

SPOTLIGHT

Peace Keeps Hilltop Scholars on Track

Peace Community Center helps create a culture of high expectations for Tacoma students. “We can be part of the academic, character, and social-emotional development of our Scholars for up to 15 years of their lives,” explains Rosie Ayala, Director of Peace Hilltop Scholars High School and College and Career programs, “We’re hitting mile markers every year with them and coaching them along the way.”

As Hilltop Scholars prepare for post-secondary plans, Peace coaches facilitate discussions about a wide range of “real-world” topics. “Students can’t focus on exceeding at something,” explains Ayala, “if they don’t have foundational skills.”

Those discussions and skills equip students not only to get to college, but also to stay the course once they get there. Scholars in college receive monthly check-ins, regular care packages, and counseling regarding such things as financial aid, tenants’ rights, and how to conquer the many and varied barriers that can stand in the way of persistence.

“The imposter syndrome is a big one,” Ayala says. “Our students can feel like they don’t belong in college. It hits them that they have grown up in a bubble and they think their peers have a better sense of this new world. We talk them through it and help them find ways to change their perspective.”

Despite the challenges they face, 47% of Peace Hilltop Scholars have attained a post-secondary degree. It’s a long game with a big payoff, a childhood’s worth of lessons to learn, and high expectations to aim for along the way.



COMMUNITY INDICATORS

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

KEY FINDINGS

Students Rising to a New Bar

The proportion of juniors and seniors taking at least one academically rigorous course is up six points over last year and up 38 points over baseline. Hidden in the numbers are two encouraging points: First, if you raise the bar for students, they will rise to meet it. Also, students’ apparent level of enthusiasm for these classes didn’t surge and then wane after TPS instituted the policy in 2012-13 by which students are automatically enrolled in college-credit eligible classes and must opt out on their own. They’re staying in the classes and are doing well in them across all high schools.

Data-Driven Takeaways

- There have been 25+ point gains over baseline across every race and ethnicity and among students in poverty.
- The opportunity gap for students living in poverty is still about two times greater than it was at baseline (8% vs. 15%), but these kids have also seen gains, from 29% to 63%.
- By ethnicity, we see strong gains for Students of Color, but still not at the level of White students, resulting in a widening of the gap.
- The level of participation in rigorous classes at Oakland High, where such classes became available just two years ago, has jumped from 1% to 45%.



DIG DEEPER:

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

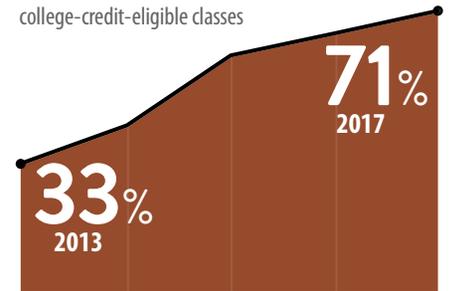
GAP CHANGE: Represents the ▲ increase or ▼ decrease in the achievement gap between 1) Students of Color and White students and 2) between students in poverty and those not in poverty, baseline to current.



DATA TRENDS

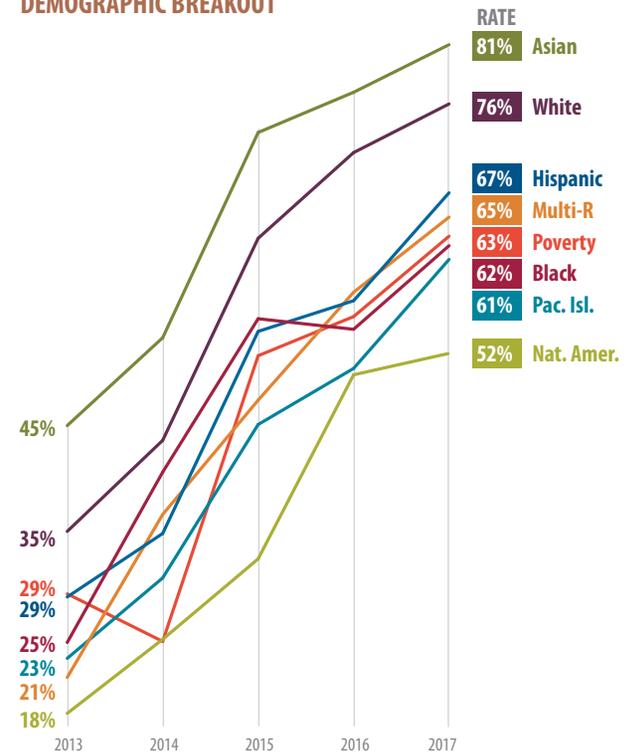
BASELINE TO CURRENT

11th and 12th graders enrolled in college-credit-eligible classes



AIMING HIGHER GOAL: Increase the percentage of 11th and 12th graders taking at least one advanced class eligible for college credit.

DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT



Data Source: TPS