

SPOTLIGHT

Strengthening Early Learning Ties

Since 2012, the Early Learning and Reading Network has eased children's transition into kindergarten through a shared professional development opportunity called Building Connections. Three times a year, this professional development training opportunity reaches childcare providers, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, principals, families, and/or any other professionals working with three- to five-year-olds in Tacoma. The purpose is to help direct-service providers to understand developmental stages, engage children, maintain developmental progress, and provide clear messaging for the annual WaKIDS Assessment administered each fall.

The program has benefited from increased input from preschool and childcare educators, according to TPS Director of Early Learning Tracye Ferguson. "Having a stronger community voice has brought more alignment with school readiness goals," she says. "A provider might have thought learning numbers was the most important thing, but through this program they learn social and emotional skills are actually more important."

The 2017 event launched TPS's Willard STEAM Early Learning Center and attracted 87 participants, including parents and guardians, who were invited for the first time, to focus with educators on how families can build readiness in their kids. Leading community partners included Child Care Resources and KBTC Public Television.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

KEY FINDINGS

Rates Remain Flat, Gaps Widen

WaKIDS (Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills) is an assessment of all entering kindergarteners who demonstrate the skills typical of entering kindergarteners in all six domains: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and math. We have not seen gains in the percent of children who are assessed as meeting all six domains, but our rate has remained steady, which is better than the volatility many school districts are experiencing. We are down 1.7 points from our new baseline* of 48%.

Since the WaKIDS assessment is widely agreed to be a very subjective measure, it is worth looking deeper into the data. The number at top right represents children who demonstrate the skills in all six domains that are typical of a child entering kindergarten. When we look at how kids are faring in four or more domains (*lower right*), those assessed to be meeting expectations increases to 74%. *View much more interactive data on this measure at GraduateTacoma.org/Data.*

Data-Driven Takeaways

- Students of Color and those living in poverty trail far behind their White and non-poverty peers. Gaps range from 12% (Multi-racial) to 30% and 40% (for students in poverty and Native American students).
- The high percentage of students not meeting the standard in math weights down the overall assessment.
- Grant, Whitman, Boze, and NE Tacoma Elementary Schools have made gains of as much as 58% over baseline.

GET INVOLVED!

- **Encourage** parents of birth to five-year-old children to download and use the VROOM app. Help promote daily brain-building activities.
- **Learn** about the developmental domains and practice with three- to five-year-olds.
- **Promote** math concepts daily and help early learners count to 20 before they enter kindergarten.

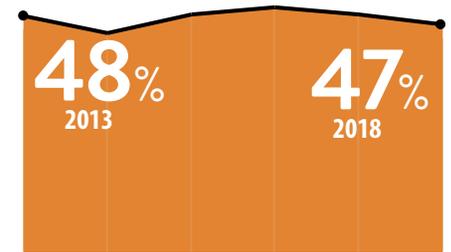
*We have moved from using TPS data for this indicator to Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). With this data, we will see more consistent data over time for the WaKIDS measurements. Finally, it will allow for comparative reporting against the state and other school districts.

Data Source: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

DATA TRENDS

BASELINE TO CURRENT

WaKIDS Assessment



AIMING HIGHER GOAL: Increase the percentage of incoming students who demonstrate the skills typical of a child entering kindergarten in all six developmental areas as measured by the WaKIDS Assessment.

BEYOND 6 OF 6 DOMAINS

