



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## Tacoma Public Schools

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**TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY'S EDUCATION PROJECT at McCARVER ELEMENTARY SHOWS PROGRESS, ATTRACTS LOCAL and NATIONAL ATTENTION**

**TACOMA LEADS STATE IN COLLEGE BOUND SCHOLARSHIP ENROLLMENT, AGAIN**

“We appreciate the partnership with the Tacoma Housing Authority and the important work being done with the McCarver students and their families. What we’re confirming is what we’ve always suspected – that school is more difficult for kids from families forced to move often due to economic and other life circumstances. Not every school can teach exactly the same things at the same time on every subject. So bouncing around from school to school with breaks in between means some kids don’t get that solid foundation of learning concepts that build on each other. For these kids in the Housing Authority program at McCarver, the stability they’re experiencing could mean they will experience huge academic successes that otherwise might pass them by.”

- Carla Santorno  
Superintendent, Tacoma Public Schools (TPS)

“THA is learning that a public housing authority, in how it uses its housing resources, can help children succeed in school and help schools that serve its communities.”

- Michael Mirra  
Executive Director, Tacoma Housing Authority (THA)

### NEWS UPDATES

- Students whose families enrolled in an innovative THA program aimed at stabilizing homeless families and keeping students enrolled in their elementary school showed more than three times the gains in reading test scores over key comparison groups, along with greatly increased housing stability, according to a newly released report by GEO Education & Research. The data from the first year of this five-year program offer preliminary support for the proposition the program seeks to test: that stabilizing a family’s home life and keeping children continuously enrolled in the same school can boost academic achievement.
- The City of Tacoma and THA lead the state in enrollment of students in the College Bound Scholarship Program, again.

## SOME DETAILS

### **McCarver Elementary School Special Housing Project**

THA and TPS have received the third-party evaluation report on the first year of the McCarver Elementary School Special Housing Project. A copy is attached. This innovative collaboration between THA and the TPS, and many community partners, seeks to stabilize the McCarver student population and improve school outcomes. McCarver serves the Hilltop neighborhood. Its student population is very low-income. It has the most homeless children of schools in its region. As a consequence, the student annual turnover rate has ranged in the past few years from 107 percent to 179 percent, with destructive consequences on school performance.

In response, THA and TPS began a focused, innovative, highly coordinated and closely evaluated five-year project. Its first school year was 2011-2012. Funding for this effort comes from THA, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, Pierce County, and KBTC. Many partners contribute supportive services. The project's main elements include:

- *Housing and case management assistance*  
THA is providing rental assistance and intensive case management services to 50 formerly homeless families of McCarver students. These families have 70 McCarver students who comprise about 20 percent of the school. The assistance will last for up to five years. The rental assistance starts high and tapers down to zero over the five years.
- *Commitment of Parents*  
Participating parents must commit to do the following:
  - ~ keep their children enrolled at McCarver;
  - ~ participate actively in the school and in their children's education;
  - ~ invest in their own education and employment prospects, with the help of an array of social service partners.
- *Investment by TPS and the McCarver Faculty and Staff*  
TPS and the McCarver staff and faculty have been a full partner in this project. Most significantly, they have committed the substantial investment of money and training to turn McCarver into a Primary Years International Baccalaureate School.
- *Evaluation*  
Third-party evaluations will assess the project's outcomes yearly for five years.

While data for one year is preliminary, important indicators are promising. For example:

- program students made substantial progress in reading (22 percent gain overall; 29.2 percent for grades K-2, which is more than three times the gain of students in similar schools and cohorts);
- the turnover rate for the school declined from 107 percent in the year before the program to 96.6 percent for the program's first year; the turnover rate among program students was 4.5 percent, while the mobility rate for the rest of the student population was 114 percent.

THA and TPS have over 40 community partners in the McCarver Project including the following:

Associated Ministries	Mercy Housing
Bates Technical College	Peace Community Center
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Pierce County Dept. of Community Connections
Broadway Center for the Performing Arts	Salvation Army Family Shelter
Building Changes	Tacoma 360
Children’s Museum of Tacoma	Tacoma Community House
Comprehensive Life Resources	Tacoma Goodwill
Dept. of Social and Health Services	Tacoma Rescue Mission
KBTC	UW-Tacoma Dept. of Urban Studies
McCarver Moms	YWCA Women’s Support Shelter
Metro Parks	

### College Bound Scholarship Enrollment Effort: City of Tacoma Leads Again

Once again, the City of Tacoma leads the state in enrolling students into the state’s College Bound Scholarship Program (CBSP). In the 2011-2012 school year, approximately 100 percent of Tacoma’s eighth graders enrolled. In contrast, 77 percent of eighth graders state-wide signed up:

Students Enrolled in the Washington State College Bound Scholarship Program by the End of Eighth Grade*				
	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Washington State	55%	68%	75%	77%
Tacoma Public Schools	77%	90%	Approx. 100%	Approx. 100%
THA	83%	91%	Approx. 100%	Approx. 100%

*\*All numbers are estimates. Data as of 9/10/2012.*

Tacoma’s success arises from a dedicated effort spearheaded by TPS in partnership with the Tacoma College Support Network which includes, among 40 partners, the Washington Student Achievement Council, the College Success Foundation, Metropolitan Development Council, Tacoma Community College and THA. A report on THA’s enrollment efforts is attached.

The CBSP is a valuable promise the legislature makes to low-income students: if an eligible student graduates from high school, with at least a 2.0 GPA, stays out of serious trouble and gets into a post-secondary school, then the state will make tuition financially affordable. Yet, the student and his or her parent or guardian must sign up by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. To learn more, see the web site for the [Washington Student Achievement Council](#).

### EYES ON TACOMA

THA’s educational activity has attracted some notable local and national attention:

- *Tacoma-Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium’s 2012 Award for Innovation*  
On October 25<sup>th</sup>, the Tacoma-Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium awarded THA its 2012 Award for Innovation. The Consortium cited THA’s McCarver School Project.
- *McCarver Elementary School Conference: October 9, 2012*  
On October 9<sup>th</sup>, THA and TPS hosted a day of discussion among visitors from around the nation. The discussion addressed two questions: why and how should a housing authority be

interested in education; why and how should a school district collaborate with a housing authority. THA and TPS hosted officials from the housing authorities and school districts of Atlanta, Fresno, Akron, Portland, Seattle and King County. Representatives also attended from HUD, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, Pierce County, KBTC, Seattle University, GEO Education and Research, and Organizational Research Services.

- *The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness*  
The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness asked THA to address its September 12, 2012 meeting in Washington, D.C.. The council requested a presentation about THA's initiatives to serve homeless families, including its McCarver Project.
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## **About Tacoma Housing Authority and its Education Project**

Established in 1940, Tacoma Housing Authority engages in a wide range of efforts to help its City meet the growing need for affordable housing. THA develops and manages real estate. It provides rental housing. In partnership with thousands of private landlords, it helps families pay the rent in the private rental market. It delivers supportive services to help families succeed as “tenants, parents, students and wage earners who can live without assistance.” It helps them purchase their first home. THA seeks to do its work in ways that help neighborhoods be attractive places to “live, work, attend school, shop and play”, and that help its city be “safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just.” For more information about THA, go to [www.tacomahousing.org](http://www.tacomahousing.org).

The THA Education Project is a collaboration with the Tacoma School District (TPS). This project seeks to find out whether and how a housing authority can use its housing resources in ways that promote two outcomes:

- School success among the children THA houses;
- Success of the schools that serve THA's properties.

THA is interested in education for three reasons. **First**, THA's mission is to help the families it serves prosper. It wants their time with THA to be transforming in that way, and temporary. Education is an important part of this transformation. **Second**, THA is a real estate and community developer. The social and financial success of its developments depends on successful schools. **Third**, the school district needs help. The education of Tacoma's children is a community responsibility. THA is interested to know how it can help. A summary description of the Education Project is attached.