

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Bellingham, Washington

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent

DATE: March 6, 2018

SUBJECT: Ends Monitoring Report 2.1, Part 3

I am pleased to submit this Ends monitoring report (End 2.1, Part 3 - Student Post-secondary Enrollment Rates) to the school district's board of directors. Our process for reporting on Ends 2.1 during the 2017-18 school year occurs over a series of meetings, beginning with the previously submitted Part 1 report at the January 10, 2018 meeting, and Part 2 submitted at the Feb 7, 2018 meeting. This report is the third installment of the Ends 2.1 sequence for this academic year. Yet to come is a summative report on Ends 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0, which will be presented on May 9, 2018.

Ends 2.1 Part 3 examines how Bellingham students are faring in terms of post-secondary enrollment rates, and how we are preparing students for post-secondary educational options. This work includes a focus on post-secondary enrollments for Bellingham students in higher education, both two-year and four-year options, as well as preparation pathways for students who pursue post-secondary career and technical options. We have once again relied on comparisons with a small group of high-performing comparable districts whose rates of students eligible for free/reduced priced meals fall below those in our district. We have also relied on comparisons with a cluster of districts that are within +/-5% of Bellingham in terms of percent of students eligible for free/reduced priced meals. This free/reduced priced meals percentage comparison is what we typically use as a proxy for a poverty index in our data comparisons.

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

Our approach to this Ends 2.1, Part 3 report is consistent with the approach we've followed previously. This report focuses specifically on the *fifth point* listed below – examination of student participation in post-secondary and career preparation. By way of reminder, 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. All children of the Bellingham Public Schools community shall make continuous advancement toward on-time graduation and extended graduation in comparison to high-performing districts.
5. After graduation, student participation in post-secondary education and career preparation shall increase and exceed participation than in comparable high-performing districts.

Post-secondary Enrollment First Year after Graduation

We first examined comparative trends in post-secondary enrollment. Data presented include the results of post-secondary enrollments for the first year after high school graduation for Bellingham students compared to students from our high-performing comparable districts, as well as those across the state. The data we rely on for this comparison are reliably available up through the 2016 graduating student cohort. As page one of the data set reveals, Bellingham's 2016 graduating cohort enrolled at levels well above the state average, but dipped slightly from 2015 to 2016. More than two-thirds (68%) of Bellingham students from the 2016 cohort matriculated to either a two- or four-year institution directly out of high school. Our high-performing comparable districts all enrolled higher percentages of students (Bellevue 83%; Olympia 70%; and Shoreline 78%). However, two of the three (Olympia and Shoreline) also experienced a slight dip in year-to-year comparisons, as did the state average overall. We think this is consistent with historical looks at this data that suggest it tends to fluctuate a few points in either direction each year depending on the particular student cohort. We have also included a graph showing the average of the comparison group of districts within +/- 5% of Bellingham's free/reduced priced meals percentage (labeled "comparable" in the bar chart on the top of page one of the data set). Bellingham graduates' post-secondary enrollments are currently, and have historically been, higher than the average of this subgroup of districts by 8-10%.

We also examined post-secondary enrollment trends for Bellingham student subgroups, including Hispanic, low income, ELL and graduates with an IEP. In all cases, Bellingham's students enroll at significantly higher percentages than state averages. One subgroup worthy of specific mention are graduates served by our ELL program. ELL graduates from Bellingham in 2016 enrolled in post-secondary options at a rate of 66%, well above the state average of 41%.

Post-secondary Enrollment and Persistence for Bellingham Graduates

Many graduates who end up in college do not enroll immediately after high school graduation. More and more are opting to take a "gap year" experience in their first year out of high school. Some use this time to work to save for college, to travel or pursue other interests. To get a fuller picture of the actual post-secondary enrollment of Bellingham graduates, we track post-secondary enrollments into the second year after high school graduation. Including the second year out, the big picture suggests that typically at least three-quarters of Bellingham graduates enroll in some kind of post-secondary two- or four-year experience. The 2013 to 2015 trends displayed on page two of the data set suggest that overall our graduates' two-year enrollment fluctuated slightly over this time from about 80% in 2013 to 75% in 2015. Graduates enroll in four-year options more so than two-year options at a ratio nearly 2:1, and these splits remained relatively consistent over the last three years. We also included a graphic on page two that shows how Bellingham graduates from 2014 (latest available national data set) compared to several other groups nationally. For purposes of these national comparisons, Bellingham is considered an urban district, with a low minority population and relatively high-income population. Bellingham graduates overall enroll at higher levels than students from other urban schools in general, as well as at higher rates than districts with low minority populations or higher income populations.

Graduates' enrollment in post-secondary educational options is only part of the equation. Once enrolled, we also expect them to stay enrolled over time and ultimately complete their programs of study. Persistence data are displayed on the bottom of page two of the data set. This graph shows that Bellingham graduates demonstrate a high rate of persistence (86% overall in each of the past two years), and that this rate tends to be higher for students enrolled in four-year institutions than for those enrolled in two-year institutions.

We were also curious to understand more about the characteristics of our graduates' participation in higher education, once enrolled. Specifically, we explored the extent to which Bellingham graduates enroll in any pre-college course as a part of their initial experience in college, suggesting the need for remediation or extra support to get them ready for college course work. As the data on page three of the data set suggest, for graduates attending four-year institutions between 5% to 9% of Bellingham graduates engage in some pre-college course upon enrollment in post-secondary. This is below the state average, and on par with high-performing comparable districts Olympia (6%) and Shoreline (5-9%). Bellevue graduates are below all others at 3% enrolling in pre-college coursework. For those graduates attending two-year post-secondary institutions, the percentages are much higher across the board. Forty-eight percent of Bellingham graduates attending two-year institutions in 2016 enrolled in some pre-college coursework. This was comparable to those graduates from Olympia and Shoreline, and nearly exactly on par with the state average (47%). Bellevue, again, was the outlier with only 27% of graduates enrolling in a two-year institution taking a pre-college course of some nature.

Overall, we are pleased that about three-quarters of Bellingham graduates are enrolling in two- or four-year institutions within two years of graduation, and with the persistence data suggesting that most of these graduates continue in higher education once they start. Data also suggest we can do a better job preparing a significant percentage of our graduates who are matriculating to a two-year institution with the readiness to engage immediately with college-level work.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Preparation for Post-secondary

In addition to tracking post-secondary enrollments in two- and four-year institutions, we also examined how well our students in career and technical fields are prepared for post-secondary options. Career and technical program areas with the highest levels of participation from 2014 to 2017 are displayed in the circle graphic on the bottom of page four of the data set. The most highly enrolled program areas include sign language interpretation, applied principles of technology, engineering design and robotics. We track three different data points with regard to student participation in CTE. These include: (1) *CTE concentrators*. These students have enrolled in two or more CTE courses above the exploratory level within a single program cluster; (2) *CTE completers*. These students have completed a CTE instructional program of 360 hours (4 courses) in the same area of study; and (3) *Industry certificates*. These students have earned a microcredential that shows competency in a career skill area.

As the table on the top left of page 4 of the data set shows, CTE concentrators have increased significantly over the past few years. The data from 2017 is not yet available from the state, but in 2016 there were 647 Bellingham students who enrolled in two or more CTE courses in a single program cluster. We believe these numbers are likely to be higher again for 2017, given greater breadth and depth in the availability of course offerings. CTE completer data dropped somewhat in 2017 year-over-year comparisons. This was due to a new process that assigned courses to a greater number of CTE clusters. For example, health science was created as a separate cluster from family and community services. Also, forensics and visual communications moved out of the STEM cluster. This means that course credits are distributed across more categories. Given this, it is likely important to think of 2017 as a new baseline for the completer data moving forward.

The data on industry certificates contains perhaps the most significant story line with regard to CTE. Certification validates the knowledge and skills students have gained in the classroom and is recognized in the workplace. 2017 was a windfall year for students in earning additional industry certificates. This is due in large part to a huge increase in students earning an industry certificate in sports medicine. We believe a significant part of this increase may be due to the school district decision to pay for CPR and first aid certification costs for students as a part of Project Free Education. Next year, we will see an increase in certification for students who, through our technical literacy and MS Office specialist courses, earn MOS certification. With this, these students earn free college credit through Bellingham Technical College.

In addition to tracking participation in CTE, which has increased dramatically over the past few years under CTE Director Jeff Tetric's leadership, we also track who is enrolling in these courses. Specifically, for this year's report we included some data on the gender balance in CTE offerings, and did a brief historical look to see what that data suggests in terms of movement toward a more equitable male/female gender divide. We know that many CTE fields have historically been male-dominated. The left-hand side of page five of the data set shows CTE

course enrollments from 2013-14. This picture highlights a stark divide between male and female student participation in CTE science, technology, math and engineering (STEM) courses. Seven of the first ten courses on the list from 2013 were STEM-related and highly dominated by male participants. Fast forward to 2016-17 (right-hand side of page five) where there is still evidence of male-dominated courses in the STEM fields, yet female participation continues to expand. Of note with growing female participation, in particular, are course pathways in computer programming where female participation has increased from 12% in 2013-14 to 25% in 2016-17, as well as video game design (0% to 19%) and webpage design (14% to 22%). Progress is clearly evident in this area, but also more work is necessary to ensure equitable access and participation for both male and female students to all CTE career pathways.

Post-school Outcome Trends for Bellingham Students with an IEP

This report pays special attention to the post-high school outcomes for our students and graduates who have received services with an individualized education plan (IEP) as they have progressed through Bellingham schools. In one sense, we can gauge our success as a school system on how well our students with some of the greatest learning challenges manage their lives once they leave our system. Page six of the data set offers a window into the data on the outcomes for our students with IEPs, post-high school. As the top graph on page seven of the data set reveals, students with an IEP in Bellingham who graduate are far more likely to be engaged in either higher education, other educational experiences or employment than the average across Washington state. These numbers drop for students who do not graduate, highlighting the importance for the system to ensure that our students with IEPs finish high school successfully.

Trend data is shown on the bottom of page six of the data set. Over the past several years, fewer Bellingham students who graduate with an IEP are noted as “not engaged”, meaning they are not engaged in either identifiable work options or schooling of some sort. This trend suggests that our district is doing a better job of preparing our students with IEPs to be successful in some recognizable way in the world, post-graduation. The data on non-graduates is starkly different. If a Bellingham student with an IEP does not eventually graduate, our data suggest that student is far less likely to realize success in either future employment or future education/training options. While the data on Bellingham graduates continues to improve for students who have been on IEPs, those who do not graduate do not fare as well. There is more work to do in terms of support for students with IEPs realizing high school graduation and future opportunities for success.

Concluding Statement

This third and final installment of the Ends 2.1 monitoring report, in combination with the other parts of the 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 believe this report reveals our continued 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.