BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT
Bellingham, Washington

MEMORANDUM

TO: **Board of Directors**

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

DATE: **February 22, 2024**

SUBJECT: **Ends Monitoring Report 2.1, Part 1**

Introduction

I am pleased to submit this Ends monitoring report (End 2.1 - Student Competence, Part 1) to the school district's board of directors. This annual report typically focuses on student testing performance in English language arts (ELA), math and science

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 1 report, we focus on numbers one and two above. In our Ends 2.1 Part 2 report presented next month, we focus on indicators 3-4.

Bellingham and Comparable District Proficiency Comparisons

We first focus on Bellingham's student assessment results in comparison to the group of 38 most comparable districts in Washington State. We reviewed whether re-evaluating the comparable district criteria for school year 2022-23 would uncover significant changes or additional districts to add to the list of 38 comparable districts. Table 1 displays the parameters for the selection of the districts most comparable to Bellingham.

Table 1. Comparable District Pool Criteria with 2022-23 Data

Criteria	Parameters	Low	BPS	High
Enrollment	75% above and below	2,906	11,623	20,340
% Free/Reduced Meal	50% above and below	21	41	62
% Asian and White	25% above and below	52	69.6	87
% Multilingual Learner	75% above and below	2	8.4	15
% Special Education	25% above and below	13	17.9	22

Six additional districts (Central Kitsap, Fife, Goldendale, Kennewick, Quillayute Valley, West Valley) could be added back in with 2022-23 data now placing them within the criteria. These districts are similar in overall data to the composition of 38 districts identified in 2019. However, for this year's report, we decided to keep with the group of 38 comparable districts from the 2019 selection as a representative sample and to maintain consistency with trend views.

A. English Language Arts Proficiency Comparisons

The three figures below offer a series of views of the SBA ELA scores of those 38 comparable districts along with Bellingham and the State, comparing the current year (2023) with the 2022 and 2019 views. Specifically, Figure 2 shows 62 percent of Bellingham students met standard in ELA in 2019, pre-pandemic, putting our scores above the state average, and about in the middle of the group of 38 comparable districts. Figure 3 provides that same view of ELA scores for 2022. 2022 was the first year of reliable state assessment data post-

Figure 2. 2019 English Language Arts Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 3-8 and 10

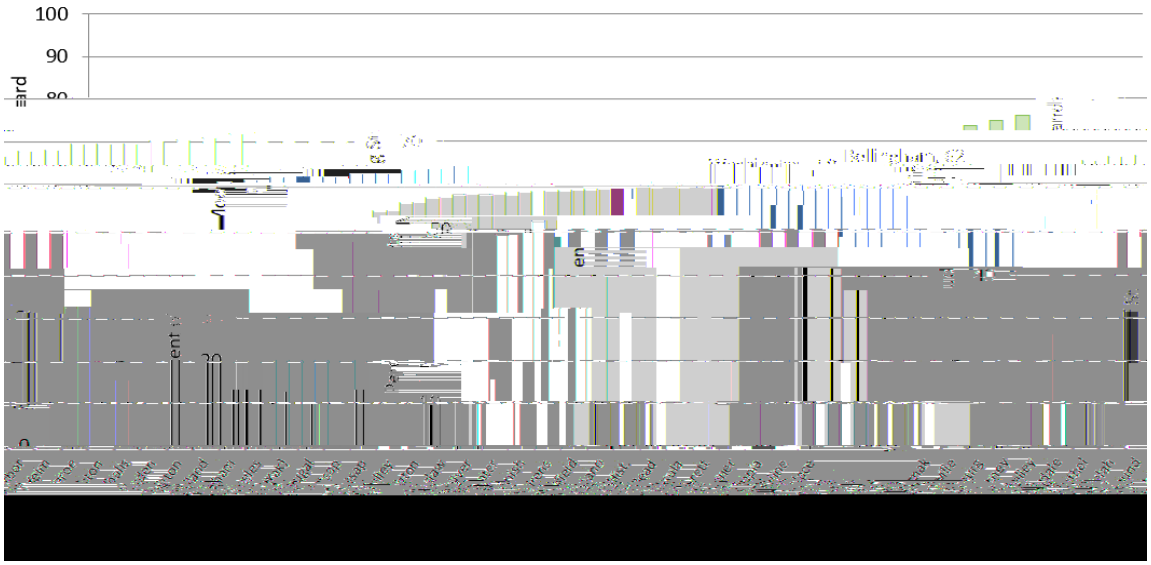
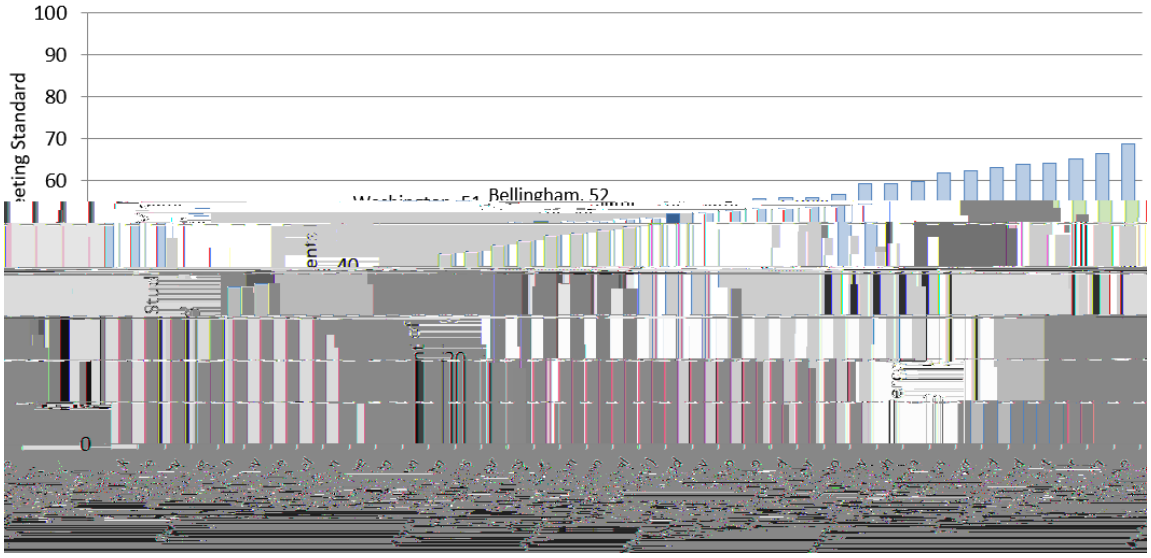


Figure 3. 2022 English Language Arts Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 3-8 and 10



Data from the spring 2023 state assessment, displayed in Figure 4 below, reveals that the percentage of Bellingham students meeting standard in ELA held steady at approximately 52 percent proficient overall. Again, student scores placed us above the state, and in the middle of the group of comparable districts, positioned slightly lower by comparison to 2022. Overall comparison of 2023 ELA scores with those of 2022 showed many of the 38 districts holding steady, some gaining a few points, some losing a point or two. Consistent with the national trends in ELA scores, we found that our students, as well as those in our comparison districts, did not experience large changes in ELA assessment scores over the period from 2022 to 2023; students' assessment scores were similar to prior year results.

Figure 4. 2023 English Language Arts Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 3-8 and 10

As in prior years, we are also including here trend comparisons with a small group of districts referred to as our “high bar” comparable districts. The districts included in this group are Shoreline, Olympia and Bellevue, and they are included specifically because their student scores tend to be higher than those of our students in Bellingham. This serves an aspirational purpose, and when we see trends that move us closer to or further from these high bar comparable districts, that is worth noting. Figure 5 displays ELA data for Bellingham, Washington state and our four “high bar” districts over the years 2018, 2019, 2022 and 2023.

Figure 5. English Language Arts High Bar Comparison Trends in Grades 3-8 and 10

The graphics in Figure 5 display trends in ELA scores for students in grades 3-5 (left),

steady at 60 percent. Grade 10 percent of Bellingham students meeting standard decreased in 2023, as did scores in all three other high bar comparable districts.

B. Math Proficiency Comparisons

Figures 6, 7 and 8 provide comparisons among the 38 comparable districts in math. Statewide about 49 percent of students met standard in math in 2019; that number fell to about 38 percent meeting standard in 2022. 46 percent of Bellingham students met standard in math in 2019, which put us below the state average. The percentage of our students meeting standard fell to 39 percent in 2022, above the state average of 38 percent. Recall from last year's report, we found that Bellingham students' 2022 scores dropped less in math than many of those districts in our comparable group, which we noted as a bit of a silver lining in an otherwise challenging picture.

Figure 6. 2019 Math Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 3-8 and 10

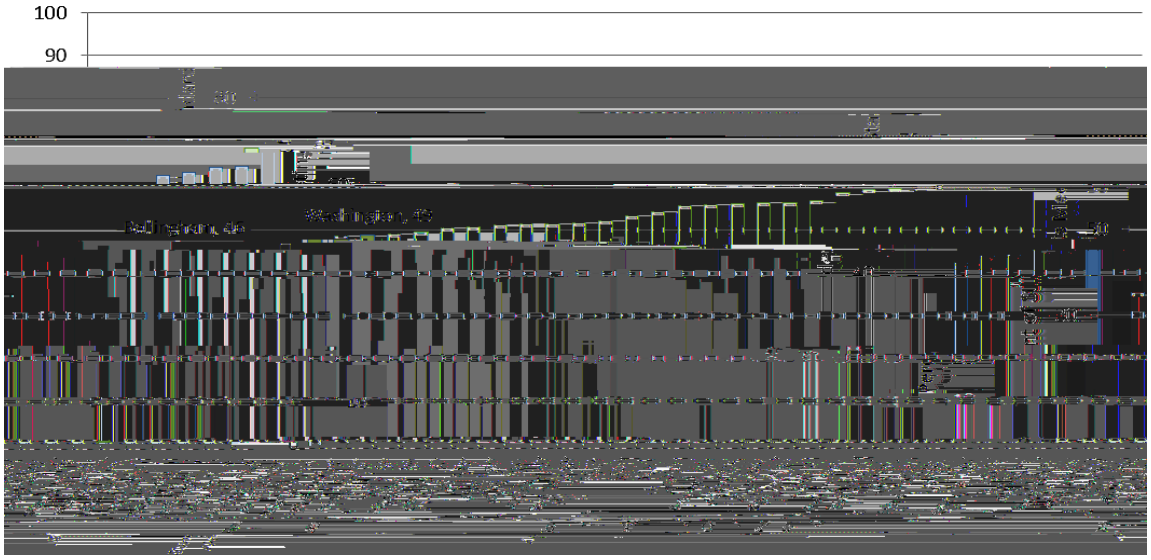
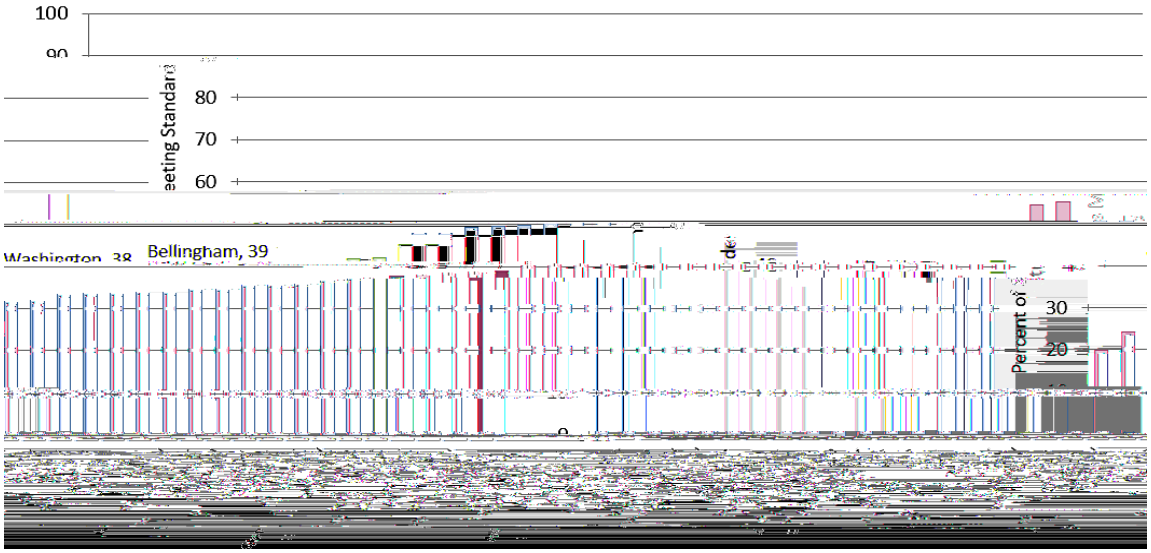


Figure 7. 2022 Math Percent Meeting Standards in Grades 3-8 and 10



Data from the 2023 state assessment, displayed in Figure 8 below, reveals that 41percent of Bellingham students met standard in math, a 2 percent increase overall from 2022. While a relatively modest gain, this was a welcome post-pandemic improvement in math scores. Our students' assessment scores placed us above the state, with slightly better year-over-year performance than average, and about in the middle of the group of comparable districts. Data on math scores showed many districts holding steady or showing slight improvement, gaining a few points. Consistent with the national trends in math scores, we found that our students, as well those in some of our comparison group of districts, appear to have experienced a small rebound over the period from 2022 to 2023.

Data from the spring 2023 state assessment, displayed in Figure 12 below, revealed that Bellingham students scored at approximately 53 percent proficient overall in science, a 2 percent

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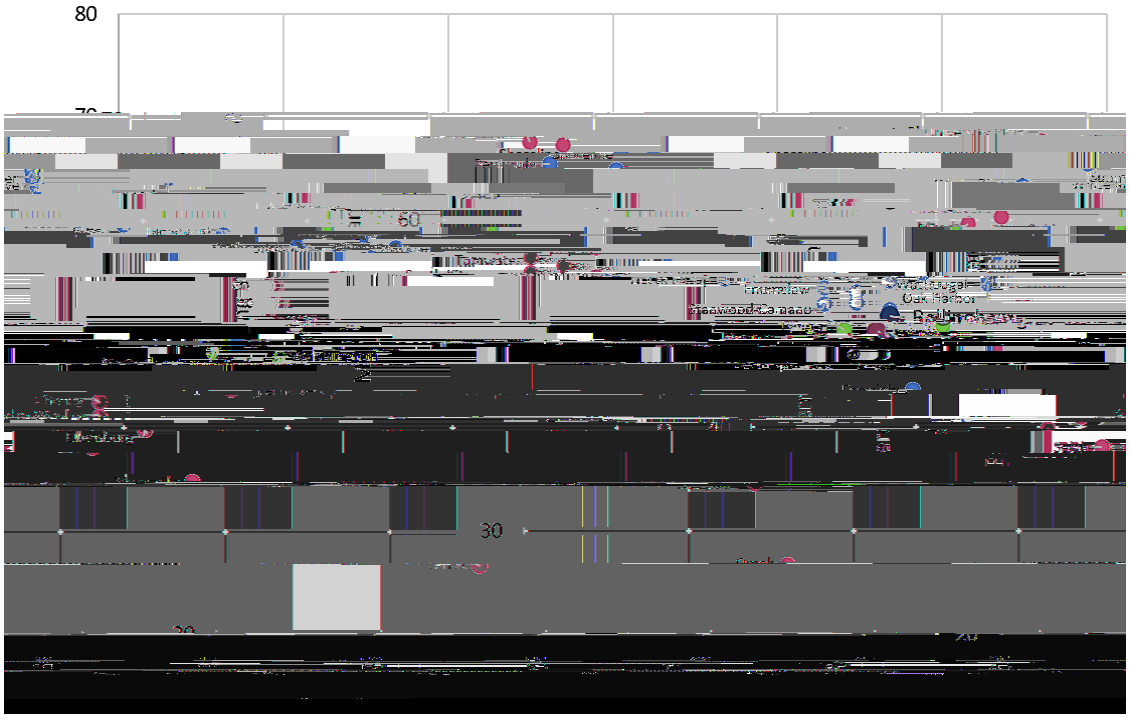
population of students in the state sits precisely at the 50th percentile; this represents the overall midpoint of growth scores across all districts in Washington. So, when we compare our students overall on growth, we like to see percentiles both above 50 percent (doing better growth-wise than the state) and as high or higher compared to our high performing comparable district peers.

A. English Language Arts Growth Percentiles

Figure 14 arrays the group of 38 comparable districts on a scatterplot showing growth versus percent meeting standard in ELA. Each district's dot represents its relative placement to the other districts on the 2023 percentage of grade 4-8 students meeting standard in ELA (vertical axis)

Figure 14. ELA 2023 Percent Meeting Standard by Median Growth Percentile, Grades 4-8



and median student growth percentile (horizontal axis). Bellingham student growth in grades 4-8 is above the median, and percent meeting standard at approximately 50 percent. Third grade is not included, as they took the exam for the first time in 2023. Figure 15 shows the districts in the group of 38 arrayed by student growth percentile, which provides a different way to see how our district compares to others in the group.

Figure 15. ELA 2023 Median Student Growth Percentile in Grades 4-8

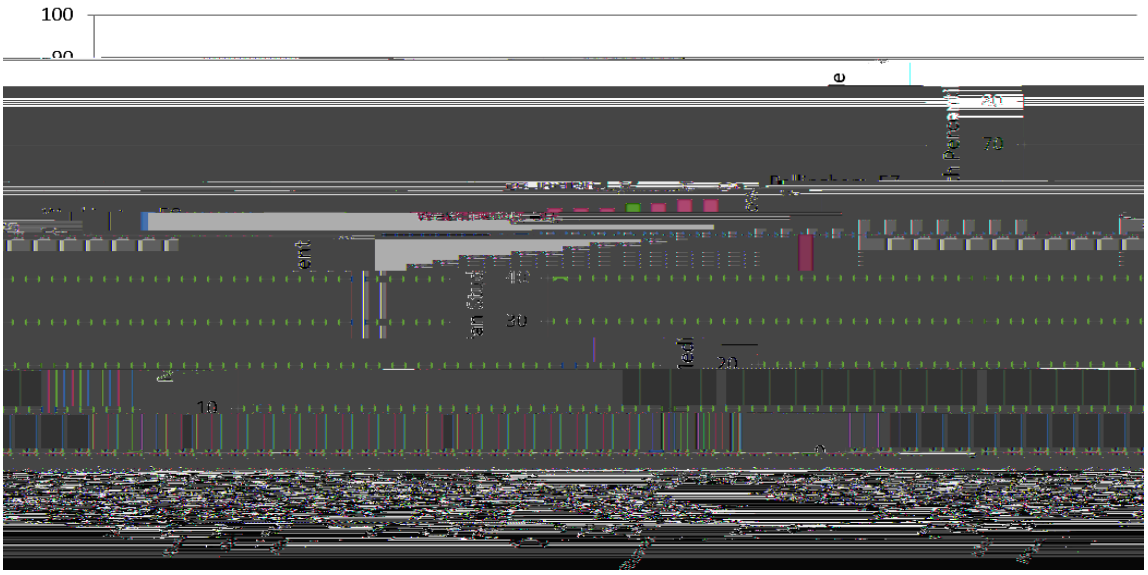
We also examined 2023 growth in ELA for different student subgroups internal to Bellingham. Student subgroups include non-low income, students without disabilities, all students, Hispanic/Latinx, low income, student with disabilities and multi-lingual learners. The groups are ranked by percentage into categories of low growth, typical group and high growth. This allows some internal comparisons and highlights groups where additional support or emphasis may be needed to ensure typical or better growth is occurring. For example, 59 percent of students with identified disabilities experienced typical or high growth, compared with 72 percent of students without identified disabilities. Non-low income students experienced more typical or high growth

We also examined growth percentiles in math. Figure 17 displays the 38 comparable districts on a scatterplot. As with the ELA scatterplot above, each district's dot represents its relative placement to the other districts in 2023 percentage of grade 4-8 students meeting standard in math (vertical axis) and median student growth percentile (horizontal axis). We were pleased to see

Figure 17. Math Scatterplot 2023 Growth by Percent Meeting Standard, Grades 4-8

Bellingham student growth in grades 4-8 was well above the median. Figure 18 shows the districts in the group of 38 arrayed by student growth percentile, which shows Bellingham students growth percentile rank at the high end of this spectrum of 38 comparable districts.

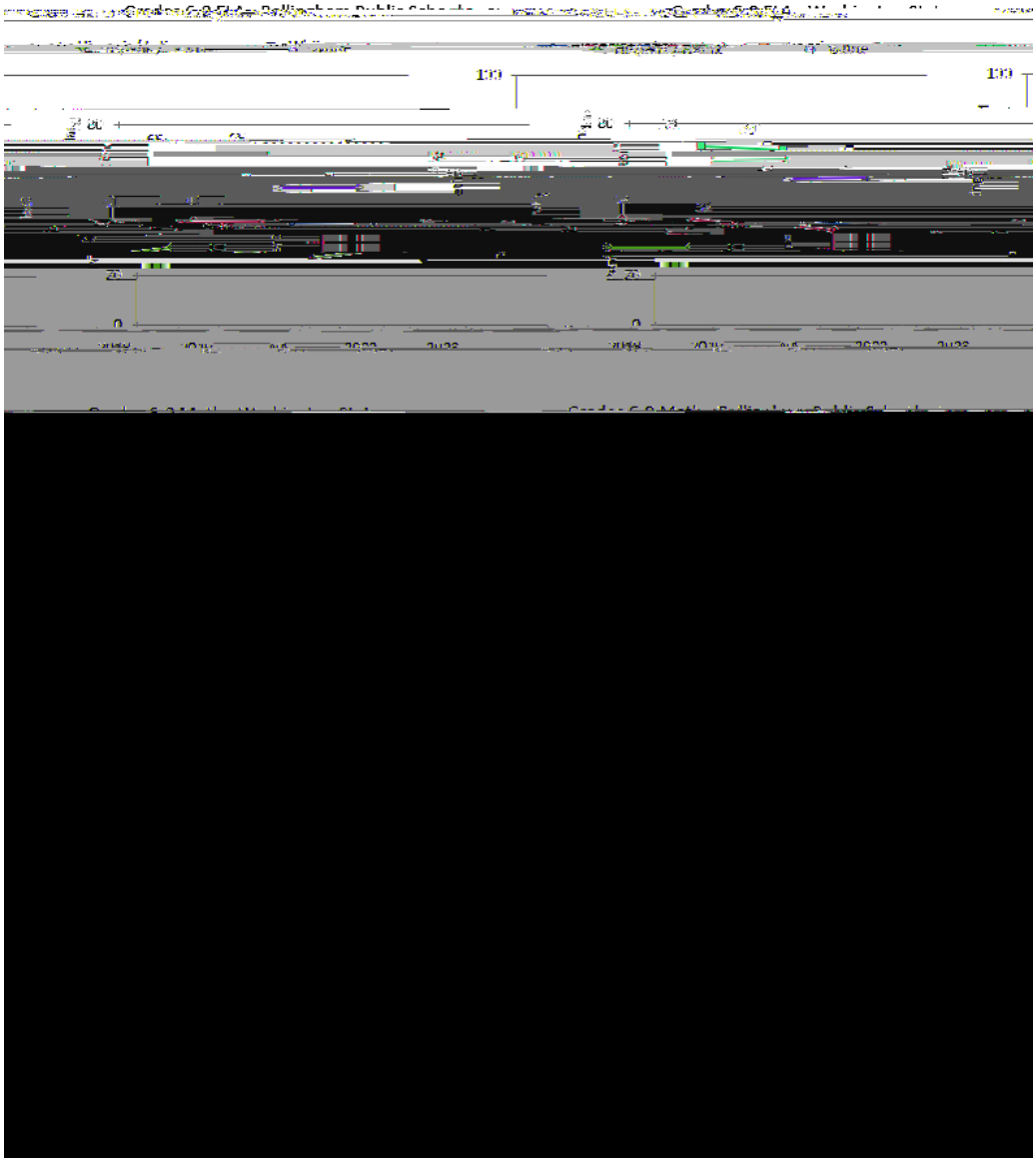
Figure 18. Math 2023 Median Student Growth Percentile in Grades 4-8



by one point during this same period. In science, grade 5 proficiency increased by 2 points for both low-income and non-low income groups, but the gap between groups remained constant.

Figure 20

Figure 24. Proficiency Gap Trends Hispanic/Latinx vs. White, Gr 6-8



In ELA for grade 10 (top graph, Figure 25, below), the percentile gap in Bellingham students' scores between Hispanic/Latinx and White decreased by one point, while proficiency levels for both subgroups decreased. In math (bottom graph, Figure 25), the proficiency gap between Hispanic/Latinx and White 10th graders' scores decreased, while proficiency overall also decreased from 2022 to 2023.

Figure 25. Proficiency Gap Trends Hispanic/Latinx vs. White, Gr 10

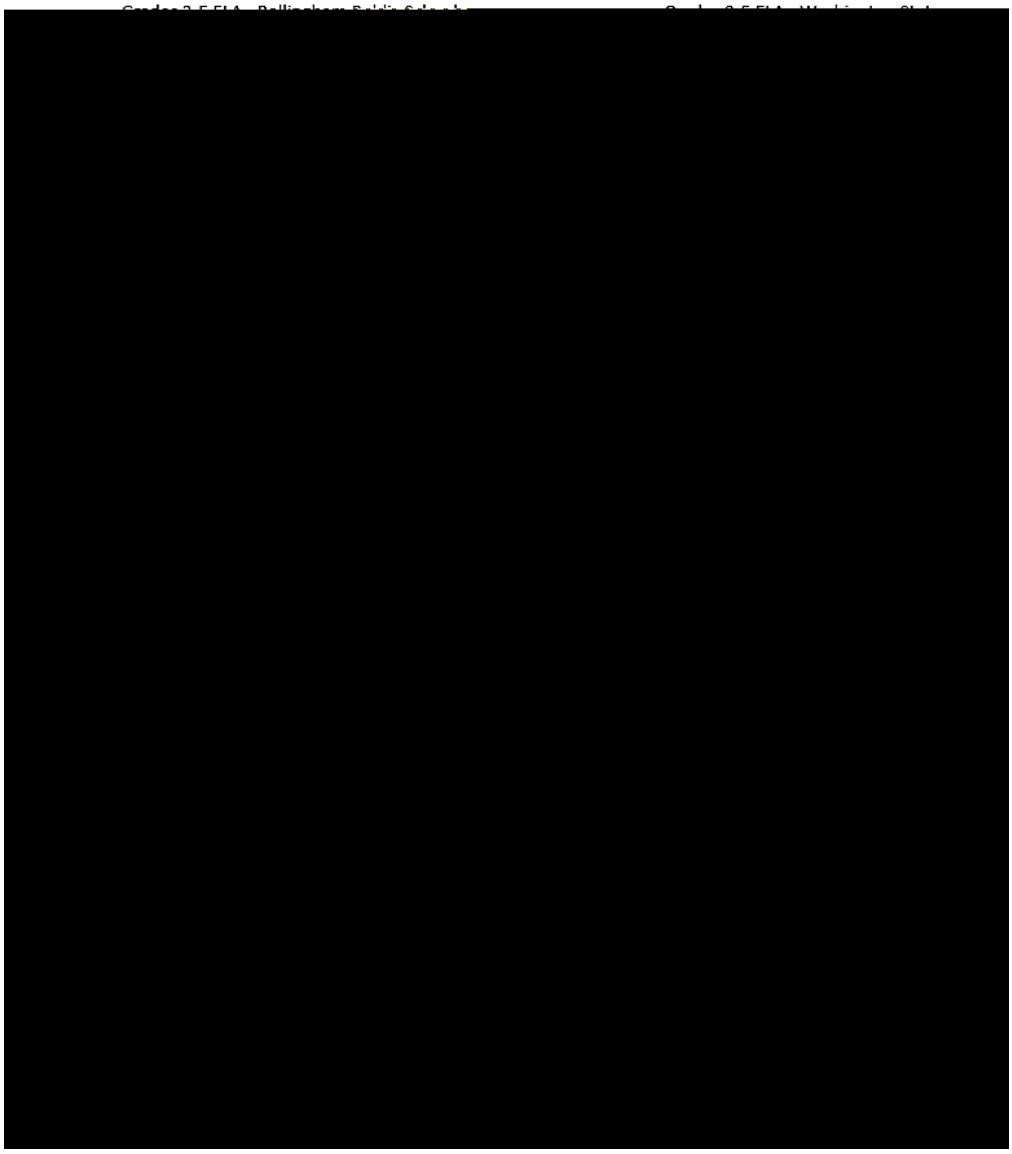
In summary, the proficiency gaps between Bellingham students who are Hispanic/Latinx and students who are White increased slightly in ELA and math at grades 3-5, increased slightly in grades 5 and 8 in science, decreased slightly at grades 6-8 in ELA, increased slightly in 6-8 math and decreased slightly in grade 10 ELA and math from 2022 to 2023. State proficiency gaps remained relatively more constant during this same period.

C. Gap Analysis: Students With Disabilities vs. Students Without Disabilities

In this next section, we compare trends between groups of students who have identified disabilities with cohort mates who are without identified disabilities. The charts included below show gap trends in ELA and math proficiency between Hispanic/Latinx students and White students at grades 3-5 (Figure 26), grades 6-8 (Figure 27) and grade 10 (Figure 28). Included for comparison with each picture is the overall change in the gaps at the state level within those grade bands and content areas.

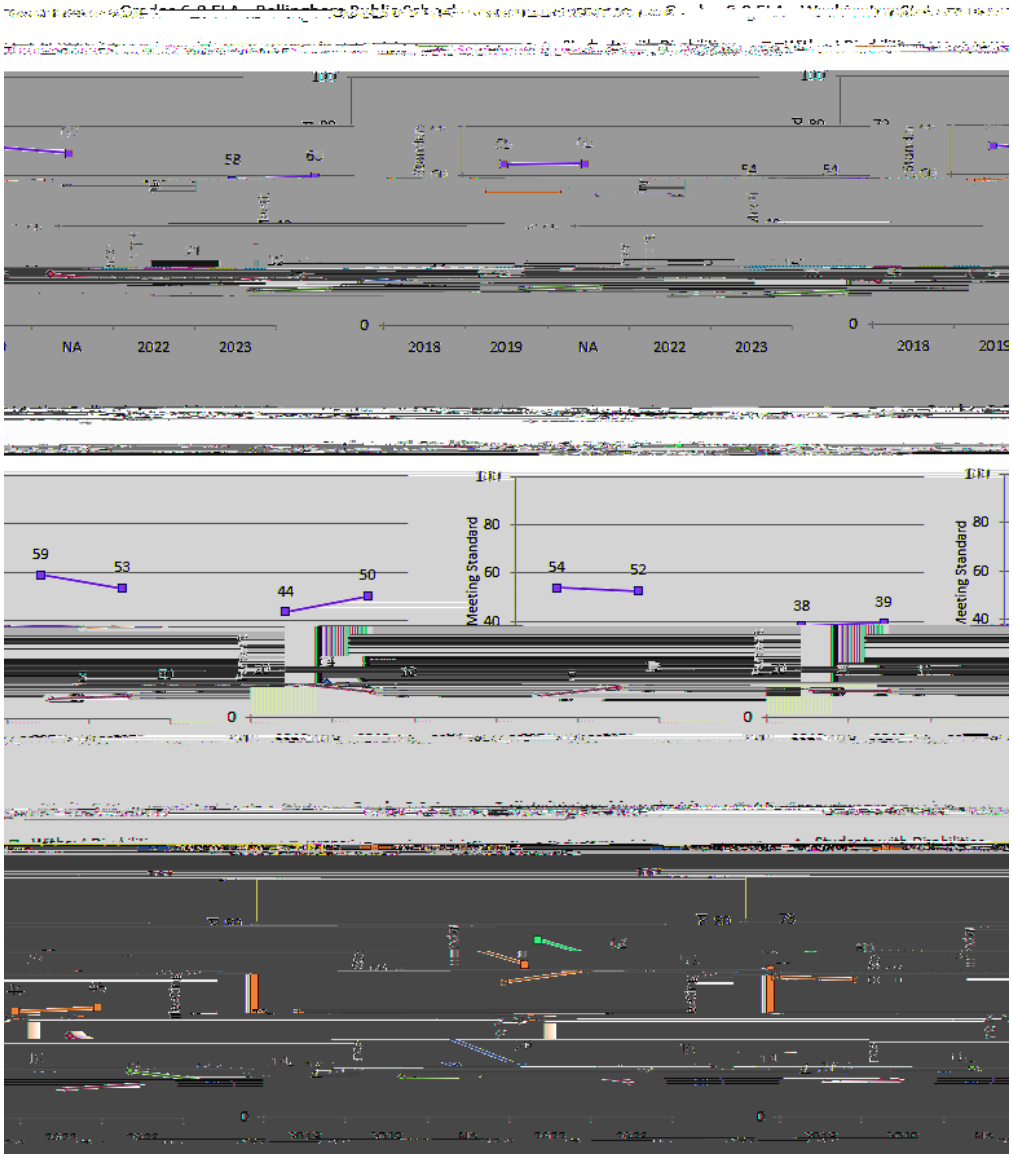
In ELA for grades 3-5 (top graph, Figure 26, below), the 2023 proficiency level for students with identified disabilities held steady at 25 percent and increased by 1 percent for students without disabilities to 52 percent, widening the gap between subgroups compared to 2022. Across the state, this gap held constant y.45 195.s constant

Figure 26. Proficiency Gap Students With Disabilities vs. Without Disabilities, Gr 3-5



In ELA for grades 6-8 (top graph, Figure 27), the percentile gap between scores of students with and without disabilities in Bellingham increased by 1 percent, while the state gap decreased slightly. In math (middle graph, Figure 27) the proficiency gap for students with and without disabilities increased among Bellingham students tested, while the statewide gap between groups decreased slightly in year-over-year comparisons. The eighth-grade science proficiency gap between these two groups (bottom graph, Figure 27) increased in Bellingham, and held steady statewide.

Figure 27. Proficiency Gap Students With Disabilities vs. Without Disabilities, Gr 6-8



In ELA for grade 10 (top graph, Figure 28, below), the percentile gap between Bellingham students with and without disabilities decreased by 12 percentage points, due largely to a drop in proficiency levels for students without identified disabilities. In math (bottom graph, Figure 28), the proficiency gap between Bellingham's 10th graders with and without disabilities decreased by 9 percent overall, while proficiency overall improved for students with disabilities from 2022 to 2023. State comparisons showed a slight increase in the gap in ELA, and a slight decrease in math.

Figure 29. Proficiency Gap Multilingual vs. Non-multilingual students, Gr 3-5

In ELA for grades 6-8 (top graph, Figure 30), the percentile gap between scores of multilingual students and non-multilingual students in Bellingham increased by 3 percent, while the state gap held steady. In math (middle graph, Figure 30) the proficiency gap between multilingual and non-multilingual increased by 2 percent among Bellingham students tested, similar to the state

Figure 31. Proficiency Gap Multilingual vs. Non-multilingual students, Gr 6-8

In summary, the proficiency gaps between multilingual and non-multilingual Bellingham students' scores decreased slightly in ELA and math at grades 3-5, held steady in grade 5 and grade 8 science, and increased slightly at grades 6-8 in ELA and math, increased slightly in grade 10 ELA and decreased slightly in grade 10 math from 2022 to 2023. State proficiency gaps remained relatively more constant during this same period.

Concluding Statement

The analysis of proficiency and growth on the state assessment presented above provides one way of understanding student progress. While the impacts vary within schools and grade levels, when we zoom out to see the impact on the whole system, it is evident that the decline in scores attributed to the pandemic has turned around to a degree, and particularly so in math in the elementary and middle schools. Our percentage of students meeting standard in ELA, math and science at elementary and middle school all trended up in year-over-year comparisons. Proficiency gaps are still prevalent across all grade bands and content areas as was noted in various subgroup comparisons. Ensuring equitable outcomes that have all students experiencing annual growth and success continues to be a focus for our system.

Noted challenges:

- ELA proficiency level districtwide is flat in year-over-year comparison, mostly due to the influence of high school scores trending down again in 2023.
- High school ELA and math proficiency down year over year.
- A smaller percentage of students with disabilities and multi-lingual learners show typical or high growth in ELA.
- The proficiency gap increased for students who are low income in grades 3-5 ELA, 3-5 math.
- Proficiency gap increased for students who are Hispanic/Latinx in grades 3-5 ELA, 3-5 math, grade 5 science.
- Proficiency gap increased for Hispanic/Latinx students 6-8 ELA, and science.
- The proficiency gap increased for students with identified disabilities in 3-5 ELA, 3-5 math, 6-8 ELA, 6-8 math, grade 8 science.
- The proficiency gap increased at grades 6-8 in ELA and math, grade 10 ELA.

Trending positive:

- Math proficiency levels districtwide slightly up overall
- Science proficiency levels districtwide slightly up overall
- ES (3-