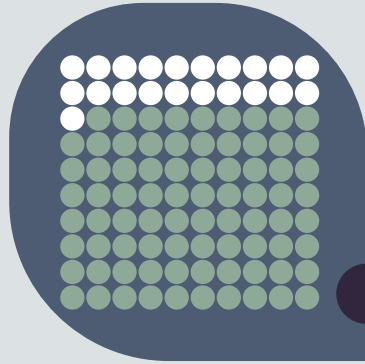
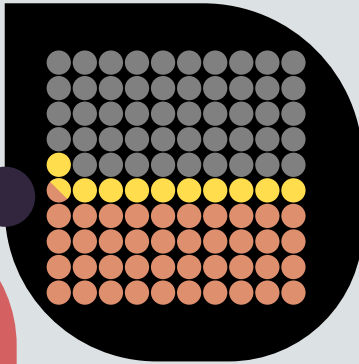


# School-Aged Children and Youth



Youth under age 18 comprised about **21%** of Bellevue's population in 2019.

Over **50%** of students at BSD are people of color, with Asian students making up over **40%** of all students.



**18%** of students at BSD were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

BSD reported **333** students qualified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act in the 2020-2021 school year.



**27%** of respondents ranked "lack of services for children and youth/teens" as a major/moderate community problem.

**35.6%** of 12th-grade students reporting depressive feelings.



# School-Aged Children and Youth

## Key Findings

- Many children and youth continue to show signs of significant stress: problems in school, substance use disorder, anxiety, suicide ideation and depression.
- Access to supports for school-aged children and youth to ensure their health and wellbeing is critical. Many families still struggle to provide the basics for their children because the cost of living is outpacing earnings. Lack of resources can put children and youth at risk for poor outcomes.
- With the growing diversity in Bellevue, there is a need for more culturally responsive programs and activities for school-aged children and youth and their families who may be coping with adjusting to a new country and culture or to gender-based or physical differences.

## Population Overview

Responding to the needs of school-aged children and youth is critical for their healthy growth and development. This is especially important for those with limited access to resources they need to succeed in school and in life. It is important to ensure that their families are also receiving support, such as help in finding livable wage jobs and affordable housing.

Youth under age 18 comprised about 21% of Bellevue's population in 2019. Bellevue had a similar proportion of youth compared to the nation (22%), Washington State (22%), and King County (20%), but a larger proportion than Seattle (15%). About 42% of youth under age 18 in Bellevue identify as White, compared to 74% of people 65 and over.<sup>1</sup> The Bellevue School District (BSD) is highly diverse. Over 50% of students are people of color, with Asian students making up over 40% of all students.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter only provides information about goals 1 through 5 as they relate specifically to School-Aged Children and Youth. For a broader discussion of these areas, please see their respective chapters.

- Goal 1: Food to Eat and Roof Overhead
- Goal 2: Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods, and Communities
- Goal 3: A Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence
- Goal 4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible
- Goal 5: Education and Job Skills to Help Individuals Reach their Full Potential
- Additional Topics for Consideration
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+) Youth

We recognize that disparate outcomes based on race exist regarding prevalence of and responses to the issues covered in this chapter. As part of the City's ongoing efforts to continue growing as a culturally competent and racially equitable organization and city, we have, when possible, highlighted racial disparities throughout this report, denoted by the phrase Racial (In)Equity Data Point.

While gender is a spectrum that includes transgender people and those who identify as neither male nor female, the sources referenced in this chapter reported data by male and female and did not report data encompassing the entire gender spectrum.

# Goal 1: Food to Eat and a Roof Overhead

Bellevue’s child poverty rate was 6% on average between 2015-2019, compared to 10% county-wide. For children under 5 years of age, the poverty rate was slightly higher in Bellevue at 7% and 10% across the county.<sup>3</sup>

In the 2020-21 school year as of October 1, 2021, 18% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.<sup>4</sup> **Racial (In)Equity Data Point:** As Figure 1 shows, some races and ethnicity groups had higher rates of being eligible for Free and Reduce Lunch. For instance, 13% of the students at BSD are Hispanic/Latino, yet 46% of the students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch are Hispanic/Latino.

## Race and Ethnicity Percentages for Total Bellevue School District Population and for the Low-Income Population (Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch)

Race/Ethnicity	Race/Ethnicity Percentages for the Total BSD Population	Racial/Ethnicity Percentages for the Low-Income Population (Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch)
Asian	44%	18%
Black	3%	11%
Hispanic/Latino	13%	46%
Multi-Ethnic	9%	6%
Native American	0.20%	0.20%
Pacific Islander	0%	1%
White	29%	18%
Grand Total	100%	100%

Figure 1 | Source: Bellevue School District <sup>5</sup>

- BSD offered food for students during the pandemic, since students were no longer able to access free and reduced meals at school. Schools worked to reduce barriers to access. However, many families still had to drive to pick up the food daily, so the cost of gas was a challenge for some families.<sup>6</sup>
- LifeSpring partners with BSD to provide food assistance during school breaks for Bellevue students enrolled in free and reduced lunch or experiencing economic hardship during the school year. Children receive a grocery store food voucher, which allows families to purchase fresh produce, dairy, meat, and culturally relevant food. While schools were providing remote learning, LifeSpring partnered with Bellevue School District to respond to the needs of the families.<sup>7</sup>
- Backpack Meals for Kids partners with the BSD to help families access needed food for the weekends. They distribute 600 packs of food through the Family Connections Centers each week. They reported an increased need due to COVID-19.<sup>8</sup>

- During a community conversation at LifeSpring, staff discussed the need for shelter for families with children in Bellevue and more affordable housing units in Bellevue that serve families with children in the BSD.<sup>9</sup>
- Under the McKinney-Vento Act, every local educational agency is required to designate a liaison for homeless children and youth. The local educational agency liaison coordinates services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically. BSD reported 333 students qualified as homeless under the McKinney -Vento Act in the 2020-2021 school year. This is a decrease from the 375 students in 2019-2020, which BSD expects is due at least in part to the decline in enrollment<sup>10</sup>

### BSD Racial and Ethnic Enrollment Compared to Homeless Students

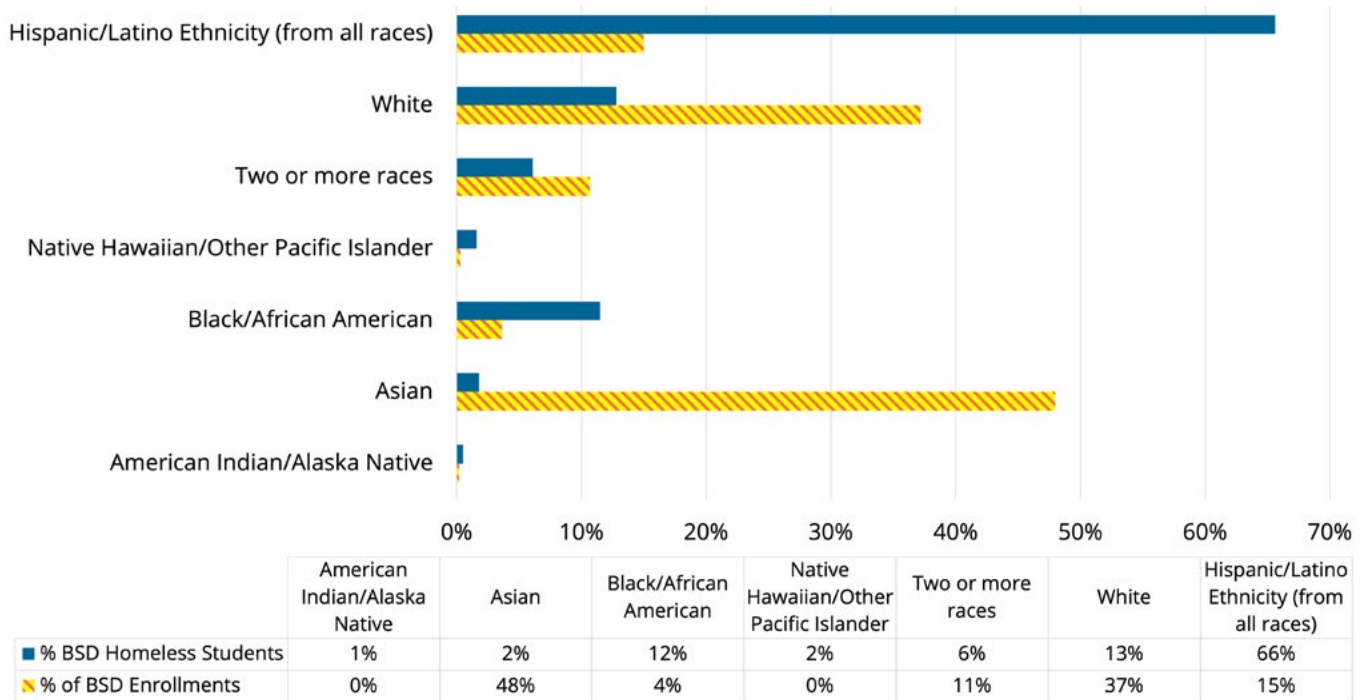


Figure 2 | Source: Bellevue School District

- In outreach conversations conducted with adults, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, a common theme was the need for affordable housing. With the high cost of living, households with individuals working full-time are not able to afford to pay for the basics.<sup>11</sup>
- In the 2020 annual Count Us In, All Home’s point-in-time count in King County, 19% of those counted were less than 18 years old. The Youth Count consists of face-to-face interview using a survey, where the street count consisted only of an observational count. 955 unaccompanied youth and young adults were counted, 26% of those counted were under 18 years old and 74% were 18-24 years old. These numbers do not include

“There has been an increase in students experiencing financial instability due to the impact COVID-19 has had on the economy. Many people have lost their jobs and have entered unstable financial states. This has led to an increase in students needing services to provide food for them during the week.”

~ Provider’s Survey, Backpack Meals for Kids

youth under 18 years old who are in a family or have children. There were 1,190 family with children, representing 3,743 adults and children experiencing homelessness on the morning of the count.<sup>12</sup>

## Goal 2: Supportive Relationships

- Twenty-seven percent of respondents in the 2021 phone/online survey ranked “lack of services for children and youth/teens” as a major/moderate community problem, as compared to 20% in 2019.<sup>13</sup>
- Staff from the BSD report that some kids needed extra support as they really struggled with remote learning. The Boys and Girls Club, Jubilee Reach, and YouthLink provides homework help and tutoring. To address the significant need in at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, YouthLink’s partnered with Bellevue Boys and Girls Club to offer offsite virtual tutoring.<sup>14</sup>
- BSD staff also discussed the lack of availability of childcare slots, especially for older children. In 2020, COVID-19 added an extra layer of challenge for accessing childcare when schools were working remotely and some childcare centers closed down or lowered capacity.<sup>15</sup>

## Goal 3: Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence

- In 2018, 81% of King County eighth graders reported feeling safe at school. In BSD, 88% of eighth graders felt safe in school.<sup>16</sup>
- In 2018, 5% of King County 12th graders reported having been a member of a gang in the past 12 months. Four percent of BSD 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported as such.<sup>17</sup>
- In King County, there has a significant decrease in juvenile arrests over the last six years with 2,695 juvenile arrests in 2013 and 1,719 juvenile arrest in 2019.<sup>18</sup> We saw a similar decrease in Bellevue. In 2020, 107 juveniles were arrested in Bellevue compared to 200 in 2019, a decrease of 56.5%.<sup>19</sup> **Racial (In)Equity Data Point:** Even as the number of incarcerated youth has declined, disparities affecting young people of color have continued to grow. Youth of color account for 28% of the U.S. population in 2017; however, they represented 67% of detained youth.<sup>20</sup> King County reports that youth of color, especially African American youth, are disproportionately represented in the population of incarcerated youth.<sup>21</sup>
- The City of Bellevue has a low level of gang activity for a municipality of its size and proximity to other major urban areas. Most of the police department calls for service that involve gang members are limited to crimes committed by persons who live outside our city and whose gang is based out of the city they reside in. There are several individuals who live in Bellevue who are loosely affiliated with gangs that are active regionally. These people tend commit low level street crime, primarily street level drug-dealing and assaults related to the activity, as well as property crimes such as Burglary, Malicious Mischief (Graffiti), and Trespass. Over the past 3 years, there have been a relatively small number of cases flagged as gang related that occurred in the City of Bellevue; 2018: 18, 2019: 28, 2020: 21.<sup>22</sup>

## Goal 4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible

- Youth and young adults have experienced many disruptions due to COVID-19 such as school closures and remote learning, social isolation, family financial hardship or lack of access to food, and some who have experienced either the illness or death of a family member

due to COVID-19. Rates for youth suicidal ideation and attempt had been rising prior to the pandemic; the system that serves youth and young adults was already overburdened. The pandemic further intensified the strains on young people's mental health and well-being, as well as on the youth mental health system.<sup>23</sup>

- A widespread challenge expressed during several community conversations was the increased need for behavioral health services for youth; waitlists are over six weeks long for the majority of the services. Several behavioral health providers stated that they are working to address the need, but their current challenge to staying fully staffed along with the increasing demand has exacerbated the problem.
- Mental health service moved to virtual meetings during Covid-19. During community conversations with Bellevue Wrap Around Services, staff expressed the challenge for youth accessing the technology resources to maintain counseling and to stay connected during a time that they felt so isolated.
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service staff report that since the start of the pandemic, referrals are needing a high acuity of care and clients have increased suicidal ideation, isolation, and depression symptoms.<sup>24</sup>
- According to the Washington State Department of Health Rapid Health Information Network, there has been an increase in the number of emergency department visits involving suicidal attempts in King County for youth age 10 to 17. The data is for the months of July to September for each year. From July to September in 2019 there were 280 visits, in 2020 there were 342 visits, and in 2021 there were 377 visits.<sup>25</sup>
- In King County, the number of deaths by suicide among youth under age 18 stayed roughly the same between 2019 and 2020 (14 deaths each year); however, the average age dropped from 16.5 years in 2019 to 14.6 years in 2020. Looking at the regional data, East King County previously had the highest rate in King County with 33% of deaths by suicide among youth under age 18 between 2016- 2019. However, for 2020-2021 only 5% of deaths by suicide among youth under 18 were East King County residents. Youth suicide remained constant by race/ethnicity (majority white, non-Hispanic) and gender (majority male) between 2019 and 2020. In the past 5 years (2016- 2021), 14% of youth who died by suicide were known to identify as LGBTQ. However, this is likely an underestimate as there may be additional youth that were not included if their gender identity or sexual orientation was not known to family or friends.<sup>26</sup>
- Washington Poison Center staff reported that calls regarding adolescent self-harm/suspected suicide steadily increased over the last decade, especially in the last year. In the first 6 months of 2021, they had 1,399 adolescent patients calling about self-harm/suicide attempts, which is up from 1052 adolescents in the first 6 months of 2020.<sup>27</sup>
- The prevalence of depression has been rising among King County youth for the past 10 years. The Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) reports whether students, during the past year, have felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more that they stopped doing some of their usual activities. Averaging data from 2016 and 2018, 31.4% of King County 8th-, 10th-, and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students experienced depressive feelings. The percentage of youth reporting depressive feelings increases significantly with each grade level from 25.7% of 8th-grade students to 35.6% of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students reporting depressive feelings. Figure 3 displays the responses for overall King County, by geographic region, and by Race/Ethnicity. For youth in



East King County, 27.9% of the HYS respondents reported experiencing depressive feelings. **Racial (In)Equity Data Point:** Hispanic (38.0%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (34.6%), American Indian/Alaska Native (34.4%), and multiple-race (37.4%) youth were more likely than Asian (27.5%), Black (29.9%), and white (29.5%) youth to report depressive feelings.

### Depression Prevalence (8th, 10th, and 12th Grade) King County (Average 2016 & 2018)

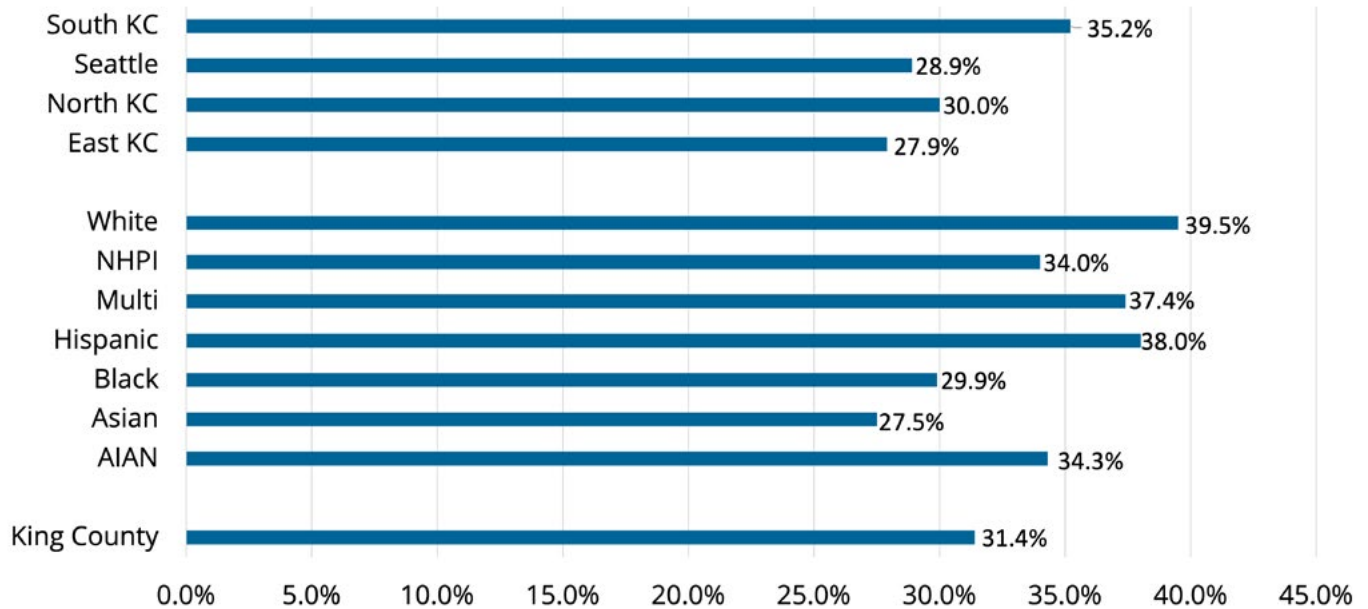


Figure 3 | Source: Healthy Youth Survey<sup>28</sup>

- The HYS also showed that 19% of 8th graders, 20% of 10th graders, and 19% of 12th graders in King County had contemplated suicide in the last 12 months. In BSD, 18% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 21% of 10th graders and 20% of 12th graders reported as such, all increased compared to 2016 data.<sup>29</sup>
- Twenty seven percent of sixth graders in King County reported in the 2018 HYS that they'd been bullied in the past 30 days. By 12th grade, this rate had dropped to 13%. In BSD, a similar trend was noted: 26% of sixth graders and 12% of twelfth graders reported being bullied.<sup>30</sup>
- This indicator also reports on 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders' high-risk substance use, including alcohol, marijuana, painkillers, or other illegal drugs in the past 30 days. Averaging data from 2016 and 2018, 23.7% of King County youth responding to the HYS in the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades reported using high-risk substances or other illegal drugs during the past 30 days. Twenty-two percent of students in East King County reported using a high-risk or illegal substance, compared to Seattle (29.0%), North (22.2%), and South (23.0%) regions. The percentage of students reporting substance use increased 2.5 times between 8th (9.1%) and 10th (23.2%) grades and increased another 1.6 times between 10th and 12th (37.4%) grades. **Racial (In)Equity Data Point:** Hispanic (28.9%) and multiple-race (28.6%) youth were significantly more likely to report substance use compared to the King County average.
- Dental care is important and can affect an individual's general health. In 2015, 38% of children in King County had cavities – about the same as the 40% reported in 2010. **Racial (In)Equity Data Point:** The presence of dental cavities is a marker of dental health and access to care among children. At a rate 2.4 times that of white children, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children were significantly more likely to have had cavities than children in

other racial/ethnic groups. Asian, Black, Hispanic, and multiple-race children were also more likely than white children to have had cavities. More than half of children who are eligible for free/ reduced lunch have had cavities. At 33%, students from English-speaking households were significantly less likely to have had cavities than those from households where the primary language was Spanish (54%) or another non-English language (47%). This data suggests that children in these racial/ethnic groups may have reduced access to dental care.

- Averaging data from 2014–2018, more than seven out of 10 expectant mothers (72.2%) in King County received early and adequate prenatal care. **Racial (In)Equity Data Point:** Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander expectant mothers (47.7%) were significantly less likely to have early and adequate prenatal care compared to any other race/ethnicity. American Indian/Alaska Native (60.4%) and Black (61.5%) expectant mothers were the second and third less likely, respectively. White expectant mothers (76.4%) were most likely to have early and adequate prenatal care. The likelihood of receiving early and adequate prenatal care increases with age. Young expectant mothers age 10–17 years old were least likely (48.4%) to have received prenatal care. Expectant mothers 18–24 years old had the second lowest percentage (60.8%).<sup>31</sup>
- Averaging data from 2014–2018, 3.9 per 1,000 infants born to King County residents died within 365 days after birth. The King County rate is lower than the Washington state infant mortality rate of 4.7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births (2018). **Racial (In)Equity Data Point:** Disparities persist by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and neighborhood. Infants born to American Indian/Alaska Native mothers (12.2 per 1,000) die at rates more than four times the rate among Asian (2.8 per 1,000) or white mothers (3.0 per 1,000). Infants born to Black mothers (7.8 per 1,000) die at rates more than 2.5 times the rate of infants born to Asian or white mothers.<sup>32</sup>
- Research has shown that when mental health and substance use disorder are treated simultaneously, people are more likely to be successful in long term recovery. Youth Eastside Services (YES) provides this treatment for co-occurring disorders whether or not the young people can afford it. YES staff report an increase in the number of teens they see that need this type of care.<sup>33</sup>
- The Crisis Connections' Teen Link program provides a youth-answered help line open evenings to respond to calls from youth on a wide variety of topics. Teen Link handled 33 calls (chats) in 2020 and as of September 2021 they have had 21 calls (chats) from Bellevue youth.<sup>34</sup>
- TeenLink also offers suicide prevention training in junior, middle and high schools, and youth serving organizations. Teen Link presented to 494 students from Bellevue in 2020 and 544 as of September 2021.<sup>35</sup>

“The need for behavioral health services for youth and families is as substantial as ever. Youth continue to struggle with issues including anxiety, depression, grief and loss, substance use, and family conflict. Online learning and social isolation have further exacerbated mental health concerns for some individuals, and suicidal ideations is on the rise among youth.”

~ Youth Eastside Service



## Goal 5: Education and Job Skills to Help Individuals Reach their Full Potential

- With Covid-19, school districts had to navigate new ways of teaching youth while students were participating remotely. During a community conversation with Bellevue Wrap Around Services and YouthLink staff, staff stated that virtual school was a huge challenge for students without internet. In the beginning, students were going to parks and other public places to access internet to complete their schoolwork.
- As of October 2021, BSD's enrollment was 18,808.<sup>36</sup> Some students who are Bellevue residents attend schools in the Issaquah School District: Sunset and Cougar Ridge Elementary Schools and Issaquah Middle School.
- Across BSD in the 2018-19 school year, 69% of children entered kindergarten with expected skills in all six domains of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills.<sup>37</sup>
- In 2020, BSD's 4-year graduation rate was 94%, with 2.1% continuing in school and 3.8% dropping out.<sup>38</sup>
- In addition to growing racial and ethnic diversity, there are now 104 first languages spoken in the district. Forty-one percent of students speak a first language other than English. The top two languages are Mandarin Chinese and Spanish with over 1,500 speakers each, followed by Chinese unspecified, Korean, Russian, Telugu, and Hindi.<sup>39</sup>
- In 2021-22 school year, 16% of BSD students were English Language Learners (ELLs).<sup>40</sup>
- Eastside Pathways (EP) engages organizations and works collaboratively to align efforts to address the systemic barriers that hold back some of our children to maximize every child's opportunity for success in school and life from cradle to career. EP partnerships include 84 public, private, and non-profit organizations. The City of Bellevue has been a partner from the onset with staff participating in the collaboratives, on the board, and providing other support.<sup>41</sup>

"An increased number of high schoolers are seeing their parents being laid off and taking on the responsibility of working and bringing home income while also going to school, which is a lot of pressure on a youth."

~ Bellevue Diversity Staff

## Additional Items for Consideration

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer + (LGBTQ+) Youth

- The 2018 Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) show that 11.3% of King County public high school students identify as LGBTQ+ and 7% are not sure of their sexual orientation.<sup>42</sup>
- BGLAD is a weekly drop-in social support group for youth at Youth Eastside Services, established as a welcoming and affirming space for people exploring or seeking support for their identities. In a community conversation with BGLAD, a participant stated that teens, especially LGBTQ+ teens, don't know where to go to get domestic violence resources.<sup>43</sup>
- BGLAD participants in the community conversation also stated that underage or young adult queer folks are overrepresented in sex work.<sup>44</sup>

- Forty-six percent of homeless LGBTQ youth report they no longer live in their family home due to family rejection of their sexual orientation and 17% ended up on the streets after they aged out of the foster care system.<sup>45</sup>
- Within 48 hours of becoming homeless, 1 in 3 homeless youth will be recruited by a trafficker into commercial sexual exploitation. There is a disproportionate number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) youth in the commercially sexually exploited population. LGBTQ youth's entry into commercial sexual exploitation often begins with survival sex: the exchange of sexual favors for basic needs like food, shelter, or clothing. Homeless LGBTQ youth were three times as likely to engage in survival sex than their heterosexual peers.<sup>46</sup>
- The National Coalition for the Homeless reports that between 20-40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.<sup>47</sup> Of the unaccompanied youth in the 2020 Count Us In report, 27% of the youth and young adults identified as LGBTQ+, compared to 1% of the non-unaccompanied youth and young adult population.<sup>48</sup>
- Due to their sexual orientation, many LGBTQ+ youth are routinely victimized not only by their peers but by their own family members. LGBTQ+ youth who face discrimination, name-calling and abuse in their childhood are more likely to have low self-esteem and higher rates of mental health problems.<sup>49</sup> The HYS reports whether students, during the past year, have felt so sad or hopeless for two weeks or more that they stopped doing some of their usual activities. Averaging data from 2016 and 2018, 57.2% of youth identifying as LGBTQ+ report depressive feelings compared to youth who identified themselves as heterosexual (26.4%).<sup>50</sup>
- The HYS indicator reports on 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders' high-risk substance use, including alcohol, marijuana, painkillers, or other illegal drugs in the past 30 days Among youth identifying as LGBTQ+, 34.4% reported substance use, which is higher than youth identifying as heterosexual (23.5%) and higher than the overall King County average.<sup>51</sup>
- In a recent King County Community Health report, key informants and LGBTQ+ youth and young adults were asked to relate their experiences with the healthcare as well as other systems from which they seek resources. Some themes that emerged included lack of feeling heard by doctors; lack of safety in general, at school, and out in the community; and lack of support from adults. Youth suggested that some ways to mitigate these issues would include having more queer friendly intake forms that gave many options for sexuality choices, displaying PRIDE flags and signage, and having LGBTQ+ staff.<sup>52</sup>
- Staff from Friends of Youth, which works with youth experiencing homelessness, report that they see a disproportionate amount of LGBTQ+ and youth of color represented in the demographics that they serve.<sup>53</sup>

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