5-Year, Extended High School Graduation Rate
Community-Wide Adopted Goal

The high school diploma matters regardless of how long it takes. It is required to go on to college. We support all students, even if it takes a fifth year to earn the credits for graduation. That’s why, in 2012, the community adopted its goal to increase the 5-year extended graduation rate by 50%—from 58% in 2010 to 87% by 2020. The rate tracks students beginning in the ninth grade and includes both 4-year on-time and 5-year extended high school graduates. The rate is calculated consistently—apples to apples—across all school districts by the State of Washington.

5-Year, Extended High School Graduation Rate

Baseline Class of 2010: 58%
Class of 2013: 77%

Aiming Higher: Increase the 5-year extended high school graduation rate by 50%—to 87% by 2020.

More than Another Statistic

When her senior year rolled around, Jaclyn felt overwhelmed by life. On top of general struggles, she learned she was not going to have enough credits to walk with her class. She gave up on her education and moved to Seattle. At age 20, she realized she wanted more from life and returned to Tacoma. She enrolled in TPS’s Oakland High School where she completed her education and earned her diploma in 2014. Jaclyn is one of the many inspirational faces and stories behind the data in this report.

*2014 Data Source: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
College Enrollment

Today’s high school graduate earns an average of 30% more than students who drop out. Graduates who go on to earn a college degree, on average, earn more than twice as much as their peers who don’t complete high school.

When students continue to post-secondary education soon after high school, odds are they will be more successful. And the sooner they get started in college or technical school, the sooner they will graduate and be prepared for a good job.

AIMING HIGHER: Increase the percentage of TPS graduates who gain college admission, documented by the TPS process for showing a verified letter of acceptance to their next institution. Increase the percentage of TPS graduates who enroll in two- or four-year colleges, apprenticeship programs, or technical certification courses within one year of graduation.
Degree or Certificate

Acceptance to college is a big accomplishment, but completing can be a bigger challenge for some students, particularly in a community where many are first in their family to attend college. According to most recent U.S. Census data, just 25% of Tacomans have a Bachelor’s degree, compared to 31% statewide. By 2018, two-thirds of all jobs in Washington State will require a degree or career credential. More important still, completing a college or technical degree is closely linked to income level.

Aiming Higher: Increase the percentage of TPS high school graduates who complete a 2- or 4-year college degree, technical certificate or apprenticeship within six years of high school graduation.

Peer Support Gets Students Together Through College

Tacoma Community College, where roughly 30% of TPS graduates start their post-secondary education, is partnering with Act Six/Northwest Leadership Foundation and Degrees of Change to connect incoming students in cohorts that are supported from spring of senior year through the beginning of the sophomore year in college. This pilot builds on the success of the Act Six program that prepares students academically, socially and financially for the challenges of college, while creating a peer support system. That model will be adjusted to address the different challenges of attending a two-year college.

*Data Source: Educational Research and Data Center, Office of Financial Management
**Parent and Family Engagement**

Parents and family are a child’s first and most important teachers.

When parents and family members play an active role in their child’s education, students are more successful in school. Schools and community organizations will actively support parent involvement and help in their child’s success.

**AIMING HIGHER:** Increase the number of parents and guardians who are supported and engaged.

NOTE: A measure for this indicator will be set with the community this year. This indicator will be measured and tracked in the future.

**Stand University for Parents (Stand UP)**

Over the last 18 months, 85 parents, many with their children at their side, have graduated from Stand University for Parents (Stand UP), a 6-week parent leadership and engagement program designed to help parents lead their child to success from elementary school all the way to college. Stand for Children has conducted the course at six schools to date, with about half the programs conducted in Spanish. Parent graduates are now co-leading courses with other new parents.

Kids play a special part in the celebration when the parents graduate from Stand UP.
Social-Emotional Support
Each day of learning can be different for each student. Personal and behavioral issues create learning barriers, but prompt response and support can make a huge difference in helping students stay on track and in school. School staff and community partners play key roles in providing this support.

AIMING HIGHER: Increase in positive behavior and student engagement and decrease in behavioral challenges.
NOTE: A measure for this indicator will be set with the community. This indicator will be measured and tracked in the future.

Safe and Healthy Environment
When students feel safe, healthy, and supported, it’s easier to learn. Educators and community groups pay close attention to students’ physical and emotional health, including nutrition, exercise and positive personal support—helping foster more learning.

AIMING HIGHER: Increase safety and healthy, nurturing environments for students in the community.
NOTE: A measure for this indicator will be set with the community. This indicator will be measured and tracked in the future.

Tacoma Whole Child Initiative is a Game Changer
In partnership with the Center for Strong Schools at University of Washington Tacoma, Tacoma Whole Child Initiative (TWCI) is creating common expectations in every school and classroom across the district. By understanding exactly what behaviors are expected and receiving support for positive behavior, more students are engaged in learning and staff can identify and address specific needs. In the first cohort of 13 elementary schools, suspensions and expulsions dropped by 49 percent.

Greg Benner, Executive Director of the Center, points out that since students are spending more time on-task and in class, teachers are gaining up to 15 more minutes of teaching time per 45-minute class. And, because overall office referrals are decreasing, “students who need intensive support rise to the top and they don’t fall through the cracks,” said Truman Middle School Principal Justin Johnson

Community partners are also receiving training in the TWCI approach, providing students and families with consistent expectations throughout the day.

Metro Parks Tacoma promotes fitness and health through youth development programs.

Teens in Safe Streets Youth Leading Change program promote health and safety with their peers.
High Expectations

There’s an old saying, “If you aim high, that’s what you’ll hit.”

As a city—teachers, parents, students and community organizations—we need to set and hold high expectations for academic achievement among all students, regardless of income, ethnicity or background. Higher expectations will translate to more students taking rigorous courses, more students achieving at higher levels and, in turn, more students setting their sights on college or a technical degree.

The Academic Acceleration program sets the tone for our community’s culture of high expectations. All high school students meeting standard are now automatically enrolled in College Prep courses. Under the new system, students opt-out, rather than having to opt-in to take part in the more rigorous learning experience. Many students are able to earn college credits while in high school, helping not only to better prepare them for college but also potentially helping to reduce the cost of earning a degree.
Out-of-School & Summer Learning

Kids learn in many different ways outside the regular school day. After all, kids are in school less than half the days of the year and, at most, half their waking hours each day. Summer and after-school programs offer tremendous opportunity for the community to engage in preparing students for success, through activities that enhance learning, knowledge and personal development. Expanded learning experiences can provide relevant education in subjects where trend data shows students struggling to learn or retain information. To combat math deficits, sports camp can include time for calculating statistics along with critical thinking as players discuss and strategize defensive plays. How about an art class based on principals of geometry? Or zoo camp where getting to know more about a favorite animal suddenly gives relevance to biology or climate change? We just need to look at how we can do things differently to help overcome gaps in access, opportunity and achievement.

In addition to recreation activities, kids who dropped into Portland Avenue Community Center’s summer playground program read for 30 minutes each day.

Community Partners Align Resources to Help Reverse the “Summer Slide”

Our community’s new focus on summer learning yielded several new partnerships with community and partner organizations.

Boys & Girls Club collaborated with Manitou Park Elementary to offer a five-week reading and math intensive camp for students entering grades 2 and 3. Working with certified teachers each morning, participating students increased their reading by an average of 1.36 levels and math improved 21-23 percent. Research shows that engagement in summer learning heads off the “summer slide,” and prevents students from losing several months worth of learning between school years. Summer slide is a major contributor to the achievement gap as students impacted by poverty often don’t have the same access to books, summer camps and vacations that keep minds active. With a free club membership for the entire summer, kids also enjoyed a range of fitness and enrichment activities.
**STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

**Student Attendance**

Students need to be in school to learn and keep up with key academic skills and milestones. Everyone—students, parents, community members—can promote and support consistent school attendance.

AIMING HIGHER: Decrease the percentage of students who are chronically absent—missing 10% of the school year (18 days or more).

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE CHRONIC ABSENCE (18+ DAYS)**

- **Elementary School:** 15%
- **Middle School:** 27%
- **High School:** 47%

2013-14

Includes both excused and unexcused absences

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE IMPACTED BY POVERTY**

- **Poverty:** 56%
- **Non-Poverty:** 32%

*2013-14 Data Source: Tacoma Public Schools

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE RACE AND ETHNICITY**

- **Asian:** 56%
- **Black:** 54%
- **Hispanic:** 60%
- **Multi-Racial:** 61%
- **Native American:** 61%
- **Pacific Islander:** 41%

*2013-14 Data Source: Tacoma Public Schools

**“T-birds” Slash Tardies by 54%**

Mount Tahoma staff is committed to slashing tardies and increasing learning time for all students. Promoting attendance as part of “how to be a T-bird,” staff spent time in the hallways positively encouraging students to get to class on time, thanking those who arrived on time, and talking with students who still had trouble beating the bell. Tardies decreased by almost two-thirds from 5,970 in September 2012 to 2,162 in September 2013.

Students pass through Mt. Tahoma’s busy Commons before school.
Collective Community Impact

Influencing student progress across all indicators takes a community-wide effort.

Through the Graduate Tacoma! movement, networks of community organizations are collaborating to focus resources and target their efforts in these three key focus areas:

- Early Learning & Reading
- Out-of-School & Summer Learning
- Going to College

The following pages highlight some of the ways these networks have taken a collective impact approach to build and strengthen the Graduate Tacoma! movement over the past year.

Photos of community members with classmates’ portraits of seventh graders representing the class of 2020.
All Children Ready and Reading

Convocation to address two key indicators—Readiness for Kindergarten and Third Grade Reading—the early literacy action team aims to move the needle on both. One target is to increase the percentage of students demonstrating kindergarten readiness on the WaKIDS assessment from 48% in 2012-13 to 53% in 2016-17. Increasing the percentage of third grade students passing the state reading exam is equally important, but since the test will change this year, a target has not been set.

The team joined cities across the country in the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading (CGLR), committed to all children reading at grade level by third grade. The Campaign emphasizes the importance of early literacy activities that engage families and preschoolers, preparing children for success in K, and also fighting summer learning loss through reading-enriched programs over the summer vacation.

Building Connections for Kindergarten Readiness

More than 100 community and school educators strengthened their relationships through the 2014 Building Connections series, designed to help students and families prepare for successful transitions to kindergarten. “I have been teaching early childhood for 18 years and I’ve never seen this many people from different entities come together to bridge this gap,” observed one participant. Community child care providers gathered with elementary principals, kindergarten and preschool teachers to participate in one of five facilitated discussions on the importance of building children’s social emotional skills. A principal commented, “I feel closer to the child care teachers who pick up and drop off our students. I’ll take more time to talk with them.”

Focus on Parents, One Neighborhood at a Time

Early support by a child’s first teacher—their parent—is crucial to reading success. In 2015, the Network will focus on reaching families in different ways. Partners will work with the neighborhoods around Jennie Reed and Whitman Elementary schools. While each school has many assets, including skilled teachers and caring parents, a high percentage of students are impacted by poverty and earn low scores on the state reading test. Creating community support for literacy will include connecting parents with resources and with each other, engaging local businesses, making books plentifully available and recruiting reading volunteers to work with students during the school day.

Summer Reading

Coming together as a network helped our partners to boost reading in multiple ways. United Way took books to free-lunch sites at local parks. Children who dropped by for lunch chose a book and then read with a volunteer. For the first time, several school libraries opened up in July for weekly Ready! Set, Read-Tacoma story hours for preschoolers and their families. KBTC expanded its PBS Kids-themed outreach to a 3-week summer camp at Lister Elementary. “I was happy when I waked up this morning because I wanted to know what we are doing in Fetch today. It was fun yesterday and I know it will be even funner today,” commented Jasmine, a second grader. Kids like Jasmine received breakfast and lunch plus a day full of activities based on PBS Kids content that were designed to be fun, encouraging, engaging and interactive, as well as educational.

Attendance Counts

It’s easy for parents to think that missing a few days of kindergarten or first grade doesn’t matter. But research shows that children who miss 10% of school days or more, even in the earliest grades, are less likely to read by third grade. The Network is promoting better attendance through communications with parents, social media and school outreach.
Get Involved

- Become a reading tutor
- Read with children at a summer meal site through United Way
- Volunteer as a story-teller with Ready! Set, Read–Tacoma
- Help get books into children’s hands in neighborhoods impacted by poverty
- Contribute to local early learning opportunities

Check GraduateTacoma.org for updated opportunities
Expanding Learning To Summer And Out-Of-School Time

Learning out of school is different. The more relaxed atmosphere in youth programs allows learning to mix with play, gives more time for exploration and hands-on experimentation, and is supported by strong relationships with peers and adults. The long days of summer and their potential for time outdoors is prime time for learning. Understanding the pivotal role the “summer slide” plays in the achievement gap, partners in Graduate Tacoma’s Out-of-School & Summer Learning Network are focusing first on expanding summer opportunities, especially for students of color and those impacted by poverty. This focus continues in 2015.

Summer Learning Campaign Launched

A city-wide Summer Learning Tacoma campaign including a new website, billboards, yard signs, phone calls and flyers home in back-packs made families aware of the importance of summer learning and the range of activities, many free or low-cost, available to Tacoma students.

The Network’s target was to increase student participation by 25% by the summer of 2016. In 2013, 5,616 program slots at partner organizations were filled, which includes duplication because some students participated in more than one program. In 2014, 8,919 program slots were filled, a growth of 59% in just one year. With the prospect of better data becoming available, this year the Network will set a new goal based on the number of unduplicated summer participants with specific targets for students of color and students impacted by poverty.

Connecting Through Summer Learning Website

The 2014 launched website, SummerLearningTacoma.org, provided a one-stop shop to find opportunities. Thanks to a generous grant from Comcast, the Network developed a centralized website where parents could find more than 66 community partners and 220 programs—searchable to type of learning, by neighborhood location, by cost and scholarships. There were more than 26,000 searches made through the site. Look for an expanded site next summer.

Integrating Learning and Fun

As partners learned more about the summer slide they added reading and math elements to their programming. For example, the YMCA added daily reading time to their recreational day camps. Tacoma Urban League added twice weekly sessions on mathematical problem-solving to their Male Involvement Summer Program. Metro Parks added reading enrichment to the playground program at Portland Avenue Community Center.

Quality Youth Engagement

The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, in partnership with the Raikes Foundation, supports youth program partners in assessing and improving the quality of their programs. Using a research-proven approach, organizations assess how they engage youth and receive training to transform kids’ out-of-school experiences from good to great. Most of the summer learning partners have participated in the program and the Boys and Girls Clubs invited all to join a large training that introduced concepts and deepened their understanding.
COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK

OUT-OF-SCHOOL & SUMMER LEARNING

Get Involved

• Volunteer at summer day camps
• Contribute scholarship funds to local youth programs
• Host a summer intern through the City of Tacoma’s Jobs253 program

Check GraduateTacoma.org for updated opportunities

Through free events like Explore the Shore and Tiptoe through the Tidepools, Metro Parks Tacoma helped children learn about Puget Sound through fun activities for all ages.
Going to College: 4-Year, 2-Year or Technical
The Tacoma College Support Network (TCSN), Graduate Tacoma’s action team for post-secondary admission and enrollment, focuses on enrolling more students in a right-fit college or technical school each year, special emphasis on students of color and those impacted by poverty. The target is to enroll 70% of seniors by 2017, up from 59% in 2010. Each member organization works daily to inform and support students in their college pathway with the team’s aligned and collaborative projects enhancing their reach.

College Planning Packets
(Itambién en Español)
It’s your child’s senior year. Have you talked with about what happens after graduation? Is she going to college? Is 2- or 4-year a better option? How will you pay? When are applications due—and what’s the process for applying?

To help answer these questions, community partners in TCSN banded together to develop a College Planning Toolkit, sent to the home of every TPS senior in September. Chock full of tips and information, the packets offered a simple framework to help seniors and their families navigate the complex world of getting into and paying for college. All of the documents were translated into Spanish to help remove potential language barriers for non-English speaking parents.

College Bound Scholarship Support
The State’s College Bound Scholarship funds full college tuition for students impacted by poverty, and also seems to be serving as a high school graduation incentive. In 2014, 80% of students who had registered for the scholarship graduated, as compared with 62% of eligible students who had not registered in the seventh or eighth grade as required by the program. TCSN has actively supported enrolling students and Tacoma Public Schools is now a state leader in signing up 100% of eligible students. In April, the Network’s fifth College Bound Saturday event offered tailored information for each high school grade. This year, a new structured parent-track will be offered. 

Great Tacoma Personal Essay Days
A personal essay may be one of the most important parts of the college application. Dozens of trained community volunteers, organized by Write@253, spent two Saturdays helping more than 50 high school seniors find inspiration or fine tune their college application essays. The workshops, co-hosted by Foundation for Tacoma Students, Tacoma Public Library and Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound, helped students prepare for the busy college application season. As a participant commented, “This entire process can be overwhelming and I received great feedback and feel like I’m on the right path.”

“Sometimes it’s really hard to find the deeper meaning in our own daily experiences,” shared one volunteer. “We hoped we could help pull those unique stories out of the seniors and offer important one-on-one support.”

Discover U!
When did you first begin to dream about your college and career goals? On October 15th, through a partnership with TPS, each student from kindergarten through high school explored their dreams for the future or learned about college and career pathways to take them there. Following a pilot in 2013, educators got creative about engaging kids, ranging from preschoolers drawing a picture of their adult selves as scientists or firefighters to middle schoolers presenting a college possibility to classmates at a mock College Fair.
Increasing Financial Aid Applications

Getting accepted to college is the first step, but you have to develop a financial strategy to actually be able to attend. Graduate Tacoma! promoted financial aid workshops at high schools and local colleges through mailing and calls, making sure students and their parents knew when, where and how to get help filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other financial aid forms. Volunteers and experts from college financial aid offices assisted several hundred students and the percentage of Tacoma seniors who filed FAFSAs by June rose from 46% in 2013 to 50% in 2014.

Get Involved
- Volunteer as a mentor for a college-bound student
- Help students with college essays, applications or financial aid forms
- Fund a student’s dorm room and college supply needs
- Contribute to local scholarships and college support organizations

Check GraduateTacoma.org for updated opportunities
Community Partners

A Step Ahead
Act Six
AHBL
American Leadership Forum
Asia Pacific Cultural Center
Associated Ministries
Bamford Foundation
Bassetti Architects
Bates Early Childhood Education
Bates Technical College
BCE Engineers, Inc.
BCRA
Ben B. Cheney Foundation
Beresford
Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Blue Light Coalition
BLRB
Boeing
Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound
Broadway Center for Performing Arts
Bruce Dees & Associates
Center for Strong Schools
Centro Latino
Childcare Aware of Tacoma-Pierce County
Children's Museum of Tacoma
City of Tacoma
City of Tacoma, Community and Economic Development
Clear Channel Outdoor
College Success Foundation
Columbia Bank
Comcast
Communities in Schools
Comprehensive Life Services
Coughlin Porter Lundeen
Degrees of Change
Dimmer Family Foundation
DLR Group
Economic Development Board
El Camino
Emerald Outdoor Advertising
Evergreen State College
Executive Council for a Greater Tacoma
Fab 5
Fairfax Behavioral Health
First 5 Fundamentals
Florence Kilworth Foundation
Foster Enterprises
Fred Meyer
Gary E. Milgard Family Foundation
Girl Scouts of Western Washington
Goodwill of the Olympics & Rainier Region
Gordon Thomas Honeywell, LLP
Greater Tacoma Community Foundation
Greene Gasaway
Harborstone Credit Union
Hemisphere Design & Marketing
Hewlett Packard
Hilltop Artists
Hope Sparks
Hotel Murano
Hutteball & Oremus Architecture
JayRay Ads + PR
J. Johnson Stone Pegano
Jostens
Junion Achievement of Greater Puget Sound
Kampbell & Johnson, PLLC
KBTC Public Television
Key Bank
Key Bank Foundation
Kids at Hope
Korean Women's Association (KWA)
Korso Construction
Ladies First
Latino Education Alliance
League of Education Voters
Lifetouch
Lindquist Dental Clinic for Children
Mahlum Architects
Making a Difference (MDC)
Mayor's Task Force on Education
McGranahan Architects
Medina Foundation
MESA Math, Engineering Science Achievement
Metro Parks Tacoma
MicroK12
Microsoft
MultiCare
Multicultural Child & Family Hope Center
NAACP Tacoma
Neeley Construction
Northwest Leadership Foundation
NW Stage and Sound
Oasis Youth Center
Olive Crest
Pacific Lutheran University
Palmer Scholars
Parametrix
Peace Community Center
Pediatrics Northwest
Pierce College
Pierce County Association for the Education of Children (PCEYC)
Pierce County Building and Trades Council
Pierce County Community Connections
Pierce County Council
Pierce County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium
Port of Tacoma
Pride Foundation Tacoma
Puget Sound Educational Service District
Puyallup Tribe
Rainier Foundation
Rainier Connect
REACH Center
Reach Out and Read
Rotary Club of Tacoma #8
Russell Family Foundation
Safe Streets Campaign
Saxton Bradley, Inc.
Schools Out Washington
Sequim Foundation
Stand for Children
State Farm
Tacoma Art Museum
Tacoma City Council
Tacoma Community College
Tacoma Community House
Tacoma Council Parent Teacher Association PTA
Tacoma Education Association
Tacoma Goodwill
Tacoma Housing Authority
Tacoma Learning Center
Tacoma Lutheran Retirement Community
Tacoma Math Engineering Science Association (MESA)
Tacoma Neighborhood Councils
Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Tacoma Principal's Association
Tacoma Public Library
Tacoma Public Schools
Tacoma Rainiers
Tacoma School Board
Tacoma Urban League
TAPCO Credit Union
TCF Architecture
Team Child
The Black Collective
The News Tribune
Think Through Math
Trinity Learning Center
United Way of Pierce County
University of Puget Sound Access Programs
University of Puget Sound Race & Pedagogy Initiative
US Bank
UW Tacoma Center for Strong Schools
UW Tacoma Math Science Leadership
UW Tacoma School of Education
Vibrant Schools Tacoma Coalition
Washington College Access Network (WCAN)
Washington State Department of Early Learning
Washington Student Achievement Council
Wells Fargo
Woodworth Family Foundation
Workforce Central
World Vision
Write@253
YMCA
YWCA
Building and strengthening Tacoma’s community-wide movement to help every student achieve success from cradle to college and career.