and Squalicum High School (Bellingham), specifically because both schools serve a population of students that hovers near 40% free and reduced-price meals, and both schools have significant number of transitional bilingual students.

Page 5 of the included data set displays the data for both AP and SAT for all four schools included in the comparison. The table and graph on the top of page 5 reveal that Squalicum is increasing in the number of students taking an AP test, the total number of AP exams taken, and the number of students scoring at a level 3, 4 or 5 on an AP exam from 2012-2014. Squalicum students, by comparison, also outperformed all other comparison schools in these metrics over this time period. The Squalicum-Sammamish comparison is particularly promising, given that the demographic profiles of the two schools are so similar, and the fact that Sammamish is part of a comparably higher performing school system that has been working on improving AP course-taking for more than two decades. Squalicum is showing some exceptional success regarding advanced course-taking trends among students.

### **Student Course-Taking and Success at Squalicum High School**

Given the positive comparisons we uncovered at Squalicum High School, we were curious to explore some individual cases of student trajectories and tell their stories here to offer the board a few glimpses of what happens for Bellingham students who persevere in taking rigorous course loads and who participate in college preparatory experiences. In particular, we honed in on the stories of students who participated in our programs that are designed to propel first-generation college-goers. We highlight, specifically, the stories of Karen, Lizbeth, Luis and Marina. The data and evidence here is presented in the context of telling the stories of each student's journey at Squalicum High School. We appreciate the support and help of Squalicum counselor, Aramis Johnson, in helping to tell the stories of these students.

- **Karen**

Karen “has been a champion for herself” according to her counselor, Aramis Johnson. She comes from a single parent home and has had to work hard to support both herself and her family. Her mother owns her own cleaning business and Karen has often been expected to work with her mom to help out with the business. Karen, says Aramis, “Has worked diligently to make high grades, take rigorous classes, and has been a part of our AVID family for years.” Evidence from Karen’s high school transcript include credits in the AVID program, AP US Government and Politics, AP Macroeconomics, AP Psychology, AP Spanish and Web Design. She has succeeded with a 3.0 overall GPA and has aspirations to attend either Western Washington University or Washington State University.

- **Lizbeth**

Lizbeth, “has been a great student at Squalicum and truly a leader for our Latino community” says her counselor, Aramis Johnson. He continues, “If she joins it, the others will follow. She has been one of our greatest additions to our school and school culture.” Lizbeth’s journey at Squalicum High has been one of continuous challenge, taking rigorous courses, and engaging in AVID program offerings. In addition to continual participation in AVID, Lizbeth’s high school transcript reveals her success in AP US Government and Politics, AP English Language and Composition, AP Environmental Science, AP Macroeconomics, AP Psychology, plus three credits from Spanish language credit by proficiency testing. She has attained a 3.0 overall GPA, and has aspirations to attend either Western Washington University or Evergreen State College.

- **Luis**

Regarding Luis, Aramis Johnson says, “He is a great student who has been in AVID since middle school. He is truly a first generation student who has the desire to attend a four year university. He knows that his success will set the standard for his younger siblings.” Luis’s high school transcript reveals that in addition to courses in AVID, he has been successful in AP Calculus, AP Physics C: Mechanics, AP English Language and Composition, AP Spanish, AP Macroeconomics and Engineering Technology. With an earned overall 3.2 GPA, Luis has aspirations for higher education study that include Western Washington University.

- **Marina**

About Marina, Aramis Johnson says, “She has made so many strides over the years since I met her in sixth grade. She was overly shy and now has the confidence to speak her mind. I appreciate that she has moxie now. She loves AVID as most of their cohort has been together since sixth grade. She says that it is the class she looks forward to.” Marina’s high school transcript includes her successful work demonstrated in AVID courses, as well as courses in AP Environmental Science and AP Psychology. She hopes to go to Western Washington University next fall.

## **Concluding Statement**

We believe that this Ends 2.1, Part 2 monitoring report, in combination with the previous and remaining parts of the report that will follow, serves 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. Further, we hope this report serves as a useful tool in support of the school board's ability to regularly review our ends to ensure they remain relevant and inspire meaningful work throughout the organization and community.

We appreciate the direction provided by the school board and *The Bellingham Promise* 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.