

NINTH GRADE ACHIEVEMENT

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Great iDEA: A strong start for freshman

Researchers at University of Chicago analyzed years of surveys, tests, grades, and attendance records to determine what factors most significantly impact high-school graduation rates. One finding: freshman year attendance and grades.

One freshman class is fortunate that Tacoma's newest specialized school, iDEA, opened its doors in September 2016. Modeled after successful specialized high-school predecessors SOTA (School of the Arts) and SAMI (Science and Math Institute), iDEA (Industrial Design, Engineering, and Art) is a high school focused on industrial design, engineering, and art that offers project-based learning and internship opportunities.

Prospective students to these specialized schools submit applications during eighth grade to be placed in a lottery for admission. The application process is one indicator that students are interested in engaging with the school's content, and thus may be more inclined to attend classes and apply themselves to coursework.



DIG DEEPER: To see a multi-year spread for ninth grade achievement, visit our website dashboard at GraduateTacoma.org/Data.

KEY FINDINGS

Ninth Graders on the Rebound

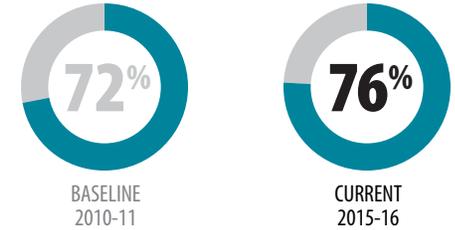
In the past two years, Tacoma's ninth graders have seen significant gains in achievement across the board. Bouncing back from a 2013-14 drop that fell to 58%, ninth graders are up four points from their 2010-11 baseline year.

In 2012-13, TPS began automatically enrolling qualified students in college-credit-eligible classes, requiring them to opt out, instead of opting in. It's interesting to note that the year after this policy was adopted, achievement rates have climbed relatively uniformly across the board. Two other factors that may explain some of the steep incline in achievement for students of color are Tacoma's Whole Child Initiative and its commitment to closing gaps with students of color, and TPS's reduction in suspensions and expulsions.

However, the gap persists for students living in poverty. This gap – at 17% last year – has widened slightly to 18%. Demographically, we see a mixed bag in terms of achievement gaps, with some students improving while Black and Native American students are not advancing at the same rate as their peers.

DATA DIVE

↑ NINTH GRADE ACHIEVEMENT PASSING ALL OR ALL BUT ONE CLASS

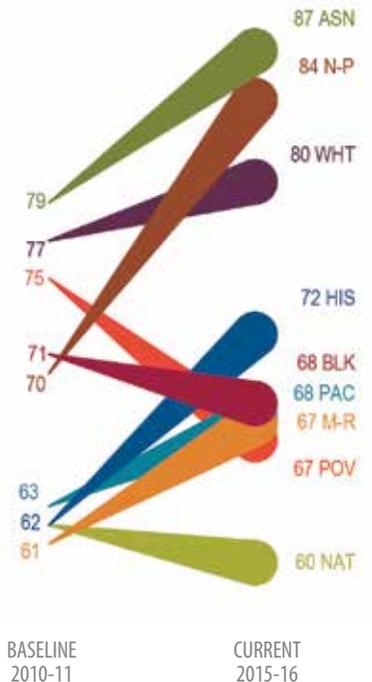
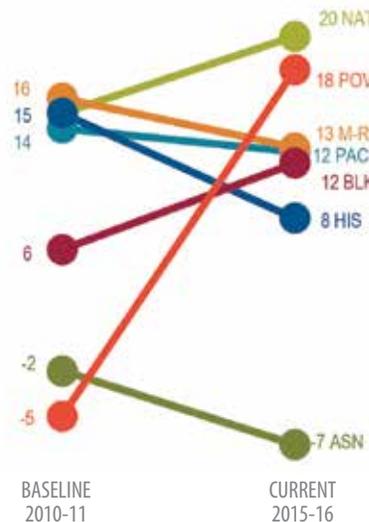


AIMING HIGHER GOAL: Increase the percentage of ninth graders who pass all or all but one of their classes.

% BY POVERTY, RACE, & ETHNICITY

PERSISTENT GAPS – NINTH GRADE ACHIEVEMENT

Gaps as % difference – Students of color: White students.
Poverty: Non-poverty.



Source: Tacoma Public School District