

SPOTLIGHT

Boosting Literacy One Haircut at a Time

Disparity calls for creativity. To address gaps in third-grade literacy for Black students, Graduate Tacoma's Early Learning and Reading Network (ELRN) got creative and asked who else is influential in the lives of young people. One answer? Barbers: Typically community leaders and mentors with strong, consistent connections to young boys – especially African American and Hispanic youth.

The Book to Barbershop program was formally initiated by ELRN two years ago as an extension of their Book to Home program in underperforming schools. The network was able to expand the program this year through a grant from the Children's Museum of Tacoma.



In January, several Tacoma barbers met with representatives from ELRN, TPS, Tacoma Children's Museum, YMCA, KBTC, Childcare Resources, and City of Tacoma over brunch to talk about how to get books into the hands of kids.

Each barber left brunch that day with a backpack full of books for their young patrons. What they gave in exchange was illuminating and invaluable: They passionately shared their own experiences and the need for better outreach and communication to families in the neighborhoods they serve.

NEXT STEPS: TPS kiosks in Hilltop barbershops with access to online grades, attendance, and resources for families, and continuing outreach and convening with barbers to provide new culturally relevant books and support as reading champions for their young clients.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL THIRD GRADE READING

KEY FINDINGS

Literacy Rates Impacted by Poverty, Black Students Falling Behind

Overall third-grade literacy rates are up over the 2014-15 baseline since the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test was introduced, but still less than half are meeting standard. More than a reading test, the SBAC is a measure of English Language Arts (ELA) competency. It requires students to use reasoning, word meaning comprehension and language use, the ability to identify and retain key details, and to explain, tell stories, and express opinions in writing. This measure is considered a strong indicator of future student success since reading and language literacy are foundational building blocks across all subjects.

Data-Driven Takeaways

- Poverty persists as an obstacle to literacy: There is a wide gap between the 63% of students not living in poverty who are meeting standard and the 35% of students living in poverty who are doing so. This 28-point gap has closed by only 3% in recent years.
- There is cause for concern about the literacy rates of Black third-graders for three reasons: Less than a quarter are reading on grade level; they've experienced a 3-point drop since the baseline year; and we see a full 35-point gap between Black and White students. *See left for steps Graduate Tacoma partners are taking to address this disparity.*
- Tacoma's third-grade literacy rates continue to lag behind the state by about seven points but we see that Tacoma's numbers are in line with other like districts throughout the state (Spokane and Franklin Pierce are also at 46%; Highline is at 38%).

GET INVOLVED!

- **Connect** students to our public libraries using their TPS IDs.
- **Read** to children and have them read to you.
- **Promote** healthy attendance. It matters. What can you do in your neighborhood, family, organizations to promote school attendance?

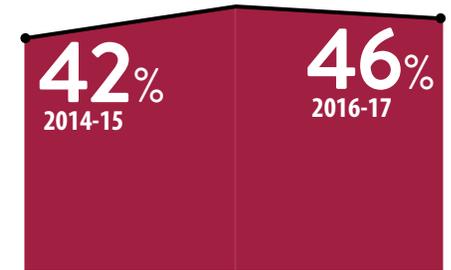
GAP CHANGE: Represents the ▲ increase or ▼ decrease in the achievement gap between 1) Students of Color and White students and 2) between students in poverty and those not in poverty, baseline to current.



DATA TRENDS

BASELINE TO CURRENT

Third Grade Literacy (SBAC)



AIMING HIGHER GOAL: Increase the percentage of third graders meeting the Washington state standardized test for third grade literacy, now the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).



DIG DEEPER:

Visit GraduateTacoma.org/Data to dig deeper into the data!

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT

