

## PLAYING TO LEARN

“*Inclusive Play to Learn* is the Children’s Museum of Tacoma’s free drop-in kindergarten readiness program offered at 25 sites across Pierce County. Our sites extend as far west as Key Peninsula and out east to Bonney Lake. Our goal is to be within a 20-30 minute drive from any child in the county.

We take the program out to community centers, schools, or libraries. We come in with our toys and supplies, play and learn with families for 90 minutes a week and then pack up the van to move on to the next spot. We support caregivers and their kids, which range from birth to six years of age.

*Inclusive Play to Learn* was created 11 years ago after learning that a large portion of children in the area weren’t in any kind of licensed child care, but rather at home with neighbors or family members who probably didn’t have training in childhood development. By offering support and learning to a child’s adult caregiver, we are building the caregiver’s ability to support their child’s development in the future. Children benefit from intentional, quality learning experiences. It builds parenting skills that extend throughout the child’s growth as they enter school and move toward more independent learning.

The goal is getting children ready to learn by exploring independently and joining a learning community. If a child has a positive experience in learning while playing with others, it makes it easier to have a good experience learning in academics later.”



Charlene Balansay is the Program Manager at the Children’s Museum of Tacoma, which provides *Inclusive Play to Learn* in partnership with community organizations and institutions.

# ELEMENTARY SCHOOL READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

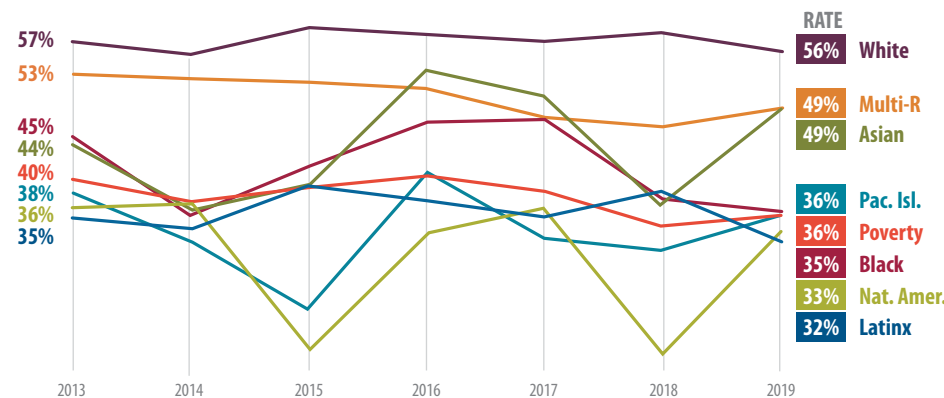
Each year, Washington teachers evaluate every incoming kindergartner’s skills in six domains: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and math. The assessment is known as the WaKIDS (Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills). Tacoma Public Schools was among the first districts to employ WaKIDS. Despite a longer record, however, the percentage of Tacoma kids ready in all domains has consistently hovered between 47 and 48 percent.

On multiple, fundamental fronts, the WaKIDS assessment is widely understood to be a subjective measure. Teachers are required to evaluate students at the start of the year with varying degrees of understanding of the student’s homelife or access to quality learning prior to kindergarten. For most schools, teachers are limited to an informal meet and greet that takes place before the first day of class with students and families. These meetings are often not enough for teachers to best understand the diverse pool of students entering their classroom.

A deeper look into other demographically-similar Washington school districts reflects enormous variation across all districts and student groups in WaKIDS competency. This highlights the vast subjectivity of the assessment — year to year, student to student, teacher to teacher. Unless the assessment changes, there is a broader need to provide more opportunities for teachers, parents, and caregivers across zip codes to continue to develop their skills around the WaKIDS assessment. See pages 32-33 to learn how Graduate Tacoma’s Early Learning & Reading Network is increasing access to WaKIDS training that underscores cultural competency to support all kids.

Beyond contextualizing and training, fluctuation and gaps can be found across all non-White racial groups and students in poverty, as seen in the graphics. Access to quality preschools disproportionately impacts black and brown students. Most notably, in 2018, Latinx kindergarteners fell behind their White peers in the WaKIDS by a 24 percent gap. Students in poverty, similarly, fell behind their more affluent peers by a 25 percent gap. To the left, read how the Children’s Museum of Tacoma is bringing programming to Tacoma’s earliest learners across geographic locations.

## DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT

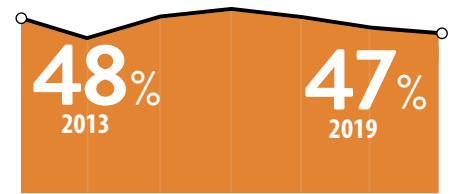


Data Source: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

## 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.

**MULTI-YEAR GAPS** Represents the increase or decrease in the achievement gap between students of color and White students and between students in poverty and those not in poverty, baseline to current.

