

# School Aged Children and Youth



**319** homeless students  
2018-2019

**48** homeless students  
2006-2007



**98** first languages  
spoken in the Bellevue  
school district



**65%** of BSD  
students are  
students of color



**18%**  
8th graders



**21%**  
10th graders



**20%**  
12th graders



reported  
contemplating  
suicide

# 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, as evidenced by comments from school staff, parents and mental health professionals.
- Access to supports for school-aged children and youth to ensure their health and wellbeing is critical so that they are prepared for success in whatever they do in life. 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/learning differences. Fears about immigration status can deter people from accessing services and also fueling the stress felt by both children and youth and their families.

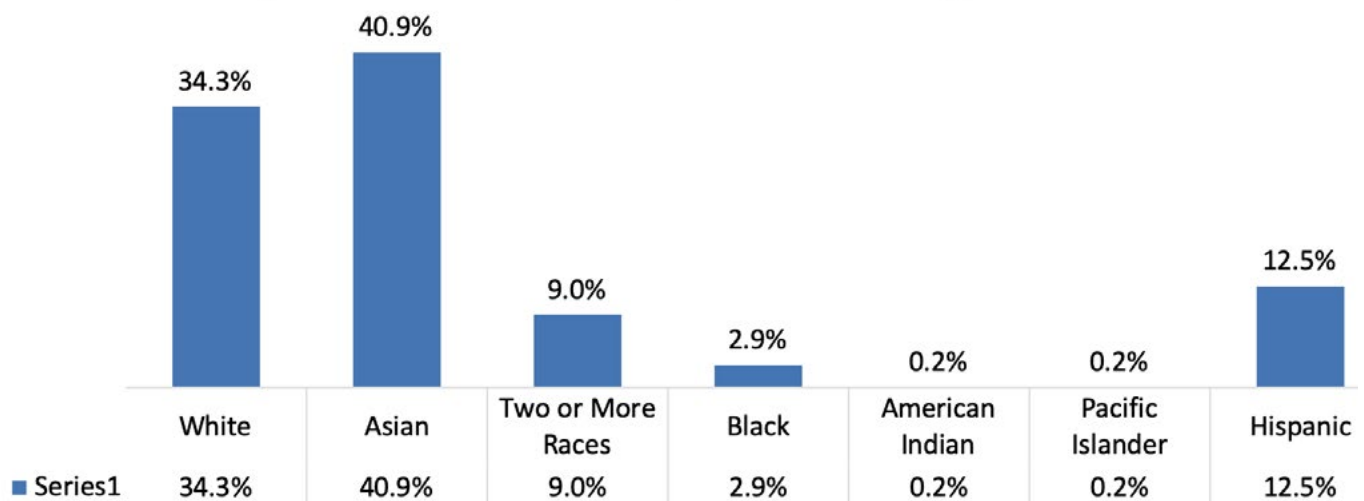
## Population Overview

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. Important too is ensuring that their families are also receiving support, such as help in finding livable wage jobs and affordable housing.

Youth under age 18 comprised about 20% of Bellevue's population in 2017. Bellevue had a smaller proportion of youth than the nation (23%) and state (22%), a similar proportion to the county (20%), but a larger proportion than Seattle (16%). About 60% of youth under age 18 in Bellevue identify as people of color, compared to 24% of people 65 and over.<sup>1</sup>

As Figure 1 shows, the Bellevue School District (BSD) is highly diverse, with a majority of students identifying as people of color.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1. BSD Enrollment by Race & Ethnicity, 2018-2019**



Source: Eastside Pathways<sup>3</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

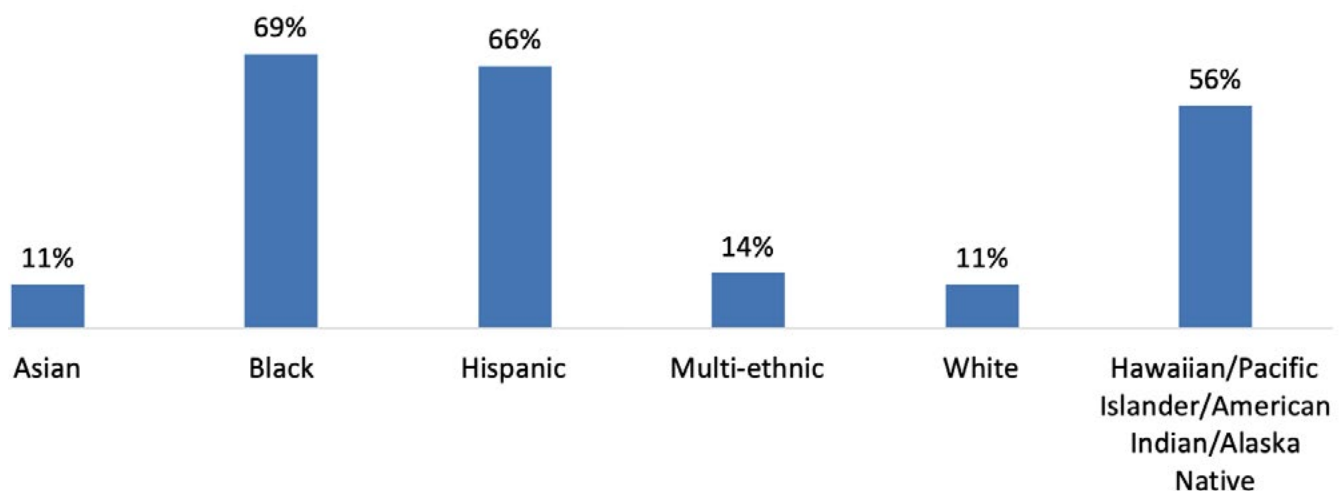
Additional topics for consideration:

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex or Asexual (LGBTQIA+) Youth
- Children in the Child Welfare System

## Goal 1: Food to Eat and a Roof Overhead

- Bellevue’s child poverty rate was 5.5% in 2017 compared to 12% countywide. For children under 5 years of age, the poverty rate slightly decreases to 3.9% in Bellevue and to 9.6% across the county.<sup>4</sup>
- Certain areas within Bellevue have historically had much higher rates of children in poverty than others. For instance, Lake Hills, Crossroads, Northeast Bellevue and Downtown have the highest percentages of children living in poverty reaching about 26% in some census tracts.<sup>5</sup>
- There are 8 schools in the BSD where at least 30% of their students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches (FRL), and 12 additional schools reported that at least 20% of students qualified.<sup>6</sup>
- As Figure 2 shows, students of color are disproportionately represented in the FRL program. For example, while Black students compose only 3% of BSD, 69% of Black students are enrolled in the FRL program.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 2. BSD Free/Reduced Lunch Enrollment by Race & Ethnicity**



Source: BSD 2018-2019 School Year<sup>8</sup>

- BSD reports a large increase in students eligible to receive services funded by the federal McKinney-Vento Act because they are experiencing homelessness. Forty-eight qualified in the 2006-2007 school year, 257 qualified in 2016-2017, and 295 qualified and in 2018-2019.<sup>9</sup>
- In the 2019 annual Count Us In, All Home's point-in-time count in King County, 1,089 unaccompanied youth and young adults were counted. This includes 82 children under the age of 18 (a decrease from 172 in 2018) and 1,007 young adults between 18 and 24. These numbers do not include youth under 25 years old who are in a family or have children. There were 763 family households, with 72 of those households headed by a young parent under 25 years old.<sup>10</sup>
- In all community conversations conducted with adults, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, a common theme was the need for affordable housing. With the high cost of living, household with individuals working full-time are not able to afford to pay for the basics.<sup>11</sup>
- Over half (52.9%) of surveyed youth believe that homeless services do not meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness, and 47.1% did not feel that affordable housing was available in our community.<sup>12</sup>
- Participants in a community conversation with Bellevue College (BC) faculty and staff shared that food insecurity and homelessness for students is an ongoing issue. BC has a food pantry and emergency food bags available; it was reported that students who are homeless do not want to tell others due to concerns about possible discrimination.<sup>13</sup>
- Guests at the Friends of Youth Day Center reported that there is a need for more affordable, permanent housing for someone making \$15/hour on the Eastside, and access to bus tickets and ORCA cards to get to the day center, school, and work.<sup>14</sup>

## Goal 2: Supportive Relationships

- Slightly fewer people (20%) in the 2019 phone/online survey ranked "lack of services for children and youth/teens" as a major/ moderate community problem as compared to 24% in 2017.<sup>15</sup>
- Staff from the BSD report the lack of availability of childcare options including after school activities especially for older youth. Barriers include lack of slots and transportation for children and youth to get to sports and other activities.<sup>16</sup>

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

- There were 11,992 juvenile arrests statewide in 2017, a decrease from 2013 when there were 13,754 arrests. Countywide, there were 1,929 juvenile arrests in 2017, also a decrease from 2013 when there were 2,695.<sup>17</sup> In Bellevue in 2018, 339 juveniles were arrested compared to 150 in 2016 an increase of over 200%.<sup>18</sup>
- Youth of color are disproportionately represented at every point in the juvenile justice system. In Washington state, the total number of youth in the juvenile justice system has declined over time; however, the percentage of youth of color in detention is increasing. Youth of color ages 10 to 17 represent 38% of the general youth population, 51% of the youth in county detention and 62% of the youth involved in Juvenile Rehabilitation. The greatest disparities exist for Black, Native American and Hispanic/Latino youth.<sup>19</sup> Research show that various explanations have emerged for the racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system ranging from jurisdictional issues, certain police practices and pervasive crime in some urban areas.<sup>20</sup>

- In 2018, 81% of King County 8th graders reported feeling safe at school; in BSD, 88% of 8th graders feel safe in school.<sup>21</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 12th graders reported as such.<sup>22</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 services 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 is a group who are loosely affiliated and 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 gang related incidents reported in the City of Bellevue; 2016: 11, 2017: 2, 2018: 5. As of August 2019, there have been 6 gang related incidents including a homicide that occurred in April. Four gang members are in custody in connection with the incident.<sup>23</sup>

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

- In 2010 to 2014, the rate of births for women ages 15 through 17 living in Bellevue was estimated to be about 2.1 births per 1,000 women, which was much lower than their King County counterparts (6.3 births per 1,000 women). One of the reasons this age group is tracked is because it is at the highest risk for poor birth outcomes, such as low birth weight and prematurity which puts the infant at risk for infant death, blindness and deafness. Children born to single teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of school and become dependent on welfare, compared to children whose parents are 18 or older.<sup>24</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>25</sup>
- Staff at International Community Health Services (ICHS) cited mental health challenges for the many school-aged children and youth they serve. In 2017, ICHS started a Community Health Clinic at Highland Middle School in Bellevue; YES provides the mental health and substance use disorder services at the clinic.<sup>26</sup> Asian Counseling and Service Center staff also concur that they are also seeing more youth with mental health issues, such as severe anxiety and suicidal thought. There are more student referrals to the behavioral health programs than they can accept for services.<sup>27</sup>
- In the BSD area, 8.45 out of every 100 deaths for youth are attributed to drug- or alcohol-related causes. This is lower than the statewide (12.36), Seattle (13.39), Snoqualmie Valley (12.55), Issaquah (10.14), and Lake Washington (9.61) rates.<sup>28</sup>

“There is a mental health crisis for children/youth and we simply need more resources to have a higher level of staffing to respond sooner.”

~Provider’s Survey

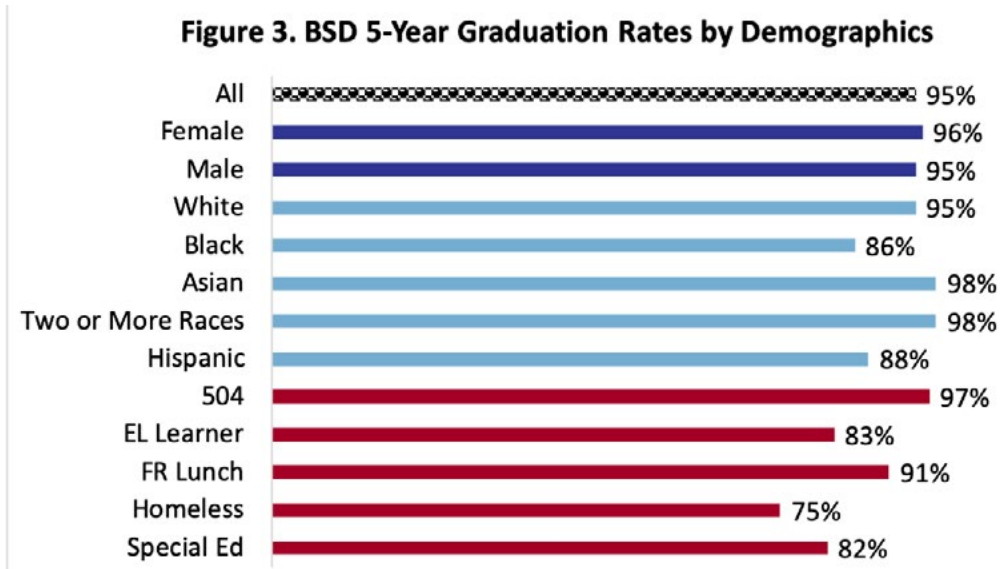
- In the Bellevue Youth Link survey, over 60% disagreed and 11.8% strongly disagreed that affordable health care is accessible in our community.<sup>29</sup>
- The Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) also provides information about substance use by youth. In 2018 in King County, 7% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 17% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 26% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported having drunk a glass, can or bottle of alcohol in the past 30 days. In 2018 in BSD, 4% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 17% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 31% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reported as such. Nineteen percent of King County 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 14% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported smoking marijuana in the past 30 days. In BSD, 18% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 11% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported as such.<sup>30</sup>
- The HYS also showed that 19% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 20% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 19% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders in King County had contemplated suicide in the last 12 months. In BSD, 18% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 21% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 20% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported as such, all increased compared to 2016 data.<sup>31</sup>
- Twenty seven percent of 6<sup>th</sup> graders in King County reported in the 2018 HYS that they'd been bullied in the past 30 days. By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, this rate had dropped to 13%. In BSD, a similar trend was noted: 26% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 12% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported being bullied.<sup>32</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. In 2018, Teen Link handled 210 calls (chats) from Bellevue youth.
- TeenLink also offers suicide prevention training in junior, middle and high schools, and youth serving organizations. In 2018, Teen Link presented to 738 students and 33 adults from Bellevue.<sup>33</sup>

In 2018, funds from the King County Mental Illness and Drug Dependency initiative provided School-Based Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT). These include youth prevention trainings to 2,328 East King County Youth and the Children's Crisis Outreach Response System, provided in-home crisis support to 271 youth and families on the Eastside.<sup>34</sup>

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

- As of October 2018, BSD's enrollment was 20,272.<sup>35</sup> In addition, approximately 1,686 students that attend school in the Issaquah School District had a Bellevue address in 2018-2019.<sup>36</sup>
- Across BSD, 57% of children entered kindergarten with expected skills in all six domains of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills. These rates varied widely for different groups: for example, only 26% of Hispanic/Latino children entered kindergarten proficient in all areas.<sup>37</sup>
- In 2017, BSD's 5-year adjusted graduation rate was 95%, slightly higher than Lake Washington (94%) and substantially higher than Seattle (82%) school districts. Graduation rates substantially differ based on race, ethnicity, and other factors. As shown in Figure 3, the BSD 5-year adjusted graduation rate for White students was 95%, and Asians, 98% compared to 86% for Black students and 88% for Hispanic/Latino students.<sup>38</sup>

- The percentage of Hispanic students (of any race) in BSD has steadily climbed over the years, growing from 5.3% in 1996-1997 to 12.5% in 2018-2019. Over that same period, the percentage of White students has declined, shrinking from 71.4% in 1996 to just over 34% in 2018-2019.
- In addition to growing racial and ethnic diversity, there are now 98 first languages spoken in the district. Thirty-eight percent of students speak a first language other than English. The top two languages are Spanish and Mandarin Chinese with over 1,400 speakers each, followed by Chinese unspecified, Russian, Telugu, Japanese and Cantonese.<sup>39</sup>



Source: BSD<sup>40</sup>

- In 2018-2019 school year, 15% of BSD students were English Language Learners (ELLs).<sup>41</sup>
- Some students who are Bellevue residents attend schools in the Issaquah School District: Sunset and Cougar Ridge Elementary Schools, Issaquah Middle School and Issaquah High School. There are 119 Bellevue students attending Issaquah schools who are English Language Learners.<sup>42</sup>
- Eastside Pathways (EP) is a community-wide partnership of almost 70 public, private, and non-profit organizations. EP's goal is to ensure that every child succeeds from cradle to career; collaboratives work on challenges such as improving school readiness and graduation rates. In 2017, Lake Washington School District joined EP. 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>43</sup>



## Additional Items for Consideration

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex or Asexual (LGBTQIA+) Youth

- The 2018 Healthy Youth Survey show that 11.3% of King County public high school students identify as LGBTQ and 7% are not sure of their sexual orientation.<sup>44</sup>
- The National Coalition for the Homeless reports that between 20-40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQIA.<sup>45</sup> Among LGBTQIA+ respondents to the 2019 Count Us In survey conducted in January 2019, 7 out of 10 first experienced homelessness in childhood or before the age of 25.<sup>46</sup>
- In a recent King County Community Health report, key informants and LGBTQ+ youth and young adults including some from the YES BGLAD support group, a support group at YES for LGBTQIA youth, 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 and in some cases parents about their specific health care needs; lack of safety in general, at school, 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>47</sup>
- Participants in BGLAD, a support group at YES for LGBTQIA youth, weighed in on what they considered key health and human services issues. These include lack of safety for the Trans community, lack of money and access to services like medical treatments, anxiety and depression including suicide ideation and high parental expectations, and lack of affordable housing.<sup>48</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>49</sup>

“Lack of a space where queer youth feel comfortable is an important issue on the Eastside.”

~Key informant interview

### Children in the Child Welfare System

- As of January 2019, there were 8,951 children in out of home care in Washington State, slightly more than the same time period in 2017 (8,800). This represents 5.4 of every 1,000 children in the State. During the 2019 time period, approximately 94% of children were in a family setting; 50% were living in foster homes and about 44% were living with relatives, and nearly 6% were in a non-family setting such as a group home. African American children were 2.2 times more likely and Native American children were 2.9 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care compared to white children.<sup>50</sup>
- As of April 2019, there were 1,604 open out of home care cases in King County, a small increase compared to the same period in 2018 (1,574). In 2019, 41% of these cases were children under 5 years old.<sup>51</sup>



- In 2018-2019, there were 23 children removed from their homes in Bellevue by Child Protective Services because it was determined that the child would not be safe in their homes.<sup>52</sup>
- According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2014, 11-34% of former foster youth report experiencing homelessness and 25% to 50% report experiencing housing stability.<sup>53</sup>
- Allowing foster children to remain in their schools may have a positive impact on their educational success and the likelihood of them finding permanent placement. For young children, moving foster homes is worse, and for older children, changing schools is worse.<sup>54</sup>
- Experts on a panel discussing issues related to the child welfare system stated that increasingly children whose parents are struggling with substance use disorder (SUD) and mental illness are entering the child welfare system, particularly for neglect. Needs include resources such as mental health services for families who are in crisis before the problems escalate and more supports to retain social workers who work with the children and families. There is also a huge need for more foster families; in Bellevue as of May 2019 there were 35 licensed foster homes, far fewer than the need. More supports are needed to retain foster parents.<sup>55</sup>

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## Endnotes

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