Tacoma Housing Authority
McCarver Special Housing Program
2015 Year Four Evaluation Report

Prepared for the Tacoma Housing Authority

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GEO EDUCATION & RESEARCH
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APPENDIX A – MCCARVER SPECIAL HOUSING COMMUNITY PARTNERS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over four years of the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) McCarver Special Housing Program (hereafter, Program) many parents have made considerable progress toward their goals of family financial stability with higher average incomes; some have made no progress for reasons related to disability, chemical dependency or domestic violence; most families struggle to afford the ever rising but still subsidized rents, and most are heavily rent burdened in the general housing market. Many students have made gains in educational performance. But gains are not consistent across families; many students continue to perform on the low ends of the scales on standardized tests. Their performance is similar to other students at McCarver and in peer schools with similar rates of poverty; on some measures they exceed the performance of students who are still classified as homeless. Program students have a very low mobility rate (7.0%) compared to non-program students (93.8%), and by housing these students the Program has helped reduce the school’s overall mobility rate from 107.4% in 2010-2011 to 81.8% in 2014-2015.

Geo Education & Research (Geo), the external evaluator of the Program, has analyzed four years of data from student performance, from THA income, and from interviews with THA staff, McCarver staff and teachers, and parents. Trends in the data over time indicate that despite many successes, the theory of change (i.e. the basic premise and underlying assumptions) of the Program needs revision, new approaches, and expectations grounded in the experiences of families served to date in the unique partnership between THA and McCarver Elementary School. The Program is not yet fully implemented. After year four of a five-year Program, there is a mixture of early success, positive changes in students, parent and family situations, and still many challenges to overcome. This varied set of outcomes is reasonable to expect in an innovative and complex program. The Program is significantly addressing one major challenge facing the school – excessive rates of student mobility. It is solving one of the major problems facing these families—homelessness—and is also providing additional support to reduce stresses on families. It is providing many parents with more motivation, skills, support, tools and resources to improve their lives and livelihoods in many ways. The Program is also training and coaching them on why and how to be more engaged in the education of their children. Still, these families’ challenges are significant. The families were not screened by the Program to accept only those likely to succeed. In this sense, THA opened the Program to all seeking to improve their lives. The fact that Program students now perform at the same levels as their peers in poverty is an improvement over the performance of students who are still homeless.
McCarver Elementary School is an important and long-standing school in Tacoma, Washington, with a notable history. In recent years, the school has faced significant challenges. Its student population has one of the highest rates of poverty in the District and in the larger metropolitan area. Its educational outcomes have been very low. The school had been designated as a failing school under state guidelines\(^1\) that threatened alternative governance as a consequence. In the years before THA began this Program, the school’s annual student mobility rate ranged from 105% to 179%. Research\(^2\) clearly shows that mobility is very detrimental to the educational outcomes of the children who come and go and to their classmates, who are also disrupted by the changes in their classrooms. Such student mobility rates also make a school a challenging place to teach. During the last school year, two teachers retired, one moved out of state, and one moved to another school in the District. In a prior year the school’s long-term counselor (who played a key role in helping students and families) retired.

The THA Program has two goals: It seeks to improve outcomes for participating families and students, and also to improve outcomes for the entire school. The Program has five elements:

1. THA and its partners have provided rental assistance to up to fifty (50) families who were homeless or on the verge of homelessness and who had a child enrolled in McCarver’s kindergarten, first, or second grade at the time of enrollment. Over the four years, the children from the Program families have comprised 16% to 19% of the school’s population.
2. The participating parents make the following commitments as a condition of their receipt of the housing assistance and other support: 1) keep their children enrolled at McCarver; 2) engage fully in their children’s education both at school and at home; 3) invest in their own employment and education prospects; 4) share their data; and 5) work with their caseworker.
3. The Program, including its service partners, provides the families with extensive supportive services to help them fulfill these commitments.

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\(^1\) Step 4 (lowest): Did not make adequate yearly progress after being in Step 3. In addition to offering public school choice and supplemental services and taking corrective action, the school must plan for alternative governance.

4. The Tacoma Public School District (TPS) has made substantial investments to remake McCarver’s curriculum into an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB).

5. Professional third party evaluation will track an array of performance measures.

Funding for this initiative comes from THA, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, Pierce County, Tacoma Public Schools, The City of Tacoma, and services and support from about thirty public and nonprofit service partners (see Appendix A).

Based on four years of data, Geo Education & Research (Geo) sees some positive signs that the Program is having positive impacts. The student mobility rate (a measure of students who enter and leave the school), though still high, is significantly lower than it was at the start of the Program. After an encouraging decline, the mobility rate for Program students has fluctuated. It was 7.8% in 2014-2015. McCarver’s overall rate has been declining since 2010-2011 (when it was 107%). It reached a low of 74% in 2013-2014 but went up to 82% in 2014-2015.

Program planners and managers did not expect to see measurable, much less significant, changes in student performance near the beginning of the Program. Given the traumas and challenges experienced by the students and their parents, rapid change seemed unlikely. However, Geo’s analysis has shown that in one primary indicator of student success—reading—Program students (especially those in grades K-2) made substantial strides during years one and two of the Program. The change was more dramatic in year one but still positive in year two. Years three and four show that Program students now have reading abilities similar to other students at McCarver but lower than students at peer schools and other elementary schools across the District.

**Parent / Household Changes**

THA housing vouchers have helped stabilize the lives of the 33 families currently in the Program. A total of 58 families have started the Program; 49 started in September of year one; and nine others joined over the first two years (with no more than 50 enrolled at any time). A total of 25 families have left the Program over four years. The current cohort (as of 8/31/15) has 33 families, 42

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3 Family data are reported for year four through August 31, 2015. School data are for the 2014-2015 school year.
parents, 104 children, with 56\(^4\) students attending McCarver. During the Program year, six families with eight McCarver students and six other children left the Program. Three of these McCarver students and three other children left during the summer. Therefore 39 families with 64 students at McCarver were served during the Program year.

Housing support has contributed to initial changes for children that support school success (e.g., attendance) and to positive parental involvement in schools for some families, but not across all families in the Program. Some families report that the housing support has allowed them to live near the school, and that living nearby has supported better school attendance for their children and increased their involvement in school. However, many families have not been able to find adequate, affordable housing in the McCarver neighborhood and have instead ended up living far from the school. In these cases students are travelling long times and distances, and staff feel this negatively impacts attendance and participation in after school activities. In the beginning of the Program, all families had students at McCarver but some lived fairly far away. Some moved in and some later moved out. Staff estimate that 60% now live outside the attendance area and some live far away. Also, staff estimate that now, in the last year of the Program, only about half of families are in satisfactory housing and about half have housing that is lacking in some way, such as location/transportation, unaffordable utility bills or a lack of a feeling of safety.

\(^4\) This is the number of McCarver students whose families were in the Program at the end of August 2015 (including the students who were 5\(^{th}\) graders in 2014-2015. The families who had students enrolled at the school between the start of the school year (September 2014) and the end of August 2015 had more students at McCarver at least part of the school year. On any given measure (e.g., attendance, reading sores) not all students have data in the TPS system.
Key Demographics of Tacoma Housing Authority McCarver Program Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of Families (average age of parents at entry = 31)</th>
<th>Number (among all 58 households ever in the Program)</th>
<th>Percent of 58 total households</th>
<th>Number among 33 active households at end of year</th>
<th>Percent of active HH or subgroup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two parent households</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent households</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female head of household&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male head of household</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers of English as a second language (one or more parents)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or ethnicity of parents (all)&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American / Alaska Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the 25 who left, nine left for positive reasons (e.g., found a job in another community; able to support the family without the Program’s support; all children graduating to middle school). Eleven left for negative reasons (e.g., failure to meet Program standards; personal traumas (including domestic violence). One family left because the parent thought another school would be better for her children. The others left for neutral reasons (mainly entering public housing or other programs like THA’s Housing Opportunity Program or having to move). Four families left in the first year; nine in the second year; six in the third year; and six in the fourth year. Because this is a pilot

<sup>5</sup> One is a grandmother who entered the program when her daughter became unable to continue caring for her children.

<sup>6</sup> Since several clients have multiple ethnicities, the numbers do not sum to parent total or 100%. Race is summarized for all parents in the households.
program with a closed cohort, the Program did not replace all the families with new ones. Outcomes for families who exited the Program are not known and are not tracked after exiting.

Two THA case workers are located in an office at the school where they can easily meet with parents, students, teachers, and school staff on a daily basis. They help parents and students identify needs, meet goals and connect to community resources and services. They also help ensure that parents meet their obligations and support their children’s educational efforts.

**Most parents have engaged in at least one education or training program and many have achieved meaningful educational goals in the last four years.** During their time with the Program, ten parents have earned their GED; four have earned their high school diploma; three have earned AA degrees; two have earned BA degrees; and one is working toward a master’s degree. Thirty-eight parents completed a financial literacy class and 24 have been certified in a skilled trade. Parents cited the encouragement, goal-setting support and concrete help (e.g., tuition support) from the Program as instrumental in achieving their education goals.

**Families have experienced increases in household income, employment, education and job training, but about half of adults in the Program are not employed.** Upon entering the Program, 7 of 61 parents (11.5%) were employed, and average monthly household income for all parents from all sources was $790. **In August 2015, 20 of 43 parents (47.6%) held jobs, and monthly incomes averaged $1,432 among all parents.** This is a rise in average monthly income but a decline in employment compared to August 2014. Average monthly earned income among working parents was $1,408 in August 2014. **Families now get 73% of their income from employment.**

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7 Including all parents, working or not and all sources of income.
## Employment and Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households (# (%)) w/ earned income</td>
<td>9 (18.4%)</td>
<td>28 (56.0%)</td>
<td>23 (51.1%)</td>
<td>25 (64.1%)</td>
<td>16 (48.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed adults (among all parents)</td>
<td>7 (11.5%)</td>
<td>20 (33.9%)</td>
<td>29 (52.7%)</td>
<td>29 (60.4%)</td>
<td>20 (47.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household monthly income</td>
<td>$712</td>
<td>$680</td>
<td>$796</td>
<td>$765</td>
<td>$782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household monthly income(^8)</td>
<td>$790</td>
<td>$799</td>
<td>$1,176</td>
<td>$1,340</td>
<td>$1,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median monthly HH earned income among HH with working adults</td>
<td>$853</td>
<td>$648</td>
<td>$1,400</td>
<td>$1,280</td>
<td>$2,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly HH earned income</td>
<td>$286</td>
<td>$361</td>
<td>$811</td>
<td>$762</td>
<td>$1,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median monthly unearned income</td>
<td>$380</td>
<td>$253</td>
<td>$285</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly unearned income</td>
<td>$504</td>
<td>$438</td>
<td>$365</td>
<td>$335</td>
<td>$384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average TANF income if on TANF (# HH)</td>
<td>$427 (24)</td>
<td>$516 (10)</td>
<td>$408 (11)</td>
<td>$558 (6)</td>
<td>$482 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household rent(^9)</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>$825</td>
<td>$904</td>
<td>$930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household rent(^10)</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>$910</td>
<td>$971</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families able to pay expected share(^11) of rent without undue rent burden</td>
<td>61 (100%)</td>
<td>49 (100%)</td>
<td>40 (95.2%)</td>
<td>27 (69.2%)</td>
<td>14 (42.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families unable to pay expected share of rent without undue rent burden(^12)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (4.8%)</td>
<td>12 (30.8%)</td>
<td>19 (57.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children (cohort total) – 8/31/15</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children at McCarver – 8/31/15(^13)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) For 33 families still enrolled 8/31/15.

\(^9\) The average is higher in more recent years as a few parents have earned much higher incomes than others.

\(^10\) Not counting subsidy from THA (i.e., what the landlord receives).

\(^11\) Not counting subsidy from THA (i.e., what the landlord receives).

\(^12\) Monthly expectations: $25 at entry through year one; 20% year two; 40% year three; 60% year four; 80% year five; and 100% year six and beyond. Since families’ shares of the rent increase each year and since many families do not earn living wages, it is not surprising that more are rent-burdened over time.

\(^13\) This is at the 50% level, meaning 19 families were paying 50% or more of their income on rent. In August of 2014, 22 families (56%) are paying more than 30% of their income on rent (even though they were paying only 40% of their rent). In 2015, 24 (73%) were paying over 30% of their income in rent (even though they were paying only 60% of their rent).

\(^14\) Includes 5th graders in 2014-2015 school year. 64 were enrolled at least part of the year; 8 left during the year.
The efforts of caseworkers to help families apply for needed and qualified financial support has helped many supplement their incomes and increase their financial stability. Fourteen of 58 households started with and some have continued receiving some government assistance. As earnings have increased, some forms of government support have decreased. After four years in the program, only three families (7%) receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The average amount of TANF funding received decreased from $558 per month to $482 for those receiving TANF. Some families also receive unearned income from other sources (e.g., Social Security, child support, unemployment insurance, Labor & Industry claims, student loans). Income has not increased enough to sustainably support most families and parents are very worried about what they will do when the program ends for them. Overall, median monthly household income stayed flat at $782. Average monthly household income rose 6.9% to $1,432. Due to the small size of the cohort (which skews the average when a few members have relatively large incomes), the median numbers are more meaningful. Among all households, six had zero income; another three received less that $500; eight received between $500 and $1,000; six received between $1,000 and $2,000; and 10 received more than $2,000. On average, households now get 73.2% of their income from employment (well up from 56.9% last year and from 36.2% at Program entry).

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15 Possibly impacted by time limits on TANF support.
Comparisons of Family Income Sources by Year for All Families

At the end of year four, among 33 families, only 14 families (48.7%) were able to pay their expected 60% of rent costs. The number of families who were heavily rent burdened (even paying just 60% of their rent) was 19 (57.6% of all families). Just eight families (24.3%) among the 33 would have been able to afford rent if they had been paying 100% of it. Since families’ shares of the rent increased each year (THA has since changed the policy governing the portion of rent that families pay), and since many families do not earn living wages, it is not surprising that many are rent-burdened.

Child Changes Based on School Data

McCarver’s mobility rate reflects the rate students enter or leave the school during the school year. It has been as high as 179% and continues to be among the highest in the District. Program students represented 18.9% of the McCarver student population in 2015. The data show that the mobility rate for Program students was 4.5% in year one; 13.3% in year two; 2.7% in year three; and 7.8% in year four (2014-2015)\(^6\). Those leaving were the children of parents who left the Program and who are no longer enrolled in McCarver. The current rate is much lower than the school’s rate. The

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6} For year four (2014-2015), five (7.8\%) of 64 students enrolled in September left the school during the school year. Another three left during the summer after the end of the school year. The 7.8\% figure is more comparable to the figures for the comparison groups that ignore summer withdrawals.}\]
stability of these Program students not only helped them; it also helped McCarver reduce its mobility rate to 82% (though that is an increase from the previous years). The non-Program students at McCarver had a mobility rate of 93.8% for the 2014-2015 school year. Four children withdrew from both the Program and from McCarver.

Student Mobility Trends within McCarver

Student Mobility Trends within McCarver and Peer Schools
In 2012-2013 Program students had higher rates of attendance compared to homeless students at McCarver and in TPS. In 2013-2014 they had attendance rates significantly lower than the all elementary school students in the District, but not significantly different from those of other McCarver students or homeless students. In 2014-2015 Program students had an attendance of 91%, which was significantly lower than the rate for all TPS students (96%). Other McCarver students and even homeless students had higher rates (94% and 92% respectively), though these differences are not statistically significant.

**Median Attendance by Cohort**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median 2013</th>
<th>Median 2014</th>
<th>Median 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THA Program Students at McCarver</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other McCarver Students</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarver Non-THA Homeless Students</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless TPS Students</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All TPS Elementary Students</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table shows some trends and comparisons on reading scores over the past four years. Please note that the type of test changed in year three and again in year four. For this reason, comparisons between years are not useful. The fall 2011 DIBELS scores for the Program students is a baseline that was obtained in their first month of school, shortly after joining the Program. One can see that only 35.8% were reading at grade level when they entered the Program. By the following spring, this number had nearly doubled to 68.8%. While all cohorts showed improvement (to be expected), no others showed such a dramatic change. In spring of 2012, with 68.8% reading at grade level, Program students had a percentage equal to that for all elementary students and had a higher

17 * = data are not available
percentage than the other cohorts. They were 16.4 percentage points higher than TPS homeless students (even though a lower percentage of Program students were reading at grade level in the fall).

Program students showed significant gains in reading in the first year of the Program. They maintained those gains in year two. Since then, their scores have not improved compared to their peers. They seem to be performing at levels equal to students who are in other high poverty schools.

Students Reading at Grade Level by Cohort by School Year 2011-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Administered</th>
<th>THA Program McCafer Students</th>
<th>Other McCafer Students</th>
<th>TPS Homeless Students</th>
<th>Peer Schools18 Students</th>
<th>All TPS Elementary Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIBLES*</td>
<td>2011 – 2012</td>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>36% (n=60)</td>
<td>51% (n=246)</td>
<td>39% (n=358)</td>
<td>50% (n=2,424)</td>
<td>52% (n=13,033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPRING</td>
<td>69% (n=63)</td>
<td>61% (n=343)</td>
<td>52% (n=463)</td>
<td>62% (n=2,399)</td>
<td>69% (n=13,024)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012 – 2013</td>
<td>SPRING</td>
<td>61% (n=58)</td>
<td>63% (n=276)</td>
<td>48% (n=231)</td>
<td>61% (n=2,304)</td>
<td>69% (n=13,316)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBA</td>
<td>2013–2014</td>
<td>SPRING19</td>
<td>41% (n=28)</td>
<td>46% (n=138)</td>
<td>56% (n=305)</td>
<td>60% (n=1,064)</td>
<td>70% (n=6,385)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRA20</td>
<td>2014–2015</td>
<td>SPRING</td>
<td>73% (n=15)</td>
<td>72% (n=138)</td>
<td>59% (n=252)</td>
<td>71% (n=1,108)</td>
<td>70% (n=5,142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR21</td>
<td></td>
<td>SPRING</td>
<td>66% (n=32)</td>
<td>64% (n=130)</td>
<td>66% (n=274)</td>
<td>69% (n=1,049)</td>
<td>73% (n=5,656)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 Blix; Lister; Manitou Park; McCarver; Roosevelt; Stanley

19 These RBA scores are on a 1 to 3 scale: 1=Below Basic; 2=Basic; 3=Proficient. The combined percentages for Basic and Proficient are reported here.

20 These DRA scores for grades k-5 are measured four times per year on a 1 to 4 scale: 1=Below Basic; 2=Basic; 3=Proficient; 4=Advanced. The combined percentages for Basic, Proficient and Advanced are reported here.

21 The STAR scores for grades 2-5 are measured four times per year on a 1 to 4 scale: 1=urgent intervention; 2=intervention; 3= on watch; 4=at/above benchmark. Only “at/above benchmark” percentages are reported here.
In 2013-2014, the results of District Math Assessment (DMA) showed that distributions of students by category were not significantly different when comparing Program students to other students at McCarver. The DMA was discontinued in 2014-2015. In its place, the District used a common core assessment for primary grades. Only eight THA students across grades 1-5 took the tests. All but one scored below basic on all tests. One first grader scored basic on the final test. Since the numbers taking the test are so low, there is no point in comparison data.

**Of the Program students in grades 3-5 in Year 4 who took the state reading test in 2015, only 27% met the state standard.** This is higher than for homeless students at McCarver (22%), lower than for non-THA McCarver students (30%), similar to homeless students (25%), lower than peer schools (31%); and lower than across the District (46%). In **math scores, 21% of Program students met the state standard.** By comparison, 11% of homeless McCarver students met the standard, as did 30% of non-THA McCarver students, 25% of homeless students across the District, 31% of students in all peer schools, and 46% across the District.

**State Test Scores for Tacoma Housing Authority McCarver Program Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Test Scores for THA Program and Other Students</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015(^{22})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading (percent meeting/exceeding State standards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THA Program students</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=30)</td>
<td>(n=28)</td>
<td>(n=33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (percent meeting/exceeding State standards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THA Program students</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=29)</td>
<td>(n=28)</td>
<td>(n=33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{22}\) State test changed to the Smarter Balanced Assessment in 2015 so comparisons between years are less meaningful.
Discipline

The data show that suspension rates for Program students were higher than rates for other McCarver students in year one; lower in year two; and again higher in year three and four. In 2014-2015, four of 59 Program students in grades K-5 (6.8%) were suspended at least once. For both Program and other students, fighting is the most common reason for suspension.\(^{23}\)

### Disciplinary Actions for McCarver Students in Grades 1-5 in 2012-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>THA Program Students at McCarver</th>
<th>Other McCarver Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#/Total</td>
<td>% of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>4/59</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>8/64</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>4/87</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>6/76</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Staff Reflections on the Program

In discussions with TPS and THA staff who work closely with the Program, Geo identified some findings for which there appears to be general consensus that illustrate where the Program has been successful and where it and the families are still challenged. These are listed here and explained in more detail in the Staff Assessment section of this report.

- The challenge for some families to find housing in the McCarver neighborhood raises important questions about the Program model and theory of change.

\(^{23}\) Note that sample sizes are very small for both cohorts so comparisons are made with caution.  
\(^{24}\) There are differences in the counts of students for discipline and attendance for both THA and non-THA cohorts. These figures are based on students in the TPS discipline data tables.
Staff agree that only a small percentage of the McCarver Special Housing Program families seem likely to actually be able to pay their full rent and afford their other bills by the end of this, the last, year of the Program.

Staff believe that in the early years of the program the requirements of parent involvement supported parents’ connections with the school and their increased capacity to support their children’s learning. Planning for and expectations of parental involvement were higher in the early years of the Program and were not a priority this past year. School involvement is not a priority for families in crisis.

Staff report that communications between McCarver Special Housing Program caseworkers and teachers have contributed to resolving issues for individual students. However, there is not consistent or regular communications among caseworkers and teachers so the potential benefits are likely not fully realized. Efforts to connect with teachers via email have not produced the desired communication and collaboration.

Caseworkers feel overburdened by data collection responsibilities.

Staff wish to highlight that the McCarver Special Housing Program is a responsive program, using the evaluation and other feedback to adapt and improve the Program. Staff acknowledge that the Program is not achieving all of the hoped-for outcomes, but strongly believe in the potential for this school/housing partnership.

These and other observations show that the Program implementers are learning and making adjustments as they go. This knowledge based on experience will help with any replication of the Program at McCarver or at other schools, and there is enough working well to anticipate that a similar, future program could be successful.

Teacher Perceptions

The teacher response suggests that they have had very high expectations of the Program and in practice see the Program as only slightly to moderately influential on student’s behavior and academic performance. However, due to natural grade advancement and to teacher turnover, many of those responding were unable to compare behaviors before the Program began with current behaviors. In addition, many teachers reported insufficient contact with the caseworkers. As a result, caseworkers’ job duties have been modified recently. Here we present some of the general findings in summary form. They are explained in more detail in the Teacher Assessments section.
- Teachers believe in the concept of the Program, but feel frustrated and disappointed with the results. Teachers perceive that parents are not being held accountable to Program expectations of attendance, parents’ involvement in school, and financial independence.
- Teachers feel that communications and information sharing with caseworkers is inadequate. While some teachers report positive interactions with THA caseworkers, nearly all teachers suggest that regular, pro-active communications between THA caseworkers and teachers would be an improvement.
- Teachers describe some students who have experienced significant positive change and describe changes such as students’ increased confidence and increased homework completion. Teachers can just as easily identify students in the Program who did not experience the positive changes the teachers expected. Some teachers could not think of a single example of a student who has improved significantly during his/her time with the Program.
- While some teachers could point to examples of parents who had increased in confidence, competence, and even in financial sustainability, there is an overall sense of teachers feeling frustrated with the parents involved in the McCarver Special Housing Program.
- Teachers’ overall wish is to get the children to school, consistently and on time. One teacher said, “I can’t teach them if they are not in the room.”

Parent Perceptions

As part of the evaluation of the THA McCarver Program, Geo interviewed a sample of parents. Below is a summary of parents’ responses to each interview question with some additional notes on topics that came up in the course of the interviews. They are presented in greater detail in the Parent Perceptions section.

- Parents’ achievements and progress toward self-sufficiency varied widely across parents. Even those who reported good progress on education and who are currently working at part-time or full-time regular jobs are very worried about the looming end of the five year Program.
- With similar variation, some parents are very satisfied with their housing and the housing location seems to support their children’s school punctuality and attendance, while others are unsatisfied with their housing and/or the housing location presents a challenge to getting the kids to school on time. Reasons for moving (or wanting to move) after enrolling in the Program include domestic violence issues and needing to have a new address, poor
conditions/repairs in their home, wanting to be close to the school, “personal issues,” landlords ending the lease and/or needing to find a new place after a rent increase.

- Many parents interviewed struggle with health, mental health, domestic violence and other problems and most do not feel secure in their ability to stay on track for their kids without this Program.
- Parents can easily describe concrete problems that case workers helped them resolve as well as give details about the emotional support and encouragement they receive from case workers. Nearly every parent could think of at least one, and usually several, positive changes in themselves, their kids or their family since they have been in the Program.
- 10 of 13 parents interviewed (71%) agree or strongly agree with the statement “My current housing meets my family’s basic needs.”
- 3 of 13 parents interviewed (21%) agree or strongly agree with the statement “I will be able to pay my portion of my rent next year.”
- In order to stay in a workable housing situation, parents reported communicating with landlords to resolve issues and receiving “hardship” or other additional help with rent from the McCarver Program when they could not work due to illness or injury.
- Most (9 of 13) parents interviewed do not believe they can pay their portion of the rent next year and they are very worried about what they will do when the Program ends for them.
- 6 of 13 parents (43%) agree or strongly agree with the statement, “Since joining this Program I have improved my education or job skills.”
- About half of the parents interviewed described progress on and achievement of significant education and employment goals while they have been a part of the McCarver Special Housing Program. Several of these parents cited the encouragement, goal-setting support and concrete help (e.g., tuition support) from the Program as instrumental in achieving their goals. Many also described that the 5-year limit of the Program was motivating to them.
- About half of the parents interviewed report little or no progress on education or job skills. Of that group, at least half report receiving Social Security Disability payments, being unable to work and having no job or employment goals that would interfere with those payments.
- 12 of 13 parents interviewed (86%) agree or strongly agree with the statement “My case manager has been helpful in encouraging me.” Nearly every parent interviewed agreed that their case workers are helpful in encouraging them.
- 8 of 13 parents interviewed (57%) answered “most of the time” or “almost always” to the question, “How often do you go to the school (for conferences, performances, volunteering, etc.?)
- 10 of 13 parents interviewed (77%) answered “most of the time” or “almost always” to the question, “My child is (or children are) rested and ready for school each day.”
A few parents reported spending a lot of time at the school and feeling really connected to the school. These parents live nearby and do not work full time or attend school. Other parents report little school involvement. Parents reported factors that facilitate and support parent involvement such as: the kids like the events and like their parents to be at school, a commitment from parents to be involved, living close to the school, and feeling appreciated and needed by the school and the kids there. Parents reported barriers to school involvement that include commitments to work, school and younger children, lack of transportation or time consuming or costly transportation and lack of enforcement of involvement by the Special Housing Program.

Having a set schedule and routine for mornings and evenings and having a reliable form of transportation (district bus or McKinney-Vento bus, living within walking distance or having a car) were reported by many parents as “what it takes” for them to successfully have their kids rested and ready for school. A few parents also talked about being committed to getting their kids there and taking responsibility as a parent.

Parents were asked to think of someone who knows them well and imagine what that person would say is different since they have been involved in this Program.

“She would tell you that I am pretty much dramatically changed as far as being responsible and sticking with things, following things through.”

“What is different is having a place to call home and to be every night and just her grades and homework. In the years previous to this, there’s a lot of times when I was really depressed that I didn’t really care if she [her daughter] went to school or not and she was home with me and it didn’t seem at the time that it was that big of a deal—and it is (a big deal), so that doesn’t happen anymore which is good.”

“My attitude. She would say I have a more ‘I can do it’ attitude.”

Many parents reported that others would see them as more responsible or stable since they have been a part of the McCarver Special Housing Program. Along these lines some parents said others would see them as more independent, consistent and better at following through.

Some parents reported that others would notice changes for their families such as less stress, decreased anger-levels among the parents and less uncertainty and moving around. A few parents also said that others would notice an improved attitude and better outlook on life, when compared to before their involvement in the McCarver Special Housing Program. Finally, others might notice that their kids are better behaved, have more friends and are more stable and happy.
Many parents expressed concern about the Program entering its last year.

“Even though it's [the Program] supposed to be getting over, I'm not ready for it to be over because I'm not done with my schooling. I can barely afford to pay the bills, even though I have help.”

“I don't know what's going to happen when the Program ends and that's the scary thought. I got everything I set out to do [custody of children, vehicle, SSI] but it's not enough to live on and I can't go to work...I can't even afford a hotel room for a month.”

“I was blessed to come to that school and have my son go to that school and be able to gain stability at the same time. That doesn’t happen all the time. It was a time in my life where I really needed to be on my feet and get my life together and if it wasn't for the Program I would still be struggling and homeless. So overall they help you a lot. And what they do really makes changes in people's lives and as long as the person is still trying and is still making effort that they should still keep working with these families and not just kick them off the Program.”

Progress Compared to Program Goals

The figures below show some summary measures for the Program benchmarked against goals set by the THA staff. Data are reported through August 31, 2015. The figures show that the Program is exceeding expectations in some areas (green bars) but not succeeding in other areas (red bars). Where no goals were set or where the results are in transition, the bars are yellow.
### Summary of Accomplishments by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Accomplishment</th>
<th>Four-Year Goal</th>
<th>Four-Year Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families participating in the Program (figures are for the end of each Program year (August 31) as a percent of goal of 50)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled Program students as a percentage of McCarver enrollment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families able to pay expected portion of their rent (60% in 2015) at end of Program year and still be paying less than 50% of their income for rent</td>
<td>All (100%)</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families able to pay subsidized rent (60% in 2015) and still have rent be less than 30% of their monthly income at Program year end</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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25 Enrollment was 49 in year one with 46 remaining in August 2012 (end of Program year); 50 at the beginning of year two with 41 remaining in August 2013; 39 in year three with 37 in August 2014; 37 in year four with 33 in August 2015.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Accomplishment</th>
<th>Four-Year Goal</th>
<th>Four-Year Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families able to pay entire rent and still have rent be less than 30% of their monthly income at Program year end</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="chart1.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of adults who have completed education programs(^{26})</td>
<td>20</td>
<td><img src="chart2.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average earned household monthly income among working adults</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="chart3.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average total household monthly income</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="chart4.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{26}\) For 2014, includes adults who have exited the Program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Accomplishment</th>
<th>Four-Year Goal</th>
<th>Four-Year Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility rate of THA Program students at McCarver</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility rate of non-Program students at McCarver</td>
<td>TPS Avg. for 2014-2015 was 52%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility rate of all students at McCarver</td>
<td>TPS Avg. for 2014-2015 was 52%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average school attendance rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Accomplishment</td>
<td>Four-Year Goal</td>
<td>Four-Year Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State reading exam²⁷</td>
<td>+15 pts. /year</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(% at benchmark)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| State math exam²⁸      | +15 pts. /year| ![Graph](image) |
| (% at benchmark)       |               |                  |

²⁷ New state tests make results after 2014 not comparable.
²⁸ New state tests make results after 2014 not comparable.
INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM SUMMARY

This is the fourth detailed third-party evaluation report on the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) McCarver Special Housing Program (hereafter, “Program”).

McCarver Elementary School is an important and long-standing school in Tacoma, Washington, with a notable history. In recent years, it has faced significant challenges. Its student population has one of the highest percentages with low incomes in the Puget Sound Region. It has more homeless children than any other elementary school in the region and possibly the state. Its educational outcomes have been very low. The school had been designated as a failing school under state guidelines29 that threatened alternative governance as a consequence. In the years before THA began this Program, the school’s annual student mobility rate ranged from 105% to 179%. Research30 clearly shows that mobility is very detrimental to the educational outcomes of the children who come and go and to their classmates who are also disrupted by the changes in their classrooms. Such student transient rates also make a school a challenging place to teach. As a result, McCarver has had high teacher turnover.

Program Description

The THA Program has two goals. First, it seeks to improve outcomes for participating families and students. Second, it seeks to improve outcomes for the entire school. THA planned this Program with the Tacoma Public Schools, community partners and, critically, the parents, teachers, and staff of McCarver Elementary School. The Program has five elements described below.

29 Step 4 (lowest): Did not make adequate yearly progress after being in Step 3. In addition to offering public school choice and supplemental services and taking corrective action, the school must plan for alternative governance.
Housing

THA has provided rental assistance and a wide range of supportive services to 58 families (at some stage in the Program) who were homeless or on the verge of homelessness and who had a child enrolled in McCarver’s kindergarten, first, or second grade. At the end of August, 2015 there were 33 families with 104 children, 56 of who attended McCarver in the 2014-15 school year. Eight children exited McCarver during the school year. (These children are included in the data analysis that follows, because they were students at McCarver during part of the 2014-15 school year, but left with the six families who left the Program during the Program year (9/1/14-8/31/15).) The 64 children who were in the Program and attended McCarver at least part of the year constituted about 17% of the school’s student population. This is a much lower percentage than in any previous year of the Program because many of the students in the cohort have moved into middle school.

In their first year of the Program, participating families paid only $25 per month toward their rent. THA paid the balance. Each year thereafter, the participants pay 20% more of the rent so that they are paying 80% in the fifth and final year. The rental assistance ends after the conclusion of the fifth year. On average, a voucher is worth over $500 per month for a low-income family. The Program also offered “hardship exceptions” to this rent structure for those families who needed more assistance. In the past year of the Program, a few of the families received such an exception and paid only a minimum rent. As a result, for the final year of the pilot, the Program, pending a full program review, the Program changed all families to a more traditional rent structure that required a family to pay 30% of its income for rent and utilities. The allocation of rent support for year five has shifted to THA paying a portion of participant’s rent based on income rather than rent costs.

Supportive Services

THA provides the services of two full time caseworkers. They work at the school where they can easily meet with parents, students, teachers and school staff on a daily basis. They help identify needs, counsel parents and students, help them identify goals, and connect them to community resources and services. Caseworkers also help ensure that parents meet their obligations and support their children’s educational efforts.

These caseworkers also coordinate the services and contributions of about thirty public and nonprofit partners. Appendix A lists these partners. These services support parent advancements in education, employment and parenting skills; provide occasional food and household supplies; help parents and students get support within the school; and plan and deliver other programming for students and families. They also provide programing during school breaks and over the summer to
keep students academically engaged. Many students take advantage of these opportunities with approximately 40% participating in the spring break camp; 30% participating in summer programs and 70% participating in other after-school activities (e.g., Peacemakers - a student leadership group, music, sports).

**Parental Commitment**

The participating parents make the following commitments as a condition of their receipt of the housing assistance and other support: 1) keep their children enrolled at McCarver; 2) engage fully in their children’s education both at school and at home; 3) invest in their own employment and education prospects; 4) share data on their families; and 5) work with their caseworker. Robust supportive services from THA and service partners help the parent fulfill this commitment.

**Commitment of the Tacoma Public School District**

The Tacoma Public School District is a critical partner to THA in four ways. First, it warmly welcomed the collaboration with THA. It was a full planning partner. Second, it signed an essential data sharing agreement with THA to permit evaluation and planning. Third, it hosts THA’s two caseworkers at the school, providing them with office space. Fourth, it has made the substantial investment to convert McCarver’s curriculum into an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB). IB will raise standards and expectations for the entire school. Finally, the District is investing in a complete remodeling and upgrading of the main McCarver school building. This is underway in the 2015-16 school year, requiring grades 2-5 to move to the McKinley Elementary School building several miles south of McCarver. Pre-K, kindergarten and first grade classes will continue in the McCarver Annex building and other students will be bussed to McKinley.

**Professional Third Party Evaluation**

A professional third party evaluator, Geo Education & Research, is tracking an array of performance measures. This report is the fourth annual report for that purpose.

Funding for this initiative comes from THA, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, Pierce County, Tacoma Public Schools, The City of Tacoma, and services and support from about thirty public and nonprofit service partners.
Startup and Progression

The Program began accepting families in the fall of 2011. Between August 2011 and January 2012, 49 families, with 70 McCarver students in kindergarten through second grade (K-2), were housed. Most of these 49 families were in the Program for most of the 2011-2012 school year. By the end of August 2012, there were 44 families. By September 2012, more families left and several joined, bringing the total to 50 families. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year there were 39 families with 64 students at McCarver. At the end of August 2015, there were 33 families with (43 parents) in the Program and 56 children who had attended McCarver in 2014-2015 (plus other older and younger siblings). Program children constituted 17% of the entire student population of McCarver in year four.

There has been some turnover in families since inception, with 49 starting in 2011; 7 families joining in year two; and some leaving each year. This means that a total of 58 families have been in the Program, and 33 (57%) are still participating. Among the 25 who left, nine left for positive reasons (e.g., found a job in another community; able to support the family without the Program’s support). Eleven left for negative reasons (e.g., failure to meet Program standards; personal traumas). The others left for neutral reasons (mainly entering public housing or other programs). Four families left in the first year; nine in the second year; six in the third year; and six in the fourth year. Because the Program is a pilot with a closed cohort, it did not replace departing families with new ones to refresh the cohort.

THA and TPS recruited and engaged many community partners at the beginning of the Program (see list in Appendix). These included a DSHS employee stationed in the THA McCarver office (who is no longer there); a peer support specialist from Comprehensive Life Resources who was meeting with clients in the Program on a weekly basis (loss of funding was the cause of this discontinuation); a CLR counselor who was stationed at McCarver one day a week (cut due to low participation); a contracted parenting skills trainer; and an intern from the UWT Urban Studies program who assisted with office work, networking inside and outside of the school, and communication. Over the years, many of these resources have left, even though many of the needs remain.

The Program has served McCarver in ways that extend its influence beyond the Program families. THA staff help other McCarver families and those in the neighborhood with no ties to the school find resources within THA and in other organizations. In some ways, they function as a satellite THA office. The staff also work to support the school by working with school staff and teachers to find help for students and families not in the Program. Some of the activities developed have served the

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general McCarver population as well. The re-energizing of the parent-teacher association in the first year is one example.

**Outcome Map**

Figure 1 is graphic illustration of the Program design. It illustrates how the students and the changes they experience are the focus of the Program. The work the THA does (and especially the caseworkers) supports the work of McCarver teachers and administrators and other District staff who work with students and their parents. The parents have their own successes and support those in their children.

**Evaluation Approach**

Geo Education & Research (Geo) was hired by THA to provide an independent assessment of the Program’s core outcomes. Geo is collecting data directly from teachers, parents, students, school staff and selected partners, and it is analyzing data on school performance collected by Tacoma Public Schools.

Geo has reviewed the data collection and evaluation strategies employed by THA for the Program and has suggested some improvements and new sources of data. New quantitative and qualitative tools based on these suggestions have been used to collect data for this report (including many more interviews with staff, teachers, and parents. Geo also analyzed student performance data provided by Tacoma Public Schools (TPS).

Geo is focusing its evaluation on several types of desired changes. The holistic approach of the Program is designed to address a variety of needs experienced by homeless families that affect educational outcomes for their young children and the need of the school for greater student stability. All family members are benefiting from greater housing stability. In addition, case workers are helping to identify and address the various needs of parents. McCarver is re-designing its curricula for all students, so changes in the school will also be reflected in future reports. Geo is analyzing data on the following outcomes in this report.

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31 The signs the students hold are quotes from the McCarver THA students (expressed in Geo focus groups).
School Outcomes

- Decreased student turnover
- Increased attention to the needs of Program students by teachers and staff in collaboration with THA staff
- Increased number of community partners serving students in the Program

Child Outcomes

- Improved attendance;
- Standardized test scores compared to peers
- Fewer discipline problems compared to peers

Family and Parent Outcomes

- Finding and maintaining adequate housing
- Maintaining student enrollment
- Positive perceptions of the Program
- Improved education and job skills
- Increased employment
- Increased earned income
- Increased benefits
- Ability to meet increasing co-pay requirements for rent
- Improved financial stability
- Improved parenting skills
- Increased engagement by parents in their children’s education
- Increased feelings of self-efficacy in parenting, in participating in child(ren)’s education, and in providing family income and fulfilling related needs
Figure 1 | Outcome Map

McCarver Elementary School Special Housing Program

THA Caseworkers working at McCarver every day to connect students, parents, teachers, & partners & to support and to mentor parents

Program Implementation
- Setting clear expectations
- Collaborating with partners
- KBTC Interns
- Providing spring break and summer programs

Program Administration
- Finding support for individual needs
- Engaging community
- Requiring compliance with expectations
- Monitoring program outcomes

McCarver & TPS Staff
- Coordinating student support with caseworkers & parents
- Individualizing instruction
- Coordinating curricula with out-of-school programs
- Implementing the International Baccalaureate Program
- Analyzing student data
- Funding a full time Spanish teacher
- Re-establishing PTA
- Helping parents engage with school & student learning

Student Outcomes
- Attendance
- Discipline
- Reading
- Math

Parents
- Setting goals
- Improving parenting skills
- Improving education mentoring skills
- Reading with kids more often
- Extending education & earning degrees & certificates
- Earning more income
- Getting off subsidies
- Volunteering at school more
- Going to more school performances
- Going to more teacher conferences
- Spending more time with kids

Tacoma Housing Authority

Geo Education & Research
Evaluation Questions

Since there are many facets to this Program, there are many evaluation questions. The core questions are:

1. Can school achievement for homeless or imminently homeless students at McCarver Elementary School be improved by providing stable housing and case management services for the family?
2. Can the Program reduce the school-wide student turnover rate?
3. Can the Program improve stability and other outcomes for families with the current model?

Changes in the short-term and long-term educational and social outcomes of the children will be important to observe in answering these core questions. The Program design calls for support throughout the students’ elementary years, enabling the measurement of long-term changes. To further analyze the overall social and educational outcomes, we identified 22 other evaluation questions (see Table 1). These were described in our first report.

Evaluation Plan

The data needed to answer the questions above have come from many sources over the past four years. The major sources are listed below:

1. THA records (applications, needs assessments, success plans and goal statements)
2. THA case worker notes and insights
3. McCarver staff members’ insights
4. School records (e.g., attendance, grades, test scores, discipline records)
5. Teacher surveys and interviews (about individual students and about the Program)
6. Parent interviews (about changes in their situations and their children and about the Program)
7. Data from Tacoma Public Schools

To maintain high levels of validity and reliability in the data, Geo is relying on standardized data collected by TPS for most indicators of student performance. This also allows us to compare the performance of students in the Program to others in the school and the school district. Geo uses other data collected by THA staff involved in the Program to identify family challenges and goals, participation rates in various sub-programs, and insights gathered from the case workers who have
frequent contact with the parents, children and Program partners. Geo also collects data from teachers and parents with tools it has developed with the help of THA staff. Geo maintains strict standards of confidentiality in the collection, storage, use and disclosure of any data collected.

Table 1 | Outcome Questions Grouped by Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Outcome Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do children improve in their educational outcomes and develop greater self-confidence? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do children improve in the regularity of their attendance? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do children receive the additional educational assistance they may need?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do children participate in out-of-school activities designed to improve educational and/or social skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do children take advantage of other programs?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Participation Outcome Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Do students maintain continuous enrollment in McCarver? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do families move to and remain in the school attendance area, reducing housing instability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do families find and maintain adequate housing? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do parents receive case management services that help them identify and solve problems affecting them and their children? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do parents set achievable personal and family goals and identify pathways for achieving them? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Do parents and Program partners feel that the Program is addressing the right needs in the right ways? *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Outcome Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Do parents improve their education and job skills (make progress on career pathway to independence)?*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do parents apply for and obtain paid employment? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Do parents find additional financial support or increased incomes? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Do parents pay increasing portions of their rents as they progress through the Program? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Do families improve their financial situations? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Are parents improving their parenting skills and constructively engaging their children in learning and good behavior?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Do parents become more involved in their children’s education? *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and School District Outcome Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Do teachers and staff pay more attention to the needs of students in the Program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Do additional community partners become involved or do the same community partners become even more involved in the THA McCarver Program? *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Does the IB inquiry-based curriculum improve learning outcomes for McCarver students? (The School and the District will answer this question.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Do Program students remain at McCarver and does the mobility rate of the school decline over time?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates items analyzed in this report; others need more/different data and were/will be analyzed in other reports.
Parent / Household Demographics and Changes

The families in the Program have multiple needs necessitating a wide range of services. A child & family therapist working at McCarver identified many areas of support necessary to help children function and learn, as well as many of the challenges youth like those in the THA McCarver Program face. Those areas include stability (at home and at school), support (from parents and other adults), encouragement (from parents, teachers and others), and assistance adjusting to new situations. Having residential stability and being assured of attending the same school provide important foundations. The evidence from teachers in year one documented how this stability improved social functioning in students even before academic improvement was evident. The therapist said, “We need to strive to reach out to each and every child, make meaningful connections with them, and support them in ways that will help foster personal growth and a sense of security. In summary, the degree of support children need may vary from situation to situation, but one thing remains constant: children need to know that they have safe, respectful, understanding, non-judgmental people on their side. They need people advocating for them, providing unconditional acceptance and nurturing who will not judge or discriminate and who will contribute to helping them feel safe, secure, and worthwhile.”

The demographics of the heads of households in the Program change as families enter and exit. The demographics of the 33 households in the Program as of August 2015 are listed below in Table 2.

The 39 participating families had a total of 119 children (an average of 3.1 per family) ages 0 to 18, of whom 64 were enrolled at McCarver at least sometime during the 2014-2015 school year. Among the 33 households at the end of the Program year (8/31/15), nine of the households had two parents. Among the 24 single parents, 21 were female and 3 were male32. Among all parents, 54.3% are people of color and none are English language learners. In the original cohort, two parents were English language learners.

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32 These numbers include the families that were exited; a total of 39 households throughout the year
Table 2 | Key Demographics of Tacoma Housing Authority McCarver Program Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition of Families (average age of parents at entry = 31)</th>
<th>Number (among all 58 households ever in the Program)</th>
<th>Percent of 58 total households</th>
<th>Number among 33 active households at end of year</th>
<th>Percent of active HH or subgroup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two parent households</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent households</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female head of household(^{33})</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male head of household</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers of English as a second language (one or more parents)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race or ethnicity of parents (all)(^{34})</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American / Alaska Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Program has met the most significant need of the families engaged: stable housing. All families accepted into the Program were previously homeless or facing homelessness soon. Each successfully resettled into homes and continued to have stable shelter through the first school year. Through year four, four families have been evicted (one in year three and three in year four). Some families report that the housing support has allowed them to live near the school, and that living nearby has supported better school attendance for their children and increased their involvement in school. However, many families have not been able to find adequate, affordable housing in the

\(^{33}\) One is a grandmother who entered the program when her daughter became unable to continue caring for her children.

\(^{34}\) Since several clients have multiple ethnicities, the numbers do not sum to parent total or 100%. Race is summarized for all parents in the households.
McCarver neighborhood and have instead ended up living far from the school. In these cases students are travelling long times and distances, and staff feel this negatively impacts attendance and participation in after school activities. In the beginning of the Program, all families had students at McCarver but some lived fairly far away. Some moved in and some later moved out. Plotting the addresses of 31 of the 33 families in the Program in August 2015 (the other two were looking for homes), Geo found many living outside of the McCarver attendance area (which has its western boundary only three blocks from the school). However, many of these lived near the school. Eight families (26%) were living more than two miles from the school (measured directly, not by street routes). Five (16%) were more than three miles away. The family living farthest from the school lived 5 miles away. Also, staff estimate that now, in the last year of the Program, only about half of families are in satisfactory housing and about half have housing that is lacking in some way, such as location/transportation, unaffordable utility bills or a lack of a feeling of safety.

Those living farther away face additional barriers to school engagement—a major goal of the Program. This is especially true if families do not own cars. The situation for these families creates a conflict. They need to keep their children enrolled in McCarver in order to stay in the Program and receive the rent subsidies and other services. But many have been forced to look farther away from the school to find acceptable housing that they can afford as rents in the McCarver neighborhood rise. Living farther away makes it harder for both parents and students to participate in some after-school activities.

Employment and Income

Families have experienced increases in education, job training employment, and income. Incomes fluctuated monthly. In August 2015, 20 adults in 16 households in the Program had earned income (46.5% of the 43 adults in the 33 households). This is a decline from last year when 60.4% of adults were employed. The percentage of adults employed rose steadily from a low of 11.4% at Program entry to 60.4% last year. The families had 16 adults employed full time and 6 employed part time.

Among the 43 adults in the 33 families in the Program in August 2015, many have maintained or gained employment while in the Program. Their jobs include: baker, machinist, housekeeper, custodian, customer service representative (2), carpenter (2), home health care worker, sales clerk (2), laborer (4), trainer, warehouse worker, administrative clerk, day care worker, CNA certified caregiver (4), cashier, mail carrier, recycler, truck driver, paint salesperson, car salesperson, medical receptionist, social worker, and pizza chef.
Many (14) started with and some have continued receiving some government assistance. Seven households receive some SSI payments (5 for children); 10 receive child support; three receive TANF; two receive unemployment compensation; and none receive support from family members; most receive SNAP (food stamps Earned income (averaging $1,048/month) now far exceeds unearned income (averaging $384/month). (See Table 3 and Figure 2.)

Only 3 families (9.1%) receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The average amount of TANF funding received decreased from $558 per month to $494 for those receiving TANF. Some families also receive unearned income from other sources (e.g., child support, unemployment insurance). The efforts of caseworkers to help families apply for needed and qualified financial support has helped many supplement their incomes and increase their financial stability.

Table 3 and Figure 2 show the relative amounts of income households receive from earned and unearned sources. **Overall, median monthly household income stayed flat at $782.** Average monthly household income rose 6.9% to $1,432. Due to the small size of the cohort (which skews the average when a few families have relatively large incomes), the median numbers are more meaningful. Among all households, six had zero income; another three received less that $500; eight received between $500 and $1,000; six received between $1,000 and $2,000; and 10 received more than $2,000. **Households now get 73.2% of their income from employment** (well up from 56.9% last year and from 36.2% at Program entry). These figures do not take into account family size.

The Program has made many referrals to agencies that provide other services, such as: benefits that families are entitled to (e.g., social security, health care, disability insurance); food stamps; counseling services for parents; counseling services for all children; legal services; financial literacy training (four-week class); college programs; and technical/vocational training.

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35 Possibly impacted by time limits on TANF support.
Table 3 | Employment, Income, and Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment, income, rent, and children (n=adults in household)</th>
<th>At Entry (n=61)</th>
<th>Sept. 2012 (n=59)</th>
<th>Aug. 2013 (n=55)</th>
<th>Aug. 2014 (n=48)</th>
<th>Aug. 2015&lt;sup&gt;36&lt;/sup&gt; (n=43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households (# (%)) w/ earned income</td>
<td>9 (18.4%)</td>
<td>28 (56.0%)</td>
<td>23 (51.1%)</td>
<td>25 (64.1%)</td>
<td>16 (48.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed adults (among all parents)</td>
<td>7 (11.5%)</td>
<td>20 (33.9%)</td>
<td>29 (52.7%)</td>
<td>29 (60.4%)</td>
<td>20 (47.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household monthly income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$796</td>
<td>$765</td>
<td>$782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household monthly income&lt;sup&gt;37&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>$770</td>
<td>$799</td>
<td>$1,176</td>
<td>$1,340</td>
<td>$1,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median monthly HH earned income among HH with working adults</td>
<td>$853</td>
<td>$648</td>
<td>$1,400</td>
<td>$1,280</td>
<td>$2,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly HH earned income</td>
<td>$286</td>
<td>$361</td>
<td>$811</td>
<td>$762</td>
<td>$1,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median monthly unearned income</td>
<td>$380</td>
<td>$253</td>
<td>$285</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average monthly unearned income</td>
<td>$504</td>
<td>$438</td>
<td>$365</td>
<td>$335</td>
<td>$384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average TANF income if on TANF (# HH)</td>
<td>$427 (24)</td>
<td>$516 (10)</td>
<td>$408 (11)</td>
<td>$558 (6)</td>
<td>$482 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household rent&lt;sup&gt;38&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>$825</td>
<td>$904</td>
<td>$930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household rent&lt;sup&gt;39&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
<td>$910</td>
<td>$971</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families able to pay expected share&lt;sup&gt;40&lt;/sup&gt; of rent without undue rent burden</td>
<td>61 (100%)</td>
<td>49 (100%)</td>
<td>40 (95.2%)</td>
<td>27 (69.2%)</td>
<td>14 (42.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families unable to pay expected share of rent without undue rent burden&lt;sup&gt;41&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (4.8%)</td>
<td>12 (30.8%)</td>
<td>19 (57.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children (cohort total) – 8/31/15</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># children at McCarver – 8/31/15&lt;sup&gt;42&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>36</sup> For 33 families still enrolled 8/31/15.
<sup>37</sup> The average is higher in more recent years as a few parents have earned much higher incomes than others.
<sup>38</sup> Not counting subsidy from THA (i.e., what the landlord receives).
<sup>39</sup> Not counting subsidy from THA (i.e., what the landlord receives).
<sup>40</sup> Monthly expectations: $25 at entry through year one; 20% year two; 40% year three; 60% year four; 80% year five; and 100% year six and beyond. Since families’ shares of the rent increase each year and since many families do not earn living wages, it is not surprising that more are rent-burdened over time.
<sup>41</sup> This is at the 50% level, meaning 19 families were paying 50% or more of their income on rent. In August of 2014, 22 families (56%) are paying more than 30% of their income on rent (even though they were paying only 40% of their rent). In 2015, 24 (73%) were paying over 30% of their income in rent (even though they were paying only 60% of their rent).
<sup>42</sup> Includes 5<sup>th</sup> graders in 2014-2015 school year. 64 were enrolled at least part of the year; 8 left during the year.
Most parents have engaged in at least one education or training program. They have had many educational accomplishments in the last four years including those listed in Table 4. During their time with the Program, ten parents have earned their GED; four have earned their high school diploma; three have earned AA degrees; two have earned BA degrees; and one is working toward a master’s degree. Thirty-eight parents completed a financial literacy class and 24 have been certified in a skilled trade. Parents cited the encouragement, goal-setting support and concrete help from the Program as instrumental in achieving their education goals. This has included tuition support for trade classes at local technical colleges, annual state certifications for C.N.A. workers, and school supplies. Several parents also received job preparation and work search services. Most reached these educational milestones in the earlier years.

Although median income is the more representative measure, so many families have zero income in one or both categories that the medians are often times zero in several years. For this reason, we display average income.
Table 4 | Cumulative Educational Accomplishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Education or Training</th>
<th>Total through all Program years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earned GED</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned high school diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned community college degree graduate</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned university degree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified in skilled trade</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed financial literacy class</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rent

Families paid only $25 per month in rent for the first year and paid 20% of their rent in the second year. There are some trends in the data worth noting:

- Among the 48 families in the Program in year two, all were able to meet their expected share of their rent (20%), though two were still heavily rent burdened (paying 50% or more of their income for rent).
- In year three, among 39 families paying rent, 35 families were able to pay their expected 40% of rent costs. The other four paid it for 10 months of the Program year. However, the number of families that were heavily rent burdened increased to 12 (30.8%).
- At the end of year four, among 33 families, only 14 families (48.7%) were able to pay their expected 60% of rent costs.
- The number of families who were heavily rent burdened (even paying just 60% of their rent) was 19 (57.6% of all families).
- Just eight families (24.3%) among the 33 would have been able to afford rent if they had been paying 100% of it.

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44 This is at the 50% level, meaning 12 families are paying 50% or more of their income on rent. 22 families (56.4%) are paying 30% or more of their income on rent.
Among the 26 households who had income and who paid rent\(^{45}\), the median rent burden was 43.2% and the average rent burden was 61.5%.

Eight (30.8%) had rent burdens of 30% or less; 5 (19.2%) had burdens of 30.1% to 49.1%; and thirteen (50%) had burdens of 50% or more.

Since families’ shares of the rent increase each year and since many families do not earn living wages, it is not surprising that many are rent-burdened. See Table 3 for more details.

This co-payment pattern demonstrates an underlying fragility in the economic situations of most of the families. For some, it is still a financial struggle to provide this 60% share of their rent, and it may be more difficult for them in the coming years due to health and employment challenges. **When families are ordered according to their rent as a percentage of their current income, the median household\(^{46}\) (earning $879 per month and paying $904 in rent) would be paying 103% of its income in rent if its rent were not subsidized. With the 60% subsidy, the median family is paying 62% of its income for its subsidized rent. The average rent was $962 and the average monthly income was $1,379.**

Looking ahead, meeting the targeted percentages for future years likely will be difficult for more families. Only 4 families (12.1%) currently earn enough to pay less than 30% of their current income for their current rent, so rent subsidies are still needed for almost all families to have enough income for other needs. Most parents understand these challenges and most have enrolled in education programs. Many of them may meet the goals for self-sufficiency. It is likely that other parents (especially some of those with severe mental and physical health challenges) will not be able to work or earn enough to meet their expected portions of rent payments and still have enough income left over for other needs. In order to succeed and become fully financially independent (i.e., be able to pay 100% of their rent at the end of year five) many parents will need to become more fully employed in jobs that pay higher salaries or wages. Many currently are working for close to minimum wage. There also are some parents with disabilities who are unlikely to be able to earn enough income to pay 100% of their rent without some subsidy, and even then, some will likely be rent burdened.

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\(^{45}\) Five others had no income and one had income but lived rent free.

\(^{46}\) This is based on 33 families with complete data.
Recognizing this situation, THA, for year five, has implemented a new plan for calculating rent payment requirements for families in the Program to make them more affordable.

Student Changes Based on School Data

In the fourth year, the Program served (at least part of the year) 39 families with 119 children, of which 64 were students at McCarver in pre-school through fifth grade for at least part of the 2014-2015 school year. During the Program year, six families with eight McCarver students and six other children left the Program. Three of these McCarver students and three other children left during the summer. Another six students were enrolled in other elementary schools. Data analyzed here include all students for whom the TPS data system has data. Because enrollment and attendance during days when standardized tests are given may fluctuate, not all analyses will have the same number of students.

Student Demographics

Updated demographics for Program participants are provided in the following tables and figures, which describe the Program cohort and compare it to other students at McCarver and all elementary students in TPS. The Program now has half of its students in the higher grades (see Table 5). The demographic characteristics of Program students closely match the characteristics of other McCarver students and TPS students enrolled in elementary schools (Table 6). All Program students except one were registered for free or reduced price lunches (Table 7). The percentage of Program students with special education designations remained at seven (11.5%). No Program students were English as a Second Language learners. Since enrolling in the Program, none of the THA McCarver Program students are now homeless, but seven students in four families have been eligible for transportation assistance because they live too far from the school. Homeless students in the non-THA McCarver cohort fell significantly from 20.8% to 12.2%.

Program students are different from other students across the District in two ways: 1) none of the Program students are now homeless; and 2) all are native English speakers. They all (except one) (like two-thirds of the students in the District) receive free or reduced price lunches.
Table 5 | Number of Tacoma Housing Authority Program Students at McCarver by Grade, 2014-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Pre-School</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>1st grade</th>
<th>2nd grade</th>
<th>3rd grade</th>
<th>4th grade</th>
<th>5th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 | Racial / Ethnic Makeup of Tacoma Housing Authority McCarver Program and Other Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race &amp; Ethnicity</th>
<th>THA McCarver Program (n=59)</th>
<th>McCarver Non-THA (n=453)</th>
<th>TPS Elem. Schools (n=16,256)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of color</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races/ethnicities</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47 According to classification in the TPS database (which records only a single race/ethnicity for each student). Some data and THA classifications are missing so the n for THA is lower than the total in the Program.
Table 7 | Additional Demographics of Tacoma Housing Authority McCarver Program Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Demographics&lt;sup&gt;48&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>McCarver Program (n=61)</th>
<th>McCarver Non-THA (n=549)</th>
<th>TPS Elementary Schools (n=16,256)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free or reduced lunch</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language learners</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless&lt;sup&gt;49&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Mobility

Table 8 and Figure 3 present historical mobility statistics for McCarver and Program students. McCarver has had one of the highest mobility rates<sup>50</sup> among TPS elementary schools. It had the highest from 2005 through 2009 and again in 2012 and 2015. It has been as high as 179%. High mobility is hard on the students who move from school to school and have to repeatedly try to adjust to new buildings, neighborhoods, teachers, curricula and peers. They also break ties and suffer losses with each move. In addition, a high flow of students in and out of classrooms affects the continuity of learning and the relationships among teachers and students. Mobility also affects other children who must adjust to the ever-changing classmates. For this reason, the Program placed a high emphasis on reducing mobility among Program students and across the school in general.

Program students represented 18.0% of the McCarver student population in 2015. The data show that the mobility rate for Program students was 4.5% in year one; 13.3% in year two; 2.7% in year

<sup>48</sup> Some data and THA classifications are missing so the n for THA is lower than the total in the Program.

<sup>49</sup> Homelessness is measured by number or percent of children identified by the District under the McKinney Vento Act. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (MV) requires school districts to provide, among other services, free transportation to and from school for homeless students. TPS is not able to identify all homeless children and many go in and out of homelessness so there is a likely undercount for all schools (except for the Program students). Some records are not up-to-date. TPS data show 24.6% of Program students still listed as homeless.

<sup>50</sup> “Mobility” is defined as all admissions and withdrawals, expressed as a percentage of the October 1, 2011 headcount. Admit/WD count does NOT include incoming Kindergarten, 6th grade and 9th grade students, who were admitted during Year-End Transition (YET). It is a measure of the amount of change (in or out) in the student body.
three; and 7.8% in year four (2014-2015). Those leaving were the children of parents who left the Program and who are no longer enrolled in McCarver. The current rate is much lower than the school’s rate. The stability of these Program students not only helped them; it also helped McCarver reduce its mobility rate to 82% (though that is an increase for the previous years). The non-Program students at McCarver had a mobility rate of 93.8% for the 2014-2015 school year. Four children withdrew from both the Program and from McCarver.

Data on teacher mobility are not available in any useful format, but McCarver’s principal did note that there have been few transfers. Given that, according to the previous principal and counselor, McCarver experienced very high teacher mobility in the past, this indicates that staff stability is improving.

Table 8 | Student Mobility Percentages Grades K-5 by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>THA McCarver Program Students (n=64 in Oct. 2014)</th>
<th>McCarver Non-Program Students (n=356 in 2014)</th>
<th>All McCarver Students (n=413 in Oct. 2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>179.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>135.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>121.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>115.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>107.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>114.2%</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For year four (2014-2015), five (7.8%) of 64 students enrolled in September left the school during the school year. Another three left during the summer after the end of the school year. The 7.8% figure is more comparable to the figures for the comparison groups that ignore summer withdrawals.
The Program is affecting some of the underlying causes of large numbers of students moving in and out of McCarver. Homelessness is still high among the non-Program students. The McCarver attendance area includes many of Tacoma’s emergency shelters where homeless families sometimes (and many times repeatedly) live. Many of these families are enrolled in McCarver. When families move from these shelters to different neighborhoods, they often enroll their children in a different schools closer to their homes (especially, as is usual, when transportation is an issue). This coupled with a relative shortage of available, low-income housing within the McCarver attendance area means that many parents choose to change schools when they move. How homeless students are tracked within the District (with many moving in and out of homelessness) make it hard to verify these figures, and there has been large turnover in the District staff who track students. Those listed as having McKinney-Vento status have that status for the entire school year.

As McCarver improves academically and implements its new IB curricula, it is possible that more parents will want to keep their students enrolled there even if they move. If more affordable housing in the area becomes available or if families can begin to afford some of the medium-cost housing that could also affect mobility rates. It is also unclear if the pending temporary relocation of the McCarver student population because of school reconstruction in 2015-16 encouraged parents to move their children to other schools. In general in TPS the mobility rates have been declining slightly for all elementary schools and more so for some the McCarver peer schools (see Figure 4). The change has been most dramatic at McCarver, but a lot of that pre-dates the THA Program. It is unclear if the increase in 2015 is an anomaly.

**Figure 3 | Student Mobility Trends Within McCarver**

![Graph showing student mobility trends within McCarver from 2005-06 to 2014-15]
McCarver’s mobility rate increased last year. Still, the trend over several years is an improvement. Among McCarver’s peer schools, Roosevelt and Stanley had comparable mobility rates and they have continued to experience decreasing mobility rates. Others have lower rates but were lower before. McCarver has made the most progress since 2010-2011. Districtwide rates are 22 points lower over the past eight years.

The Program is helping to reduce McCarver’s overall student turnover rate. Even though McCarver’s mobility rate and those of its peer schools were declining before the Program, without the Program, mobility at McCarver would likely have spiked higher in 2011-2012 and not declined as much in following years. Its mobility rate was 107% in 2011-2012. The next year, Program year one, non-Program students had a mobility rate of over 114% but since the 66 Program students had a combined rate of just 5%, the school realized an overall rate of 96.6%. Even though the mobility rate for Program students rose to 13.3% in year two, the school’s rate declined to 75.2% because 1) the Program students’ rate was much lower and 2) the mobility rate for the non-Program students also declined to 89%.

Based on Program enrollment as a proportion of overall school population, the Program helped the school realize lower mobility rates by at least 18 percentage points in 2011-2012; 14 points in 2012-2013; 16 points in 2013-2014; and 12 points in 2014-15. It is possible that other resources brought
to the school with the Program (e.g., the IB curricula; assistance of THA caseworkers with various staff and teacher efforts) also played roles in convincing parents to keep their students at McCarver and thus decreased mobility. These influences cannot be quantified.

### Attendance

Attendance is an outcome of Program participation with clear academic consequences; students who have higher average attendance rates are more likely to reap the benefits of time in the classroom and with teachers. **The median attendance rate for THA Program students in year four was 91%, the same as in year three.** The average was 90.0%. Statistically, this is not significantly different from other students at McCarver, homeless students at McCarver, or homeless students in TPS, but **it is slightly higher than for all three groups.** It is significantly lower than the District mean (as it is in most lower income schools in the District). It is also lower than the THA cohort in its first two years. It may seem obvious that students with homes are likely to have higher rates of attendance, but achieving higher attendance is not so simple. When parents and students have poor records of attendance for many reasons, it often takes changes in attitudes about school to change the behaviors that lead to lower attendance and higher tardiness rates. Of course some parents were already conscientious about attendance, but comments from some teachers and parents in years one and two indicate that **the work of the THA staff with many parents has been essential in instilling in some of them and in their students a different norm.** Also, **the abilities of the staff to monitor attendance and help parents solve individual transportation, timing, school readiness and related problems helped improve these rates initially.** The reasons for the decline in the attendance rate are unclear.

THA staff reasonably speculate that attendance may be positively correlated with distance between home and school—that is, students who live farther from school are more likely to have poor attendance. As explained earlier, many families have had to move farther from the neighborhood or never moved into it because of rent levels and access to suitable housing (i.e., difficulty finding homes that are affordable, in good condition, and for rent). Staff also mentioned that there were many absences in 2014-15 due to illness. Geo did not have access to data on reasons for absence, but since contagious illnesses likely would have affected other schools as well, it is unlikely that illness by itself explains the differences in attendance rates between Program students and other cohorts investigated. The exiting students had attendance rates on par with the THA cohort as a whole, so their departures do not explain any trends in the data. For a few Program students, custody issues may have affected their attendance since one or two parents kept their students out of school a few days for fear their other parent might take them. These problems illustrate some of the challenges parents and students face in improving attendance.
Table 9 and Figure 5 show attendance for several cohorts for the past four years. In previous years, THA Program students were on par or slightly ahead with their peers in McCarver and had higher attendance rates than homeless students there. In all years they had lower rates than all TPS elementary students.

**Table 9 | Attendance by Cohort**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort (n for 2015)</th>
<th>THA Program Students at McCarver (n=61)</th>
<th>Other McCarver Students (n=419)</th>
<th>McCarver Non-THA Homeless Students (n=60)</th>
<th>Homeless Elementary TPS Students (n=828)</th>
<th>All TPS Elementary Students (n=15,734)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median 2015</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median 2014</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median 2013</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean 2015</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean 2014</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean 2013</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>91.8%</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. Diff. from THA Program Students 2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. Diff. from THA Program Students 2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. Diff. from THA Program Students 2013</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5 | Median Attendance by Cohort\(^{52}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Median 2013</th>
<th>Median 2014</th>
<th>Median 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THA Program Students at McCarver</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other McCarver Students</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarver Non-THA Homeless Students</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless TPS Students</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All TPS Elementary Students</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Scores

In the first two years of the Program, kindergarten through 5\(^{th}\) grade students at McCarver and other TPS schools were administered the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test three times a year. The DIBLES is a diagnostic tool used to identify students who need more attention to better learn basic reading skills. This provided a useful comparison of changes within groups (i.e., how groups’ literacy levels changed over one year) and between groups (e.g., comparing in Program students with and other McCarver students or homeless students). Tests showed huge gains in reading ability for Program students in the first year for the Program.

In the 2013-2014 school year, TPS stopped using the DIBLES assessment and instead used the Reading Benchmark Assessment (RBA) developed by the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in grades 3-5. The RBA scores are for grades 3-5 combined. While the DIBLES is a diagnostic tool used to identify students who need more targeted instruction to better learn basic reading skills, the RBA is an assessment of a student’s practical application of reading competencies aligned with Common Core standards. For the 2014-2015 school year, the District switched to using

\(^{52}\) * = data are not available
the Direct Reading Assessment (DRA) test, which is given to students K-5 four times during the year. It is an even more comprehensive reading assessment (aligned with the Common Core State Standards) and is given to all students in 19 states including Washington.

The RBA offers some limited insights into how well students are learning to read, but since the assessment in TPS has no baseline to which one can compare, we include it with some caveats. The fall and winter assessment scores focus on only some of the skills students are learning. The spring assessment is more comprehensive in that it assesses a wider range of skills. For this reason, the assessments are not comparable within the year. The RBA reports scores on a three-point scale (below basic, basic, proficient).

The DRA can show change within the year for students who take the tests, but it is too new to show trends beyond the last school year. It reports scores on a four-point scale (below basic, basic, proficient, advanced). Table 11 gives detailed results on the DRA for 2014-2015.

Table 10 displays the mean scores for different cohorts for each assessment, but not any within-year changes for the RBA and DRA. Since there are relatively few students in the Program, grade level analysis is not warranted. For each cohort, the students of all grades are combined.

A rough comparison of Program students’ reading scores with other cohorts is possible across the four years, but it is important to point out the limitations of the data. As mentioned earlier, the DIBLES test was used in years one and two while the RBA test was used in year three and the DRA in year four. In addition, the tests were given to different grades (grades K-5 for DIBLES; grades 3-5 for RBA; grades K-5 for DRA). Lastly, the results shown are pooled groups and not paired ones (meaning the percentages are for all students who took a particular test in a particular fall or spring, and due to generally high mobility rates, the entry of new students, and natural grade advancement, the groups do not contain the same students year to year).

That said, Table 10 shows some trends and comparisons. Students made dramatic increases in their reading abilities in the first year of the Program. The fall 2011 DIBLES scores for the Program students form a baseline that was obtained in their first month of school, shortly after joining the Program. One can see that only 36% were reading at grade level then. By the following spring, this number had nearly doubled to 69%. While all cohorts showed improvement (to be expected), no others showed such a dramatic change. In spring of 2012, with 69% reading at grade level, Program students had a percentage equal to that for all elementary students and had a higher percentage than the other cohorts. They were 17 percentage points higher than TPS homeless students (even though a lower percentage of Program students were reading at grade level in the fall).
In 2012-2013, the second year (again based on DIBLES scores), Program students held gains but had scores comparable to and not significantly different from other students at McCarver. They were significantly higher than those for homeless students but significantly lower when compared to all students across the District.

The 2014 RBA scores show a lower percentage of Program students reading at grade level compared to all the other cohorts (on the RBA test). Remember, these scores are only for grades 3-5, which is one reason for the low number of Program students (28) taking this test. The RBA scores were lower at McCarver—and not just for Program students. The scores for Program students were lower by 20 points, and other McCarver students were lower by 17 points. The rest of the District did not change much. Without trend data, it is hard to know if the achievement really declined or if there dip was due to the test administration or some other cause.

**In 2013-2014 (based on the RBA scores) Program students demonstrated a rather low mean reading score compared to the other cohorts.** The distributions by category show nuances in the data. Compared to the non-Program students in the peer schools, the Program students had higher percentages in the Below Basic category (61.5% vs. 40.5%) and fewer in the Basic category (26.9% vs. 48.0%), while the percentages that were Proficient were the same in both groups (11.5%). These differences are statistically significant. The distributions of scores were also significantly different when comparing Program students with all TPS students (who had much higher percentages in the Proficient and Basic categories).

From 2014 onward, the low number of Program students taking the test and the wide variation in numbers of students by grade, make it impossible to calculate levels of significance in the differences between Program students and other peer groups.

During the 2014-2015 school year the District also used the STAR Reading Assessment for grades 2-5 for the first time. The STAR assessments are often used to screen students for their reading achievement. According to a TPS handout, “The STAR Reading Assessment is a computer adaptive test (CAT) that measures reading comprehension and skills for independent reading. The assessments can also be used to monitor student growth throughout the year, to estimate students’ understanding of state standards, and predict students’ performance on the Smarter Balance

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53 The fall and winter tests are not comprehensive in scope of reading abilities tested. For this reason, significance tests are presented only for the spring test, which is comprehensive. They are based on chi square.
Assessment in spring. In addition, STAR can help teachers determine appropriate instructional levels and skills that students are ready to learn.” TPS staff note that the STAR scores correlate positively with DRA scores but the scale is different. The scores are categorized as at/above benchmark, on watch, intervention, and urgent intervention.

The STAR assessment results are listed in Table 12. Program students reading at or above grade level rose from 34% in September to 66% by May. All other cohorts showed similar, large gains. The Program students started and ended with lower percentages than for the entire TPS cohort, but were on par with the other cohorts (which all have students with high percentages of students receiving free or reduced price lunch). Thus, being in the Program did not lead to any gains beyond what other cohorts experienced. The Program students were reading at or above benchmark (66%) at only slightly higher rates than non-Program students at McCarver (64%).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Type</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Administered</th>
<th>THA Program McCarver Students</th>
<th>Other McCarver Students</th>
<th>TPS Homeless Students</th>
<th>Peer Schools Students</th>
<th>All TPS Elementary Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIBLES</td>
<td>2011−2012 FALL</td>
<td>36% (n=60)</td>
<td>51% (n=246)</td>
<td>39% (n=358)</td>
<td>50% (n=2,424)</td>
<td>52% (n=13,033)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012−2013 SPRING</td>
<td>69% (n=63)</td>
<td>61% (n=343)</td>
<td>52% (n=463)</td>
<td>62% (n=2,399)</td>
<td>69% (n=13,024)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBA</td>
<td>2013−2014 SPRING</td>
<td>41% (n=28)</td>
<td>46% (n=138)</td>
<td>56% (n=305)</td>
<td>60% (n=1,064)</td>
<td>70% (n=6,385)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRA</td>
<td>2014−2015 SPRING</td>
<td>73% (n=15)</td>
<td>72% (n=138)</td>
<td>59% (n=252)</td>
<td>71% (n=1,108)</td>
<td>70% (n=5,142)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR</td>
<td>2014−2015 SPRING</td>
<td>66% (n=32)</td>
<td>64% (n=130)</td>
<td>66% (n=274)</td>
<td>69% (n=1,049)</td>
<td>73% (n=5,656)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54 Note that the types of tests differ and comparisons across years with different tests are not advised.

55 Blix; Lister; Manitou Park; McCarver; Roosevelt; Stanley

56 These DIBLES scores are on a 1 to 3 scale: 1=Needs Intensive Intervention; 2=Strategically Address Needs; 3=Reading at Grade Level. The percentages for Reading at Grade Level are reported here.

57 These RBA scores are on a 1 to 3 scale: 1=Below Basic; 2=Basic; 3=Proficient. The combined percentages for Basic and Proficient are reported here.

58 These DRA scores for grades k-5 are measured four times per year on a 1 to 4 scale: 1=Below Basic; 2=Basic; 3=Proficient; 4=Advanced. The combined percentages for Basic, Proficient and Advanced are reported here.

59 The STAR scores for grades 2-5 are measured four times per year on a 1 to 4 scale: 1=urgent intervention; 2=intervention; 3= on watch; 4=at/above benchmark. Only “at/above benchmark” percentages are reported here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=32</td>
<td>n=39</td>
<td>n=21</td>
<td>n=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 11 | Average DRA Reading Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>THA Program Students at McCarver</th>
<th>Other McCarver Students</th>
<th>TPS Homeless Students</th>
<th>Peer Schools</th>
<th>All TPS Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>n=185</td>
<td>n=360</td>
<td>n=1,569</td>
<td>n=6,989</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>n=221</td>
<td>n=454</td>
<td>n=1,874</td>
<td>n=8,380</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>n=99</td>
<td>n=327</td>
<td>n=1,451</td>
<td>n=6,226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>n=138</td>
<td>n=252</td>
<td>n=1,108</td>
<td>n=5,142</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Basic</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60 Raw scores (Scale Scores) provided by TPS are used to report percentages at each level. The key level targeted is the percentage reading at or above benchmark. Some test score distributions may not total to 100% due to rounding.
61 Blix; Lister; Manitou Park; McCarver; Roosevelt; Stanley
### Table 12 | Average Star Reading Scores<sup>62</sup> by Cohort Grades 2-5 2014-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>THA Program Students at McCarver</th>
<th>Other McCarver Students</th>
<th>TPS Homeless Students</th>
<th>Peer Schools&lt;sup&gt;63&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>All TPS Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>September</strong></td>
<td>n=38</td>
<td>n=208</td>
<td>n=362</td>
<td>n=1,608</td>
<td>n=8,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At/Above Benchmark</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Watch</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent Intervention</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January</strong></td>
<td>n=44</td>
<td>n=220</td>
<td>n=394</td>
<td>n=1,517</td>
<td>n=8,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At/Above Benchmark</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Watch</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent Intervention</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>March</strong></td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=213</td>
<td>n=390</td>
<td>n=1,545</td>
<td>n=8,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At/Above Benchmark</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Watch</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent Intervention</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May</strong></td>
<td>n=32</td>
<td>n=130</td>
<td>n=274</td>
<td>n=1,049</td>
<td>n=5,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At/Above Benchmark</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Watch</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent Intervention</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>62</sup> Raw scores (Scale Scores) provided by TPS are used to report percentages at each level. The key level targeted is the percentage reading at or above benchmark. Some test score distributions may not total to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>63</sup> Blix; Lister; Manitou Park; McCarver; Roosevelt; Stanley
Math Scores

In 2013-2014, the results of District Math Assessment (DMA) showed that distributions of students by category were not significantly different when comparing Program students to other students at McCarver. The distributions did show statistically significant differences and lower scores for Program students when comparing them to TPS homeless students, to students at peer schools, and to all TPS students. Over 60% of Program students scored Below Basic on the spring assessment compared to 49.1% for homeless students, 41.6% for peer school students, and 29.7% for all TPS students. Only 16.1% of Program students scored Proficient on the spring assessment.

The DMA was discontinued in 2014-2015. In its place, the District used a common core assessment for primary grades. Only eight THA students across grades 1-5 took the tests. All but one scored below basic on all tests. One first grader scored basic on the final test. Since the numbers taking the test are so low, any comparison would not be valid.

State Test Scores

The Washington State test scores provided other indicators of academic performance for the 2014-2015 school year. Table 13 presents the reading and math scores for Program students in grades three through five who took the state tests. These scores should be interpreted with caution because of the low numbers of students in the THA Program. Because only 15 Program students took the state tests in 2012, these scores are omitted. In interpreting the 2015 scores it is important to note that the test is substantially different from previous years; assessments were all done online; and the assessment timing was different than in previous years. Scores for all cohorts were lower than in previous years, so the more meaningful comparisons are between cohorts.

Of the Program students in grades 3-5 in Year 4 who took the state reading test in 2015, only 27% met the state standard. This is higher than for homeless students at McCarver (22%), lower than for non-THA McCarver students (30%), similar to homeless students (25%), lower than peer schools (31%); and lower than across the District (46%). In math scores, 21% of Program students met the state standard. By comparison, 11% of homeless McCarver students met the standard, as did 30% of non-THA McCarver students, 25% of homeless students across the District, 31% of students in all peer schools, and 46% across the District.
**Table 13 | State Test Scores for Program and Other Students 2012-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurements of Student Progress</th>
<th>SMARTER Balanced Assessment[^64]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Test Scores for THA Program and Other Students Grades 3-5</strong></td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading: % meeting/exceeding State standards</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THA Program students</td>
<td>80% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other McCarver students</td>
<td>44% (n=151)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarver, Non-THA Homeless Students</td>
<td>34% (n=32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless TPS students</td>
<td>51% (n=343)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer school students</td>
<td>57% (n=984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All TPS students</td>
<td>65% (n=6,771)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math: % meeting/exceeding State standards</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THA Program students</td>
<td>40% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other McCarver students</td>
<td>29% (n=147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarver, Non-THA Homeless Students</td>
<td>19% (n=32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless TPS students</td>
<td>34% (n=341)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer school students</td>
<td>50% (n=981)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All TPS students</td>
<td>55% (n=6,757)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^64]: State test changed to the Smarter Balanced Assessment in 2015 so comparisons between years are less meaningful.
Discipline

Geo obtained discipline data for 2012-2015 for all students at McCarver. These data are less reliable across school buildings because administrators have different standards. Nevertheless, we can examine various kinds of discipline issues within McCarver: disruptive behavior; fighting, harassment/intimidation/bullying; and other. Table 14 shows the incidents that led to suspension of students over the four school years for Program and other students in grades 1-5. It also shows breakdowns by type of incident. Other factors caution us in comparing data across years. These are: 1) two years ago McCarver hired a new principal and 2) more Program students were in higher grades where the suspension rates at all schools tend to be somewhat higher. With so few students in the THA Program, grade-level comparisons are less likely to be meaningful.

The data show that suspension rates for Program students were higher than rates for other McCarver students in year one; lower in year two; and again higher in years three and four. In 2014-2015, four of 59 Program students in grades K-5 (6.8%) were suspended at least once. That rate is much lower than the rate of 12.5% in year three. The percentage for other McCarver students was 3.4%; somewhat lower than in year three. Among those Program students suspended, one was in fifth grade; two were in fourth grade; and one was in second grade. All except the fifth grader were suspended only once. The fifth grader was suspended twice. For both Program and other students, fighting is the most common reason for suspension.

Disruptions can be addressed with in-school suspensions in contrast to safety issues that require suspension. In 2015-2016 McCarver will be a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) school, implementing alternatives to out of school suspensions.

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65 Administrators who have the authority to suspend students likely have a reliable standard for applying sanctions that, theoretically, should be applied without bias of any kind within their schools. These standards may differ by administrators and the populations that they serve, so comparisons across buildings are likely not meaningful.

66 Note that sample sizes are very small for both cohorts so comparisons are made with caution. In addition, with students having both different teachers and a different principal, the likelihoods of different standards and tolerances for misbehavior are high and could account for the differences noted.

67 These include short-term and long-term suspensions.
Table 14 | Disciplinary Actions for McCarver Students in Grades K-5 in 2012-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>THA Program Students at McCarver</th>
<th>Other McCarver Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students with One or More Suspensions 68</td>
<td>#/Total</td>
<td>% of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>4/59</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>8/64</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>4/87</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>6/76</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Academic Achievement Results

Demographically, the Program students resemble other students at McCarver. They differ in that there are more Program students in poverty, fewer with special education designations, none learning English as a second language, and none who are homeless.

The Program students are much less mobile, in large part because their rent subsidies and other benefits are tied to their continued enrollment at McCarver. The impact of this cohort’s mobility on the mobility rate for the school is only in proportion to their numbers as a percentage of overall school enrollment.

Attendance has remained steady at 91%. This is higher than the 90% target for the Program students but lower than it has been. Parent motivation and living far from the school appear to be continuing influences on attendance rates. THA staff have noticed that students who live farther from home struggle with attendance and tardiness.

In the Program’s first year, the recently rehoused students showed statistically significant gains in reading scores compared to their peers. Since then, their scores have tended to resemble their peers at McCarver and at peer schools. Generally they slightly out-perform homeless students. In

68 There are differences in the counts of students for discipline and attendance for both THA and non-THA cohorts. These figures are based on students in the TPS discipline data tables.
math, the Program students show achievement scores below the other cohorts, which are low compared to the District average.

Discipline rates for Program students were initially similar to those of their peers at McCarver but have become much higher in the past two years.

Although the IB Programme is a benefit to all families in the THA Program and in the school, THA staff report that many THA Program parents still seem unclear about the structure and benefits of the IB curriculum.

**STAFF ASSESSMENTS OF THE PROGRAM**

On July 28 the McCarver Special Housing Program caseworkers, Program manager and school principals met to review initial 2015 program evaluation data and discuss themes emerging from the evaluation activities. Below is a summary of the themes and key points raised by the participants in the discussion. The challenge for some families to find housing in the McCarver neighborhood raises important questions about the Program model and theory of change.

The program model relied on the assumption -- whether implicit or explicit -- that families would find housing within the McCarver catchment. Many families have not been able to find adequate, affordable housing in the McCarver neighborhood. Many families have ended up living far from the school and are keeping their children at the school to maintain their subsidy. Students are traveling long times and distances. Staff feel this negatively impacts attendance and participation in after school activities. For example, some children were arriving home from after-school activities after 6:30 p.m. and their parents felt this was too long a day for their children, so some parents withdrew them from after-school activities.

One participant in this conversation said that the “drive to keep kids at McCarver for five years has complications,” and suggested that student and family needs, in some cases, may have been better met by allowing students to transfer to a school in the neighborhood where they found housing.

In several cases, caseworkers and school staff collaborated, and children who had special transportation issues were provided assistance, often by accessing McKinney-Vento transportation assistance for those families.
Only a small percentage of the McCarver Special Housing Program families seem likely to actually be able to pay their full rent and afford their other bills by the end of this, the last, year of the Program.

The experience of the past four year has raised important questions about the definition of “success” for special housing program families. Again, whether implicit or explicit, the rent structure and other program elements are based on the assumption that “success” would mean that, by the end of the Program, a family would pay one-hundred-percent of its rent (without rent burden), pay utility and gas bills without assistance, and have adequate housing for their family (e.g., beds, and places for homework and meals). Participants in this discussion report that effective casework and efforts by families has resulted in progress and areas of positive results for families and children, but that the overall expectation that many or most families would achieve that “success,” defined as sustainable income to meet family needs, is unlikely to be met.

Staff estimated that now, in the last year of the Program, only about half of families are in satisfactory housing and about half have housing that is lacking in some way. Only a small proportion of families seem likely to be able to pay rent and afford their bills in one year. Some families, even after four years of support from this Program, are still in “constant crisis.”

Staff shared a list of some family characteristics that could provide important context for service delivery and expectations of (or redefinitions of) “success.” These characteristics include: number of parents in the home; income vs no income (and within income, earned income vs unearned income); and issues such as poor health (including mental health), substance abuse, and domestic violence.

Caseworkers report that two-parent families are often, though not always, more likely to be able to afford rent and bills. Some families are “no income” families for whom stability may never include financial independence. Caseworkers estimate that almost all “no income” families have substance abuse and/or mental health issues. Domestic violence impacts both financially successful and not-so-successful families, impacting housing stability and consistency at home. Finally, as a caution against easy assumptions, they shared that at least one family that is earning income and on a path to financial sustainability also has a substance abuse problem.

Staff believe that in the early years of the program the requirements of parent involvement supported parents’ connections with the school and their increased capacity to support their children’s learning. Planning for and expectations of parental involvement were higher in the early years of the Program and were not a priority this past year.
In earlier years of the Program parent involvement was expected of parents and attendance was taken at parenting classes, family fun nights and PTA meetings. Staff report that “more parents were in the building” when these expectations were communicated and enforced. Attendance, however, was still low, staff estimate that on average 7-10 families attended family fun nights. Though some family members complained, school staff and Program staff believed that for the families that did participate family fun nights and other activities were helpful ways for the school to connect with families, and for families to connect with the Program. These experiences helped to increase parents’ comfort at school and provide an initial positive connection with school (in many cases for parents who did not have a positive connection with schools themselves). Through school involvement, families could learn by watching, be better informed about school activities, and learn how to support their children’s learning. Finally, some parents increased their sense of community with other parents, and they provided support to one another.

Staff reported that parental involvement activities and expectations were not continued this past year for a handful of reasons:

- This cohort of parents had finished the parenting curriculum (and there was no need to repeat the same material over and over with the same parents);
- Staff determined that parents did not believe monthly parenting meetings were valuable and attendance was consistently low.
- The activities were lower priorities among families’ “hierarchy of needs.” Caseworkers focused their efforts on working with families individually on their self-sufficiency goals.

There is interest in pursuing some kind of parent activity plans for this year that would build community, promote connections to the school, and support positive parenting. This could help, and it could be impacted by the school’s temporary relocation to a building in another neighborhood for the entire school year.

**Staff report that communications between McCarver Special Housing Program caseworkers and teachers have contributed to resolving issues for individual students. However, there is not consistent or regular communications among caseworkers and teachers so the potential benefits are likely not fully realized.**

The THA caseworkers, school principals, and school staff responsible for attendance communicate regularly. The primary topics are attendance and behavior. One caseworker said, “[The Principal] is in our office almost every day.” Since he knows that caseworkers are in touch with families, he will go and see if they know what is up with families whose kids are not in school.
Examples of teacher-caseworker communications with positive results include:

- One teacher had a particularly positive relationship with caseworkers. In one example the teacher reached out to the parent via the caseworker. The teacher was able, over the course of communications, to help the parent understand what the student needed at home in order to learn the material. As a result of these communications and this work, the student got a 100% on her math test, after failing the test the previous month.
- A teacher reached out to a caseworker to let her know about repeated absences of one child. The caseworker communicated with the family and determined that transportation was the issue. The issue was resolved through accessing McKinney-Vento transportation funds for the family.
- The Principal enlisted a caseworker to help get an IEP form signed by a parent so that the IEP process could move along.

However, one caseworker reported, “There’s a selected few teachers that we’re very close to,” and communications with some teachers is minimal. A principal made announcements to teachers at two different meetings, suggesting that they engage with the THA caseworkers and suggested, at that time, that the caseworkers attend grade level teacher meetings. However there were no instances in which caseworkers did attend those meetings. Caseworkers reached out to all teachers via email at least twice in the fall of 2014 and report a similar pattern: good communication and partnership with a few teachers, but little or no interest from others.

Staff speculated that there is a need to re-establish the importance of the Program to teachers and have some kind of regular, structured communication among teachers, caseworkers, and families. Suggestions for increasing communications between teachers and caseworkers include monthly reports, email communications, and in-person connections at meetings.

Caseworkers feel overburdened by data collection responsibilities.

Caseworkers are hoping for support with data collection, ideally in the form of a new staff member assigned to the task. Talking about the data collection required from the various systems (THA, school, federal, etc. as well as the evaluation data), a caseworker said, “We’ve got so many things to work with the clients on, it’s hard to find the time to focus on these individual pieces…. We just have so much. I don’t know that people understand how much stuff we are required to track and report. It’s an enormous amount of stuff. It’s hard to do it all and I want that to be known.”

Staff wish to highlight that the McCarver Special Housing Program is a responsive program, using the evaluation and other feedback to adapt and improve the Program. Staff acknowledge that the
Program is not achieving all of the hoped-for outcomes, but strongly believe in the potential for this school/housing partnership.

As described above, some aspects of the McCarver Special Housing Program are not working as planned. Families are choosing housing that is outside, sometimes far outside, the McCarver catchment area. Only a small percentage of families are likely to be able to maintain stable housing for their families without rent support. The attendance and academic data are not as strongly positive as was hoped. One staff member shared fears that the requirement that parents keep their kids at McCarver in order to maintain their subsidy would “cause the Program to fail, which would be a shame.”

In response to those results and other feedback, staff have implemented changes. For example, for the 2015-2016 school year, THA has implemented a new rent structure that is based on families’ income, rather than a proportion of the rent for the housing they find. Other ideas on the table include changing school stability requirements to allow school transfers at the end of the school year, setting aside affordable housing units within the catchment area, changing parental involvement expectations, and requirements to support community building among “mini-groups” within the cohort.

Staff are eager for a comprehensive, honest, and useful evaluation report that can help them communicate what they have learned and what they need to change. One staff member said, “[This Program] could be so much better, and if we don’t have data that demonstrate what is not working, we won’t be able to change it the way we need to.”

Another shared, “I would like to say about the Program that it’s not a failure if we learn from it and improve.”

Teacher Assessments of Child & Parent Changes

To understand how the teachers and key staff view the Program, Geo relied on interviews and a survey. Below is a summary of responses to interviews with 5 teachers and responses to an online survey of teachers with 10 respondents. Two teachers completed both a survey and an interview and two who completed the online survey did not share their names. So the summary below incorporates input received from between 11 and 13 unique individual teachers from a list of 20 teachers provided to the evaluation team. The school counselor and administrator (responsible for attendance tracking) also participated in interviews and their responses are noted throughout.
Neither the survey nor the interviews consist of a representative sample of teachers at McCarver Elementary and the summary below should not be construed as representing all teachers’ thoughts. The summary and input reported below are an opportunity to learn about teachers’ perspectives of the Program, the parents and the students, to increase understanding about what is important to teachers and to identify opportunities to improve the Program’s efforts.

There is a big gap between teachers’ expectations of the Special Housing Program and the reality they experience. Teachers support the goals of the Program and support the overall concept, but express frustration with continued poor attendance, poor parent involvement and ongoing signs of instability in students’ lives. Teachers perceive that the Program is not holding parents accountable and/or is choosing families that are “impossible to succeed.”

Teachers respect THA case workers and, when they interact with them, report positive experiences. However teachers also complain about a lack of information about the Program and a lack of communication and interaction with case workers. When asked for recommendations for Program improvement, one teacher responded, “Follow up meetings to address the results of this survey would be a start.” The teacher went on to complain that there has been little or no reporting of findings or other follow-up to similar surveys in the past.

Some teachers could identify students and/or parents who had experienced the expected positive changes, but others could not identify a single student they believed had benefitted from the Program. Most teachers readily identified families and students whose attendance and engagement in school have fallen far short of their expectations, even after four years of participation in the Special Housing Program.

The two staff members who were interviewed meet regularly with the housing Program case workers. They reported few complaints or frustration with the Program and could readily offer concrete examples of caseworkers solving problems for families, such as finding transportation solutions or successfully connecting a student with the Big Brother program (with noticeable behavior improvements for the child).

**Program Concept**

Teachers believe in the concept of the Program, but feel frustrated and disappointed with the results. Teachers perceive that parents are not being held accountable to Program expectations.
Most teachers interviewed or surveyed report an understanding that the basic concept of the Program is to provide housing and supportive services to families in order to positively impact children’s engagement in school and their learning. When talking about their expected impacts on kids, teachers list examples such as improved attendance, ability to focus on school, social development and interaction, and homework completion. In interviews many teachers shared their belief that parents would be improving their ability to become “self-sustaining.” A few teachers described overall school changes as part of the intended outcomes of the Program.

Nine of the 10 teachers answering the survey agree that “stable housing helps students succeed in school.” Seven of those 10 agree that stable housing “helps parents participate more fully in the education of their children.”

“The provision of stable housing has allowed THA Program families the opportunity to send their children to school on a regular basis. This provision is helpful in that it allows their children to turn their attention periodically away from their plight to other areas of interest.”

“Yes, I do believe housing stability impacts learning. Stability makes a really big difference in terms of growth...learning happens over time, so it’s important to be there.”

Many teachers expressed frustration and disappointment. They acknowledge the challenging task, hard work and good intentions of the THA, but they question the success of the Program in achieving the expected outcomes (as they perceive them). From the teachers’ perspective, the problems that lead to the families’ homelessness continue to impact the families and continue to impact the children.

Only two of the nine teachers answering the question agree that “the THA Program (all aspects) has influenced the academic performance of the children in THA families” at McCarver.

“Theoretically I was very impressed with (the Program) and thought it was going to be an exceptional program, but I’m finding—after working with some of the same families for multiple years—I’m finding that the same difficulties that the Program was supposed to

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69 Staff are well aware of the challenges and patterns of thought and behavior that make it difficult for some adults and children to easily change.
alleviate are still present: the poor attendance, the frequent tardies, the limited connection with parents. I’m a little frustrated, and I want to know how those things can be improved.”

“It sounded like it was going to be monumental, but it has fizzled. It has been frustrating for us. It’s not changing our school.”

“I didn’t know them when they were homeless...all I can say is in the time that I have had the students. It wasn’t the housing Program that made them stable.”

“No one could have predicted how engrossed these families were in their lifestyle and how unwilling to surrender it, get beyond it, overcome in favor of a more positive sort of lifestyle, if nothing else, for the sake of their children.”

Teachers question some of the practices of the Program and perceive that parents are not being held accountable to Program expectations and requirements. Teachers question Program practices that allow families to choose housing outside of the McCarver geographic catchment area70 or failing to enforce parents’ school involvement. Some teachers believe that the Program has slacked off efforts to encourage school involvement over this past year.

“How is living a big distance from the school okay? How was that approved?”

“I think there needs to be more accountability for these students and their parents.”

“We (teachers) could have served as accountability for families, there should have been consequences.”

“Since (the Program) started it’s kind of gotten less important to parents. In the beginning there was a big push to be involved in the school a big push for homework, a big push for academic stuff and I just don’t see it anymore at all. Those are the parents that don’t come until dinnertime. Those are the parents that don’t come to conferences.”

70 Note: the Program does not and cannot prevent parents from living outside the McCarver attendance area and the paucity of adequate and affordable housing within the attendance area makes finding housing there difficult.
“Previously at family fun nights, families had to sign in with a caseworker. Part of me hated that because parents didn’t want to be there and talked the whole time, but it was better than now, now hardly anyone comes. Hardly anyone is coming to PTA anymore either.”

“I really appreciate the Program and what it aims to do....but...I’ve seen some families that I think would do better if they were held a little more accountable.”

Asked in interviews about the concept and impact of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, teachers report that the IB program is contributing to growth in children, but do not believe that parents in the special housing program understand what the IB program is or appreciate its importance.

The two staff members interviewed support the general concept of the Program and did not express any complaints about the concept.

Communications and Interactions with Tacoma Housing Authority

Teachers feel that communications and information sharing with caseworkers is inadequate. While some teachers report positive interactions with THA caseworkers, nearly all teachers suggest that regular, pro-active communications between THA caseworkers and teachers would be an improvement.

Even among the small number of teachers who completed surveys and interviews, there is wide variation in their experiences with THA case workers and other THA staff. Teachers who have worked closely with case workers report that case workers were very helpful, resolving problems, opening lines of communications with families, promoting regular attendance and encouraging parents’ involvement in school. However, nearly every teacher who completed a survey or an interview felt that communications between THA case workers and teachers was inadequate and that lack of communication interfered with Program effectiveness.

Teachers who did have more interaction with THA staff said that interaction occurred either because the teacher initiated it or because their classroom was near the THA office and they saw one another frequently. One teacher described a “student monthly report” that has been helpful for communications, but still suggested having monthly meetings with THA caseworkers. Another said that she had emailed THA case workers, but never directly talked with them.

Nearly every teacher participating in data collection suggested that regular, proactive communications between teachers and caseworkers would improve the Program. Teachers hope
those communications would help them understand what is going on with families, and engage THA in improving parent involvement, homework completion and attendance (including tardies and late pick-ups).

Only two of the 10 teachers answering the survey agree that “The THA caseworkers are effective in helping me understand the needs of Program students and their families.” Five of those 10 teachers agree that “the THA caseworkers are effective in helping me resolve issues affecting Program students’ education for behavior.”

“[The caseworkers] have always responded to questions in a timely manner and are very approachable.”

“We don’t really update them regularly anymore….I don’t know how they have any information.”

“They have not communicated with me directly about any problems in the last four years.”

“I just found out today which one of my students was in the Program. Communication must be improved.”

“I never interact with the caseworkers unless I go to them. Maybe some type of monthly meeting, where we could sit down and talk about how thing are going with the students in the Program (would help). That said, I think they have an incredibly difficult job and I know they are busy.”

“The communication issue is huge. Perhaps administrators can inform us of what issues come up with the families or students involved if the case worker cannot.”

“I have only reached out [to THA caseworkers] as a last resort when I could not manage the parents myself. I also think we should keep in touch about family involvement. Many of my THA students were constantly missing homework, parents were not coming to conferences, and students were missing school.”

The two staff members interviewed have regular interactions with THA caseworkers. It works well for THA case workers and these staff to meet regularly. These staff had no suggestions for improving their communications with THA caseworkers. One staff member said, “…interactions, they are always positive. That’s why families want to come in and talk with them. They are open and honest and always willing to help.”
Impact on Children

When asked to describe a Program student who had improved significantly, some teachers were able to describe a student who had experienced significant positive change. They cited changes such as a student’s increased confidence or increased homework completion. Many teachers were quick to say they can just as easily identify students in the Program who did not experience the positive changes the teachers expected. In response to this question some teachers could not think of a single example of a student who has improved significantly during his/her time with the Program.

Some teachers readily offer examples of students who have improved in some way while involved in the Program. Teachers observe increased confidence among parents and among students, increased completion of homework, improved attendance, kids seeming to feel a part of McCarver, and improved classroom behavior. Teachers seem most able to make these comparisons if they have had students for more than one year or if they have had a child as a student and then have their younger siblings in subsequent years.

“I have a student this year whose older brother I had in previous years. There is a significant change in the amount of completed assignments and homework from the previous brother to the current brother. The current student is at grade level, excited about learning and seemingly well adjusted. The former student struggled (I assume as a result of an unstable home life).”

“I have noticed that the mother seems more calm and competent as a parent.”

“I do remember that a student in the Program that I had several years back seems to be doing well here. He seems to be more confident as a person because he feels so much a part of McCarver. He especially seemed to need that when he came. I don’t know if that would have been possible without THA.”

Some teachers can just as easily identify families who do not seem to have made progress through their involvement with the Special Housing Program. One teacher described a family whose particular needs indicated that a different program or different school setting might have helped them more than the Special Housing Program and worried that the children are heading to middle school unprepared. Still other teachers report not being able to identify even one student who has experienced significant improvement or not being able to notice any difference between students in the THA Program and other students with similar family circumstances.
Five of the 10 teachers answering the survey agree that “The Program is helpful in identifying the non-academic needs of students.” Six of the 9 teachers responding agree that “the Program is helping find solutions to the non-academic needs of students.”

The two staff members interviewed could readily identify some specific instances in which THA caseworkers had helped to solve specific problems with attendance, behavior or, in one case, checking up on a child who had been injured.

Impact on Parents

While some teachers could point to examples of parents who had increased in confidence, competence, and even in financial sustainability, there is an overall sense of teachers feeling frustrated with the parents involved in the McCarver Special Housing Program.

Teachers could point to some examples of positive changes in some parents, such as going to school, getting jobs and receiving vital support through difficult times. However, they could even more readily come up with examples of parents who are not involved in school as expected and are not managing to increase students’ stability, despite four years of involvement in the Special Housing Program. For teachers, the positive signs of parents involvement include, homework completed and handed-in on time, parents being pro-active about communication (e.g., asking a teacher about lost homework or forms, stopping in to talk to a teacher), and children at school on time with regular attendance.

“I have a family that I think of that is NOT a good example…. Mom has been in and out of college, started and quit. Since it [the Program] started it’s kind of gotten less important to parents…. Those are the parents that don’t come until dinnertime. Those are the parents that don’t come to conferences.”

“Parent involvement has dropped off; conference attendance has dropped off. It’s hard to even be in touch with these families.”

“The Program parents don’t seem more available than other parents and I haven’t seen their availability change over the course of two years that I have taught their kids.”

“I’ve been working with one family for years. I adore their children. But, one of the requirements is that they need to come to conferences with me. She dodges me at every turn lately. I think it’s because things aren’t going the way they are supposed to be at home. The only conference I’ve had with them, she [the mom] sent her mother to do.”
Only two of seven teachers responding agreed that “The Program is helping parents identify their needs and goals.” Three of eight agreed that “The Program is helping parents meet their needs and goals.” Three of 10 agree that “The parents of my students who are in the Program have good parenting skills.” Five of 10 agree that “the parents of my students who are in the Program are engaged in their children’s education.”

Overall Program Observations

Teachers’ overall wish is to get the children to school, consistently and on time. One teacher said, “I can’t teach them if they are not in the room.”

Teachers were asked “If THA were to get an extra $100,000 for the McCarver Special Housing Program, what should they spend the money on? (The interviewer made it clear that this was an imaginary scenario.) Most teachers interviewed said, if there were an extra $100,000 it should be about just getting the kids into the school, on time. Teachers said they would recommend spending extra money to ensure families find housing in the catchment area, even, somewhat jokingly, recommending an apartment building right across the street from the school with an officer that would visit the family if the children are not in school. One teacher said, “These same families? I would recommend we don’t spend (any additional money).” Because “I just don't think spending more money in this particular format would do any good.”

The staff members interviewed suggest spending the (imaginary) extra funds on mental health counseling for parents, transportation for families, more THA staff (to reduce case load size) and educating parents on how to support their children’s education.

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

As part of the evaluation of the THA McCarver Program, Geo interviewed a sample of parents. Below is a summary of parents’ responses to each interview question with some additional notes on topics that came up in the course of the interviews. Parents’ achievements and progress toward self-sufficiency varied widely across parents. Even those who reported good progress on education and

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71 Some respondents skipped some questions, so for some questions there were only seven or eight total respondents.
who are currently working at part-time or full-time regular jobs are very worried about the looming end of the five year Program.

With similar variation, some parents are very satisfied with their housing and the housing location seems to support their children’s school punctuality and attendance, while others are unsatisfied with their housing and/or the housing location presents a challenge to getting the kids to school on time.

Many parents interviewed struggle with health, mental health, domestic violence and other problems and most do not feel secure in their ability to stay on track for their kids without this Program. One parent seemed to feel that it would take a lot more than this Program to help some parents, saying: “People want to do good, but when the help is actually here, like, people are shocked. I’m actually getting the help. How do I cope with this? ...A lot of people come from hurt situations. Putting a Band-Aid on hurt situations only soothes it for a little bit.” Several parents, however, cited the Programs’ time limits as a motivating factor. Some even suggested that case workers should “enforce” Program requirements more than they do now.

Parents can easily describe concrete problems that case workers helped them resolve as well as give details about the emotional support and encouragement they receive from case workers. Nearly every parent could think of at least one, and usually several, positive changes in themselves, their kids or their family since they have been in the Program.

**Housing and Financial Situation**

10 of 13 parents interviewed (71%) agree or strongly agree with the statement “My current housing meets my family’s basic needs.”

3 of 13 parents interviewed (21%) agree or strongly agree with the statement “I will be able to pay my portion of my rent next year.”

Basic needs were defined in the interview as: 1) feeling safe in the house and the neighborhood, 2) having enough room for the family, 3) being able to afford the utilities bills and 4) location and transportation – like being able to get to school, work and appointments.

The Section 8 voucher solved a big problem for most families. Parents interviewed described their circumstances of living in a motel or with relatives before receiving their voucher and finding housing. For most respondents their current housing met at least some of their family’s “basic
needs,” but many also had at least one complaint about a basic need not met in their current housing.

**What did it take to be in a housing situation that meets your basic needs?**

In order to get into, and stay in, housing that works for them, beyond using the housing voucher, families report seeking help from others for deposit money, being patient and “picky” in their housing search and receiving support from caseworkers. In one case, a landlord worked with a family to spread a move-in deposit payment over two months. Another family relied on relatives to lend deposit money. Parents who cited their “pickiness” as part of what it took to get into a good housing situation reported taking a long time with their search, wanting to find a place within walking distance to the school and/or finding a place in which the increasing rent obligations would still be manageable.

In order to stay in a workable housing situation, parents reported communicating with landlords to resolve issues and receiving “hardship” or other additional help with rent from the McCarver Program when they could not work due to illness or injury.

**Have you moved during the Program? Do you want to move now?**

Six respondents reported having moved during the Program and/or wanting to move now.

Reasons for moving (or wanting to move) include domestic violence issues and needing to have a new address, poor conditions/repairs in their home, wanting to be close to the school, “personal issues,” landlords ending the lease and/or needing to find a new place after a rent increase. One parent expressed a desire to receive “regular THA” housing support and worried that being a part of the McCarver Special Housing Program was interfering with the family’s progress on the THA waiting list. One family reported living in the same, satisfactory housing situation for all four years of the Program, but still wants to move to be closer to the school.

**How is your current housing working for your family?**

While most parents reported that their current housing generally meets their basic needs, areas of satisfaction and complaint vary widely across the group.
For example:

A house that is big enough for their family and no transportation problems, but the house, built in 1952, has not been updated. Heating oil costs and utility bills are expensive, running up to $700/month. This parent said, “It’s not the Program’s fault that the house I’m living in is not good.” (This family hopes to move to a new home by the end of the summer.)

The neighborhood isn't the best and the building that we’re living in, what we found out after we moved in, that it's infested with insects...bed bugs and things like that and it's been really hard to move out of here and it's been really frustrating. My son has been bitten and his face is swollen and things like that. (This family really wants to move to a new housing situation, but cites financial issues as a barrier.)

An apartment where repairs are completed, issues are resolved and there is a playground in the complex and the housing meets the basic needs described, but the parent does not feel comfortable with the homeless people in the neighborhood and near the playground.

We love our apartment. (The kids) have made friends....they don't want to move.

Two parents specifically mentioned NOT wanting to live on Hilltop.

One parent described a very satisfactory living situation that is far from the school and also described related transportation and attendance/tardiness issues, but did not perceive that distance as a housing problem for the family.

**Will you be able to pay your portion of the rent next year?**

Most parents interviewed do not believe they can pay their portion of the rent next year and they are very worried about what they will do when the Program ends for them.

One parent described the annual rent increases this way: “It’s a stress meter - every year the stress goes up,” and theorized that as the rent increases, parents go into “survival mode” and eschew longer-term goals for short-term financial solutions to meet rent payments.

Several parents do not foresee having sufficient income for their rent due to their health issues and inability to work. They do not believe they will be able to pay their portion of the rent next year and are very worried about the Program’s end. One parent said, "I can pay my rent but I don't know how I'm going to be able to pay the bills," and went on to say that without a Section 8 voucher, his family would definitely have to leave their current house.
Two parents are currently working very little and cited the needs of their children as a key barrier to earning more. One has children with special needs that often need her intervention during the day (though this situation has stabilized during her time on the Program), the other is reluctant to use child care and will only seek jobs she can do while the kids are in school.

The few parents who have more confidence that they can pay the rent next year said their improving their education, finding a job or their “willpower” were factors that would help them meet their rent obligations next year. One parent described how she had carefully chosen her home to ensure she could meet the increasing rent obligations. Another parent hoped that the landlord would reduce the rent for their family, so that they can stay in the same home next year and after the Program ends.

Education and Job Skills

6 of 13 parents (43%) agree or strongly agree with the statement, “Since joining this Program I have improved my education or job skills.”

About half of parents reported achieving or making significant progress toward education or job training goals. An equal number of parents reported little or no progress on job or education goals and that they did not really have education or employment goals due to health problems and for some, due to avoiding income that would impact the amount of SSI disability payments they receive. A few remaining parents reported progress through the life skills and parenting classes offered by the Program and expressed some hopes about education or employment while citing barriers to employment.

What progress have you made in your education and employment goals and what did it take for you to make that progress?

Some parents report significant progress:

“I knew that I only had this help for a certain amount of time and this was like my first ever chance…. Once I got into school I loved it so much. I liked being an example for my kids, like “mommy has homework too”.

“McCarver was a blessing to us….it made (achieving some goals we’d mapped out) easier. It made it a lot smoother for my wife to focus on going to school, and doing classes while I worked 8 hours a day.”
“Before being in the Program I just wanted a job. I wasn’t looking for extra schooling. Because of the Program, I got a Home Health Certificate that will hopefully help to get a good job.”

About half of the parents interviewed described progress on and achievement of significant education and employment goals while they have been a part of the McCarver Special Housing Program. Specific achievements included earning a home health aide certificate, earning a trucker’s license, working on a GED, and completing a GED then earning a certificate in administrative medical assistant and currently working to earn associates’ degree. Only a few parents reported that they are currently working at a regular job at least part-time.

Several of these parents cited the encouragement, goal-setting support and concrete help (e.g., tuition support) from the Program as instrumental in achieving their goals. Many also described that the 5-year limit of the Program was motivating to them. More than one parent described how the family had goals before beginning the Program and the Program was a way for them to realize those goals. Two parents reported working with the THA Employment Specialist and found her to be helpful with job leads, resume preparation, and interview skills.

Others report little or no progress:

“I need to be a little bit more energetic to let me go out and do this. In the meantime, not having a car is a big issue. It's hard to go look for a job. And I can't take the bus, the bus they want $5 a pop.”

“I haven’t really increased my job or employment skills... and it’s not the Program’s fault, in any way, it’s my kids... I have four kids, two with special needs.... and that takes up a lot of my time.”

“Thank God I finally got my SSI.... They [DVR (Disability Vocational Rehabilitation)] took me in and gave me a test and I don't qualify for anything.”

About half of the parents interviewed report little or no progress on education or job skills. Of that group, at least half report receiving Social Security Disability payments, being unable to work and having no job or employment goals that would interfere with those payments. Some report health and/or mental health issues interfering with work and education goals. A few indicated that their children’s needs, for example very young children, children with special health or behavioral needs or parenting needs, severely limit their ability to work on education or employment goals. Of this
group, several reported some small amounts of employment but only limited amounts and with sporadic or seasonal jobs.

**Case Manager**

12 of 13 parents interviewed (86%) agree or strongly agree with the statement “My case manager has been helpful in encouraging me.”

Most parents report feeling encouraged and supported by their case manager:

“(My case manager) motivated me to go out there and get a good education….sometimes I get discouraged….but she’s always there. She’s always encouraging me.”

“They’re (the case workers) like a baby’s dad when you don’t have one. They help you with everything they can.”

“She (case manager) motivated me by having a goals and To Do list on paper to keep me on track so that I could let her know what I’ve accomplished.”

“She talks with me as a friend and that’s the important thing. They don’t think they’re better than us.”

“But not everyone has someone who believes in them. (The case manager) told me, ‘you’re going to be something great. You’re going to do it.’ Having her there and do that for me, it really helped me. (crying)”

**Can you give some examples of what your case manager does (or what you wish she would do)?**

Nearly every parent interviewed agreed that their case workers are helpful in encouraging them. Parents described case workers (and THA) helping them solve specific problems, such as helping them complete the process and pay the fees to get a valid driver’s license, get engaged with mental health counseling, figure out how to get very reduced cost prescription glasses, and engage in a lengthy process of having a criminal record expunged. Parents also described how case workers encourage them personally, are kind, listen and remember the details of parents’ lives. More than one parent reported that case workers helped them when they were feeling overwhelmed with parenting and helped them make good choices about self-care and living situations.
Several parents mentioned the personnel changes for case workers that occurred over the past year. Some had only positive comments about both (or all three) case workers that had worked with. A few parents did not have any negative feedback for current case workers, but did complain that the transition was difficult for them. They said the changing case workers made it difficult for them to stay on track with their goals, and their motivation waned as they may have set different goals with a new case manager. One parent shared that the sense of trust with the new case manager would not be the same and that this parent was unlikely to share information as freely with the new case manager.

School: Parents’ Involvement, Kids Rusted and Ready

8 of 13 parents interviewed (57%) answered “most of the time” or “almost always” to the question, “How often do you go to the school (for conferences, performances, volunteering, etc.?)

10 of 13 parents interviewed (77%) answered “most of the time” or “almost always” to the question, “My child is (or children are) rested and ready for school each day.”

“Once I got into the Program with my daughter, these things were mandatory, and the fact that they were mandatory made me realize how awesome it is to be involved and how much the kids love it and how much they grow from it and how much they enjoy the fact that you’re involved with their school.”

“McCarver has gotten better over the last few years that I’ve been involved with the school...I’m excited for when they remodel it.”

“I have a set schedule for them (kids) to be in bed. They eat dinner around 6:30, kitchen has to be cleaned, rooms have to be cleaned....We don’t have a problem with our kids. They all go bed 9:30, faithfully.”

“I’m only 10 minutes away by walking - that helps us be on time.”

“...It’s a commute, so there are tardies.”

What helps you to be involved in school? What keeps from you being involved?

A few parents reported spending a lot of time at the school and feeling really connected to the school. These parents live nearby and do not work full time or attend school. Some parents reported
that they do attend conferences and family fun nights and some other events, but they can’t attend all the time. Other parents report little school involvement. The kinds of involvement that parents described included the PTA, family fun nights, book fair, school conferences, meeting with the case manager at the school, helping with homework, volunteering, getting to know teachers and staff informally and being contacted by teachers or staff for issues with their child(ren).

Parents reported factors that facilitate and support parent involvement such as: the kids like the events and like for their parents to be at school, a commitment from parents to be involved, living close to the school, and feeling appreciated and needed by the school and the kids there. Parents reported barriers to school involvement that include commitments to work, school and younger children, lack of transportation or time consuming or costly transportation and lack of enforcement of involvement by the Special Housing Program.

**What has made a difference for you to be able to have your child rested and ready for school? (Or, what would make a difference?)**

Having a set schedule and routine for mornings and evenings and having a reliable form of transportation (district bus or McKinney-Vento bus, living within walking distance or having a car) were reported by many parents as “what it takes” for them to successfully have their kids rested and ready for school. A few parents also talked about being committed to getting their kids there and taking responsibility as a parent. Several of the parents easily volunteered the details of their routines, describing different tasks for different kids and the time they need to leave to be punctual.

Parents who reported having transportation via McKinney-Vento credited case workers with arranging that for them. When talking about the needs for schedules and routines, parents sometimes referenced parenting classes they had attended through the McCarver Special Housing Program.

Among those who struggle more with having their kids rested and ready for school, parents acknowledged the need for a routine, but said they struggle with it. Some parents also reported that living far from the school made it hard to get their kids there on time and that sometimes they just choose to accept an absence.
The Program

What is different about you, your kids or your family, since you have been a part of this Program?

Parents were asked to think of someone who knows them well and imagine what that person would say is different since they have been involved in this Program.

“She would tell you that I am pretty much dramatically changed as far as being responsible and sticking with things, following things through.”

“[What is different is] having a place to call home and to be every night and just her grades and homework. In the years previous to this, there’s a lot of times when I was really depressed that I didn’t really care if she [her daughter] went to school or not and she was home with me and it didn’t seem at the time that it was that big of a deal--and it is (a big deal), so that doesn’t happen anymore which is good.”

“My attitude. She would say I have a more ‘I can do it’ attitude.”

Many parents reported that others would see them as more responsible or stable since they have been a part of the McCarver Special Housing Program. Along these lines some parents said others would see them as more independent, consistent and better at following through.

Some parents reported that others would notice changes for their families such as less stress, decreased anger-levels among the parents and less uncertainty and moving around. A few parents also said that others would notice an improved attitude and better outlook on life, when compared to before their involvement in the McCarver Special Housing Program. Finally, others might notice that their kids are better behaved, have more friends and are more stable and happy.

If they were to get an extra $100,000 for the McCarver Special Housing Program, what should they spend the money on? If they were going to start this Program at new school, what is important to include? (The interviewer made it clear that this was an imaginary scenario.)

Parents had lots of ideas of how the Program could spend additional money. Questions like this one can help reveal what participants perceive as the most valuable parts of the Program and what they see as barriers.
Many parents suggested that additional funds be spent on a longer program and smaller annual rent increases. Many parents also suggested help with transportation and emergency funds for families to handle unexpected expenses. A few suggested keeping the Program the same, but using additional funds to serve more families.

Key program elements that parents suggested supporting included, paying tuition for classes and job training, parenting classes, making school involvement mandatory, legal help (in particular to help people with a criminal record), extra-curricular activities and school programming like art and music. A few parents mentioned that programs should be sure to develop and maintain a sense of community among parents, suggesting that parents understand each other and can provide each other with emotional support.

Many parents had thoughts about accountability and Program requirements for parents.

Several parents mentioned accountability and Program requirements. Parents suggested that the Program be extended only for parents who are “committed to the Program.” One parent said, you can tell a parent is committed if “They show up to mandatory meeting, they are involved with PTA, if they do everything they have to do. They are simple rules and if you can't follow them you're wasting the money.”

Another parent suggested using additional funds for “A little longer Program...for those who deserve it, not for everybody. But not for those who take advantage of the situation and are benefiting for them [and not the kids], I think they need to cut those individuals off.” When asked how case workers would know who to keep and who to cut off, the parent answered, “They're go-getters...somebody who's asking the questions, not just here because they have to be here. Ones who want to know more, they want a direction, have a positive attitude."

One more parent said of the current Program, “They are not enforcing things. They are not enforcing the progress of a person.”
Additional Theme: Parents are Worried about the End of the Program

Many parents expressed concern about the Program entering its last year.

“Even though it’s [the Program] supposed to be getting over, I’m not ready for it to be over because I’m not done with my schooling. I can barely afford to pay the bills, even though I have help.”

“I don’t know what’s going to happen when the Program ends and that’s the scary thought. I got everything I set out to do [custody of children, vehicle, SSI] but it’s not enough to live on and I can’t go to work...I can’t even afford a hotel room for a month.”

“I was blessed to come to that school and have my son go to that school and be able to gain stability at the same time. That doesn’t happen all the time. It was a time in my life where I really needed to be on my feet and get my life together and if it wasn’t for the Program I would still be struggling and homeless. So overall they help you a lot. And what they do really makes changes in people’s lives and as long as the person is still trying and is still making effort that they should still keep working with these families and not just kick them off the Program.”

Next Steps in the Program

The 2015-2016 school year will be challenging for all students, staff and parents because grades 3-5 will be at a different site outside of the neighborhood all year while McCarver undergoes a substantial renovation. The challenges will include transportation issues for THA families; keeping parents engaged with the school; and having some families with students on different campuses.

McCarver has put into place or enhanced activities to deal with these and other issues affecting the THA Program. These include:

- Transportation from McCarver to the new school site for families who cannot get their students there directly.
- Increased communication between its staff and the THA caseworkers and administrators.
- Weekly meetings that often include additional staff for information sharing (e.g., the McCarver attendance secretary attends the last meeting of each month and share related discipline and attendance data).
• Progress report sharing at key staff meetings throughout the school year.
• Updates and information about the THA Program are shared in the school newsletter.
• Improved communication with McCarver staff about the purpose of the THA and District data collection efforts.
• Improved (but still confidential) data sharing among school staff to help them how best to help families in need.
• The THA Program manager and the district liaison will continue to meet regularly to assure communication and to enhance ongoing program development.
• Caseworkers will continue to have an office space on site at McCarver and at the temporary location.

The THA McCarver Program will continue to identify and address individual family needs and encourage or require parents to take more steps toward economic self-sufficiency. For many, it will be a challenge for them to pay higher percentages of their rent as they stay in the Program. The expectations around rent structure have changed for many families so that they will pay a fixed percentage of their income for rent (similar to rules for Section 8 vouchers). THA has offloaded some administrative tasks from its caseworkers to its leasing and occupancy staff to give the caseworkers more time to work with parents directly. Also, the school no longer expects them to assist with discipline tasks.

All teachers have started applying the methods of inquiry-based learning processes taught and supported through the Primary Years International Baccalaureate Program. Teachers have received formal training in its theory and methods. They have shared their knowledge with the other teachers, all of whom are implementing the curricular changes required for certification. Teachers have developed their own classroom curricula within the guidelines of the IB Program. It will take another year to fully implement and test the curricula. In the fall of 2014 the school submitted its application for certification to the IB Program and it was approved May 19, 2015.

THA and the Tacoma Public School district have made two tentative decisions. First, they will turn the McCarver program from a pilot program to a regular offering of the school. Second, starting in 2016, they will extend it to other elementary schools in Tacoma with high student mobility rates because of family homelessness. For those purposes, they will spend 2015 reflecting on they learned from the pilot program to adjust the program model appropriately.

CONCLUSIONS
The THA Special Housing Program at McCarver has greatly improved housing and financial stability for participating families. The provision of housing support has increased housing stability and “solved a big problem” for many families—namely housing stability. This was viewed as a first and key input for improving student educational outcomes, but Program designers and managers know other support was needed and provided it. Case management and other supportive services have resulted in educational achievements for many parents. Most families have increased their incomes. Case workers have supported parents in making good choices for themselves and their children and have helped solve specific problems for parents, such as getting connected to mental health counseling or managing the fees and processes for getting a driver’s license. Case workers have also worked with teachers, families and the school to solve specific issues related to schoolwork, behavior, or attendance.

Nevertheless, employment and income growth have not kept pace with rents—even with subsidized rents, much less with market rate rents. Rent burdens for them families continue to rise along with their expected rent payments (at 60% of rent for year four).

Most parents understand these challenges, and have enrolled in a total of education programs; and 26 have completed educational programs. It is likely that some parents (especially some of those with severe mental and/or physical health challenges or disabilities) will not be able to work or earn enough to meet their expected portions of rent payments and still have enough income left over for other needs. In order to succeed and become fully financially independent (i.e., be able to pay 100% of their rent at the end of year five), many parents will need to increase their employment and incomes.

Students in the Program have increased their school stability and helped lower the school's overall mobility rate (i.e., fewer exits and entries to the school). The Program’s stabilization of its cohort of students has a direct effect on overall McCarver stability. Stabilizing nearly 20% of the school population decreased the school’s mobility rate in the first year, even though the rate for non-program students rose. The rate for Program students has remained relatively low, and the rate for non-Program students fell in year two and then plateaued. The TPS overall K-5 mobility rate has been declining each year since 2010-2011. It was 71% that year and was 52% in 2014-2015. Identifying the reasons for changes in mobility rates is beyond the scope of this report. At McCarver they may include the increasing appeal of McCarver to other families due to the IB investment and other changes in the school. The further decline may also result from factors that have reduced mobility rates at other schools.
Median attendance has remained steady at 91%, higher than the 90% target for the Program students and about the same as for McCarver homeless students. But this is still lower than the rate for their peers in the school and across the District. Teachers perceive attendance as an ongoing problem. Parent motivation and living far from the school appear to be continuing negative influences on attendance rates.

In the Program’s first year, the recently rehoused students showed statistically significant gains in reading scores compared to their peers. Since then, their scores have tended to resemble their peers at McCarver and at peer schools. Generally they slightly out-perform homeless students. In math, the Program students show achievement scores below the other cohorts, which are low compared to the District average. Despite the implementation of additional supports like out-of-school-time programs and encouraging greater parent involvement with homework, the Program students appear to perform at levels similar to their peers at McCarver. This is still generally above the levels of students who remain homeless.

Among teachers at McCarver, there is a big gap between their expectations of the Special Housing Program and the reality they experience. Teachers support the goals of the Program and respect the THA caseworkers, but express frustration with poor parent involvement and ongoing signs of instability in students’ lives. Some teachers complain about a lack of communication with the Program and perceive that the Program is not holding parents accountable and/or is choosing families that are “impossible to succeed.” Program and school staff agree while there are some successful examples of communication and collaboration among caseworkers and teachers, when there is not consistent or regular communications potential benefits are not fully realized. Teachers’ overall wish is to have the parents get their children to school, consistently and on time, and they feel disappointed with the results so far.

The families in the Program are diverse in their needs and in their trajectories toward housing stability, improved financial situations, and school success. Some parents have significantly improved their financial situation, however given the situations of some of the families, complete financial independence for all cohort participants is not likely (nor should it be expected). The percentage of adults employed rose steadily from a low of 11% at Program entry to 48% this year; average income rose from $286 to $1,048. However, the median income has stayed steady at about $791, meaning that half of the households take in less than $791 a month. The majority of parents in the Program will not be able to afford their rent without continued support at the end of year five of the Program.
Parents appreciate the Program and acknowledge that it has given them a unique opportunity. However as one parent said, “A lot of people come from hurt situations,” and changing their situation defies easy solutions and smooth trajectories. Some families, even after four years of support from this Program, are still in “constant crisis.” Some adults in the Program have made significant education, employment and earned income gains. Other parents, have made little or no progress on education, job skills, employment or earned income citing disability, health, mental health issues and/or their children’s needs as barriers. Caseworkers add domestic violence and substance abuse to the list of barriers. (Though, as a caution against easy assumptions, caseworkers shared that at least one family that is earning income and on a path to financial sustainability also has a substance abuse problem.)

Adults in the Program report that the Program has positively impacted them in their role as parents, though outcomes for specific positive changes in school involvement vary. Some parents reported that others would see them as more responsible or stable since they have been a part of the McCarver Special Housing Program. Some parents reported that others would notice changes for their families such as less stress, decreased anger-levels among the parents and less uncertainty and moving around. Like other Program outcomes for parents, there is diversity in parents’ reported levels of school involvement at the end of year four. Some parents describe a close and much improved relationship with the school. Others report little or no school involvement, citing scheduling and transportation barriers. Staff shared that planning for and expectations of parental involvement were higher in the early years of the Program and were not a priority this past year.

THA and school staff acknowledge that the Program is not achieving all of the hoped-for outcomes, but strongly believe in the potential for this school/housing partnership. The experiences and results after four years of Program implementation raise important questions about the assumptions and theory of change that underpin Program activities and expected outcomes. Broadly, the Program is based on the belief that providing housing support and supportive services will, via a series of interim changes, improve children’s engagement with school and, ultimately, their academic success.

The unanticipated challenge for some families to find housing in the McCarver neighborhood raises important questions about the specific role housing support plays in improving attendance and other indicators of school engagement and success among students and parents. How important is proximity of housing to the school? Does that vary for families with different characteristics (e.g., car ownership; parent’s levels of education; employment; presence of a second
parent in the home)? With a relatively small sample size, finding statistically significant relationships among these variables is unlikely, but further research may still be warranted.

The Program has served McCarver in ways that extend its influence beyond the Program families. THA staff help other McCarver families and those in the neighborhood with no ties to the school find resources within THA and in other organizations. In some ways, they function as a satellite THA office. The staff also work to support the school by working with school staff and teachers to find help for students and families not in the Program. Some of the activities developed have served the general McCarver population as well. The re-energizing of the parent-teacher association in the first year is one example.

According to THA staff, instances where the progress by parents and children has been less than expected are influenced by severe and multiple hurdles. Staff were not able to recognize many of the parents’ challenges, chemical dependencies and psychological treatment needs until year three. They manifested in areas like needing to learn how to: clean and organize a home; interact with landlords and manage a lease agreement; identify and find support for mental and physical health needs; deal with legal and financial problems; interact appropriately and effectively with teachers; help their children learn; and develop job skills and find work to provide adequate income.

The design of the Program placed many responsibilities on the caseworkers stationed at McCarver. Now a THA Leasing and Occupancy Specialist is assisting families and freeing the McCarver-based THA staff to work more with the teachers and parents on other needs and goals. It appears that the Program over-estimated the basic skill levels and under-estimated the needs of families in the Program. THA has adjusted by identifying the common and individual needs of families and finding the resources that can help them overcome their barriers to success. Still, given the situations of some of the families, complete success for all cohort participants is not likely (nor should it be expected). When organizations engage in a complex pilot project like this, the learning along the way through formal and informal evaluation helps them make adjustments to help more people in the long run.

Families come into the Program with different characteristics and experience different trajectories toward stability. Caseworkers struggle to prioritize their efforts. Their work can range from resolving immediate housing, medical, mental health, or food crises to addressing school-related attendance or behavior issues to working on parenting education and parental involvement in school or pursuing employment goals. This diversity of needs and diversity of Program inputs raises key questions about what to prioritize among the outcomes and goals. Is improved school engagement and performance the highest, guiding priority? If so, how does that guide prioritization
for the caseworkers and differentiation of efforts with families with different strengths, barriers, and needs? Similarly, because families are so diverse in their strengths, barriers, and needs, should there be a different, or differentiated, definition of “success” for different families? Are there indeed conflicts between pursuing financial goals and pursuing parenting goals to support school success? If so, what should guide Program efforts?

McCarver Special Housing Program staff and school staff wish to highlight that the Program is a responsive program, using the evaluation and other feedback to adapt and improve the Program. Also, it should be reviewed in the light of its commitment to helping any family, regardless of need or situation. It did not set any entry requirements other than a stated commitment by parents to try to improve the situations and schooling for their children. Parents acknowledge that the Program is not achieving all of the hoped-for outcomes, but strongly believe in the potential for this school/housing partnership. Parents are appreciative of the opportunity they have had with this Program. One parent said, “I knew that I only had this help for a certain amount of time and this was like my first ever chance…. Once I got into school I loved it so much. I liked being an example for my kids.” She is working and going to school, however, like most parents in the Program, she does not feel able to sustain stability for her family once the Program ends. Undoubtedly, the Program has helped, but it is not enough for this family. Overall, we can similarly conclude that the Program is working to some degree to improve the lives of all participants; it has allowed a few families to succeed in obtaining full financial independence and improved student successes; but much more is needed to break the cycles of dependency and deficient school engagement for others to succeed.

Figure 6 shows some summary measures for the Program benchmarked against some of the goals set by THA. Data are reported for all years through August 31, 2015. The figures show that the Program is exceeding expectations in some areas (green bars) but not succeeding in other areas (red bars). Where no goals were set or were the results are in transition, the bars are yellow.
## Figure 6 | Progress toward Tacoma Housing Authority Agency Goals through August 31, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Accomplishment</th>
<th>Four-Year Goal</th>
<th>Four-Year Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families participating in the Program (figures are for the end of each Program year (August 31) as a percent of goal of 50)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled Program students as a percentage of McCarver enrollment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families able to pay expected portion of their rent (60% in 2015) at end of Program year and still be paying less than 50% of their income for rent</td>
<td>All (100%)</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar chart" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families able to pay subsidized rent (60% in 2015) and still have rent be less than 30% of their monthly income at Program year end</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bar chart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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72 Percentages are based on numbers of families still enrolled in August of each year.

73 Enrollment was 49 in year one with 46 remaining in August 2012 (end of Program year); 50 at the beginning of year two with 41 remaining in August 2013; 39 in year three with 37 in August 2014; 37 in year four with 33 in August 2015.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Accomplishment</th>
<th>Four-Year Goal</th>
<th>Four-Year Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of families able to pay entire rent and still have rent be less than 30% of their monthly income at Program year end</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of adults who have completed education programs(^{74})</td>
<td>20</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average earned household monthly income among working adults</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average total household monthly income</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
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</table>

\(^{74}\) For 2014, includes adults who have exited the Program.
## Targeted Accomplishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Accomplishment</th>
<th>Four-Year Goal</th>
<th>Four-Year Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobility rate of THA Program students at McCarver</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility rate of non-Program students at McCarver</td>
<td>TPS Avg. for 2014-2015 was 52%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility rate of all students at McCarver</td>
<td>TPS Avg. for 2014-2015 was 52%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average school attendance rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Targeted Accomplishment | Four-Year Goal | Four-Year Results
--- | --- | ---
State reading exam\(^{75}\) (% at benchmark) | +15 pts. /year | ![Graph showing state reading exam results from 2012 to 2015](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

State math exam\(^{76}\) (% at benchmark) | +15 pts. /year | ![Graph showing state math exam results from 2012 to 2015](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**GEO Education & Research’s Recommendations**

THA staff, McCarver teachers and staff, TPS officials, and community partners have offered a variety of suggestions for improving the Program. Some of these were mentioned in the analysis above. Geo has reviewed these and offers its recommendations below.

**Refine the Program’s Theory of Change.**

Clarify the Program’s theory about the relationship between housing, financial stability and school engagement and academic progress for children. For example, what are the beliefs and assumptions around the role of housing proximity and school engagement? These may or may not be the same role for all families, depending upon their health, transportation, work, and other characteristics. Is housing proximity an important element of success in the program? If a family does not live close

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\(^{75}\) New state tests make results after 2014 not comparable.

\(^{76}\) New state tests make results after 2014 not comparable.
to the school, what, if anything, needs to be different about their services or the expectations for that family?

Clarify beliefs and assumptions about how Program case work and other services offered in addition to housing support school success; the role that expected changes in parenting, parents’ school involvement, and parents’ personal, educational, and employment goals play in school success; and the relationship of these efforts with other expected Program outcomes, such as improved financial situation. Be clear about the unique strengths and the natural limitations of the THA-McCarver partnership. Be equally clear and knowledgeable about families’ strengths and limitations.

Clarify Program assumptions and expectations of “success” in the areas of attendance and academic achievement. (See below for details.) Clarify Program assumptions and expectations of “success” for parents’ education, work and financial stability goals. The current model has minimal or no screening to select families most likely to benefit from the Program and is therefore engaging with some families with multiple challenging characteristics. For some families, stability may not include significant earned income. Allow for differentiation of expectations or more realistic expectations of “success” given these challenges. For example, could finding a stable, subsidized housing situation be “success” for some families?

Explore the relationship between goals of financial independence – as communicated explicitly or implicitly by rent structure and the Program deadline – and near-term stability and school success, both in the provision of services and in expectations of parents. Is it possible to identify what families need most and first or should families be expected to work on multiple fronts simultaneously? Different families may have different needs, different trajectories and different expectations of “success.” For example can families achieve meaningful changes in their children’s attendance, school engagement and academic performance, even if they are not necessarily making progress on their financial goals? What guides case managers as they prioritize their efforts with and among families?

**Clarify and strengthen school-related Program elements.**

Design regular, pro-active communications with teachers, based on articulated assumptions about what kinds of interactions support children’s success. Explore how the Program can build upon the individual cases of good partnership between THA staff, school staff, and teachers.

Keep the focus on educational success in other ways:
• Continue to make daily attendance and prompt arrival high priorities, and reduce perceived and actual barriers to it. Track them frequently and seek assurances from parents that they will make on-time attendance a high priority. Build upon the positive experience collaborating with the school attendance staff to monitor and communicate about attendance.

• Find resources to help students with reading and math so that more will be able to meet state standards in grades 3 – 5 (especially when parents may lack the knowledge, skills or capabilities to assist with learning at home).
  • Tutoring will likely be necessary to help students reach even peer levels.
  • Develop cooperative learning activities within a more engaged community of peer students and parents in the Program (see item twelve below).
  • Develop mentorship opportunities for the students. These could address social or academic needs.

• Within the bounds of confidentiality, keep teachers informed about parents’ needs, issues and/or successes that might impact students.

• Continue weekly school meetings between THA and McCarver staff to review needs and progress of students.

• Have caseworkers participate in some teacher meetings at McCarver.

Adjust evaluation and data analysis to accommodate different trajectories for different parents and the developmental nature of the Program.

Explore child outcome improvements in relationship to other family characteristics and progress on goals. If, as recommended above, the Program makes changes to expectations of success, use the evaluation to test those theories. Consider more frequent collection, summarization, review and reflection of interim outcome data, particularly for child changes, because the standardized test data may not be sensitive enough to capture meaningful changes that support longer-term success nor do they provide timely data to guide the school and the Program’s efforts with children and families.

Build on examples of Program and school staff making the McCarver Special Housing Program a learning and “responsive” program. (Staff shared examples such as reviewing attendance data weekly with staff and Program staff to quickly identify and begin to resolve problems. In another example, in the summer of 2015 the Program adjusted the rent scale policy, recognizing that most families would not be able to afford the increased rent and would likely lose their housing this year
without some kind of change.) Explore using a developmental evaluation\textsuperscript{77} approach to learn about refine Program elements – especially any new Program elements in 2015 and beyond.

Provide a protocol and incentives for exited parents to report on their situations. Using District data, longitudinal analysis of students’ educational outcomes could be possible.

\textit{Initiate an online, centralized database for the ongoing collection, storage, analysis, and use of relevant data.}

This will be useful for both monitoring and evaluation efforts. The data that this report uses came from many sources collected on many different time frames by different organizations. This annual snapshot of the Program is important, but such a system would make it possible to more easily track and use data more frequently. The cost could be offset by the decreased need for intensive research efforts every year. It could also be a platform for monitoring and evaluation of other programs implemented by THA and allow comparisons across programs on certain variables. This will allow THA and its partners to more easily test program designs. THA’s good relationships with TPS and other community partners would make data sharing easier and it can be secure. Geo has developed many systems like these.

\textit{Explore additional community or governmental partnerships to support families in their particular challenges.}

Caseworkers, parents, and teachers describe parents that struggle with mental health, health, substance abuse, and domestic violence issues. Are there particular community partnerships, incentives, or expectations/agreements that can provide parents with the resources and support to overcome these challenges?

\textsuperscript{77} Developmental evaluation is an approach to understanding the activities of a program operating in dynamic, novel environments with complex interactions. It focuses on innovation and strategic learning rather than standard outcomes and is as much a way of thinking about programs-in-context and the feedback they produce. (Source: http://censemaking.com/2011/11/19/what-is-development-al-evaluation)
Encourage parent interactions and engagement.

Explore the Program’s expectations of parents and the concept of “enforcement.” What are the expectations of families that are essential to their ability to experience that benefits that the Program offers them? Should there be different expectations for different families, based on their needs and circumstances? What policies best support families and children, particularly with regard to school involvement? How will policies be communicated and enforced?

Determine what kinds of and amounts of parenting education and parental involvement will support school success and engage in activities to produce those parenting outcomes and parental involvement in school. Explore community partnerships to build upon and expand past parent school involvement and parenting education efforts. Clarify expectations (differentiated as necessary) for parent involvement and increase monitoring and evaluation of parent involvement.

Consider efforts to develop more interactions and mutual support among families in the Program. The parents and children had opportunities to meet and interact in the parenting classes and some other events but these were few and far between. Additional ongoing activities, parenting classes and other events can support the adults in their roles as parents and provide them with additional social support. Additional parenting education could include helping parents identify their own and their children’s physical, dental, mental health, and substance use needs and find assistance as needed and help them with positive discipline, expectations of children, family management as children grow older, parent coaching, and coaching for school involvement.

Encourage some parents who are less engaged to become more engaged with teachers in order to understand their children’s needs and to become more active in helping them learn. Teachers and parents should not rely on the caseworkers to be the bridges for communications. Instead they should be the coaches to help both parents and teachers interact more directly and more effectively.

If it is determined that proximity is an important part of the Program, help parents move into the McCarver area so they can use school buses and visit the school more often. Identify the barriers and ways to overcome them. Perhaps other incentives could be offered.


**Emphasize Collaboration even more.**

In general, the Program has progressed in its implementation to be more collaborative and to address more issues facing families in more comprehensive ways. But there are still additional actions that might improve Program outcomes for this cohort and for future cohorts. The Program (in both development and implementation phases) moved from needs assessment to improved communication between THA and TPS to cooperation in serving homeless families to collaboration in developing the Program and recruiting other partners and co-managing the Program. The next step that could impact outcomes might be to focus on building a greater sense of community in several overlapping realms—among families; among Program families and McCarver (including all families and staff); and among McCarver, the neighborhood and THA and City representatives. The outcome of these efforts (some of which are outlined below) would be a greater sense of identity with the Program, with McCarver and with the neighborhood that would encourage families to want to stay in the neighborhood and to maintain their enrollment at McCarver. The City and the school have taken this approach in the past (e.g., in the development of the McCarver playground; in the Hilltop crime reduction and revitalization efforts). If these (and the other Program efforts underway and already reducing mobility) are successful, they would impact all McCarver students and families, landlords, other neighborhood residents, school staff, and the natural and built environments of the neighborhood in many ways.

Making the McCarver neighborhood a more attractive and affordable place for McCarver families to live is a bigger project. This would need to be a large community development effort involving many stakeholders and entities. Some specific ideas are offered below.

**Work to decrease student and family mobility even further.**

- Actively encourage more families—not just Program families and especially those exiting homelessness—to settle in the neighborhood. This would reduce some incentives for them to move and enroll their children in different schools.
- Find and inventory affordable housing in the McCarver neighborhood and share the options with parents at McCarver.
- Encourage landlords to give preference to families with students at McCarver. Perhaps some incentives could be developed (at least for them to rent to Program families).
- Collaborate with the City and other community partners to improve the infrastructure and housing stock in the neighborhood. For example, offer low interest loans to landlords who agree to improve sub-standard housing, keep rents affordable, and give preference to McCarver families as renters. If this is coupled with infrastructure
improvements (e.g., sidewalks, trees, playgrounds) it would improve the attractiveness of the neighborhood and the values of the housing properties.

- For some neighborhood improvement projects (e.g., planning and implementing tree plantings, mural projects, and playground developments) the McCarver community (teachers, staff, parents, students, THA staff, landlords and their tenants) could help directly, thereby increasing their senses of ownership and attachment to the neighborhood.

- Provide other THA assistance to non-Program families at McCarver in ways that will encourage them to stay in the neighborhood.

- Identify students who moved away from McCarver and then returned. They might be more likely to move again (this could be analyzed). If so, contact their parents to see why they moved, why they moved back, and what factors might encourage them to stay longer or to keep their students at McCarver even if they move.

- Collaborate with programs that work directly with homeless families to find ways to encourage agencies and the families they serve to identify the families’ preferences among neighborhoods in which they can afford to live. Then help these families settle in their preferred neighborhoods when possible. If this is successful, the families may be less likely to move again later. This will have a bigger impact and be less likely to disrupt current school placements when done in the summer.

**Enhance case management efforts.**

Continue to use THA staff and community resource programs to assist parents with landlord and occupancy issues and the development of basic household management skills (e.g., cleaning, financial budgeting, time management) in order to allow THA caseworkers to spend more time helping families engage in problem solving around educational support for their children, school interactions, and finding community resources to help with other, family-specific needs. Many parents have multiple significant barriers to overcome before they can find economic and residential stability and/or support their children in school.

A program like this can take several tracks in working with high need families (e.g., screen families to place those unlikely to succeed in other programs that are more suited to their needs; find the resources/alternatives to keep them in the program but with more support and maybe even longer-term housing assistance). Since many of the barriers were not evident until families had been in the Program for many months, protocols and alternatives may be needed to deal with expected and unexpected issues. Build a program structure to support caseworkers in prioritizing their efforts to reduce the risk of high needs families monopolizing caseworkers’ time.
Implement a tracking of the barriers as suggested but not adopted in year one. It would expect caseworkers (with assistance from teachers, parents, and other THA staff) to identify, rate, and re-rate barriers such as health issues; economic issues; legal issues; and reading abilities of parents. With this knowledge and focus, it would be easier to find the assistance needed to overcome each barrier or to see how they interact. One could then see if overcoming particular barriers (e.g., teaching literate parents how to assist their children in reading and helping them find the time to do it) leads to academic success (e.g., improved reading scores)

Develop clearer understandings about the roles of caseworkers, teachers, other school staff, parents and students and revisit them periodically to make sure that the duties of each are fulfilled or revised as necessary
Appendix A – McCarver Special Housing Community Partners
McCarver Special Housing Community Partners

Answers Counseling
Associated Ministries
Bates Technical College
Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound
Broadway Center for Performing Arts
Catholic Community Services
Children’s Home Society
Clover Park Technical College
Community Health Care
Comprehensive Life Resources
Crystal Judson Family Justice Center
Evergreen State College
Hope Sparks
KBTC Public Television
McCarver Family Support Center
MCD – Making a Difference in Community
North West Furniture Bank
Northwest Justice Project
Peace Community Center
Pierce College
Pierce County Library
Pierce County YMCA
Pierce County YWCA
Readiness to Learn
Social Security Administrations- Plan to Work Program
South Sound Outreach
Tacoma Community College
Tacoma Community House
Tacoma Goodwill
Tacoma Pierce County Health Department
Tacoma Public Schools
Tacoma Public Utilities
University of Washington Tacoma
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Washington Women’s Employment and Education
Workforce Central