

## CONTINUED OPPORTUNITIES

# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

**AIMING HIGHER GOAL:** Increase positive behavior and student engagement and decrease behavioral challenges.

Social and emotional learning is the process through which we acquire and effectively apply the skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Tacoma Public Schools and the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation have helped deepen our community's progress toward providing social-emotional support by way of the Tacoma Whole Child Initiative (TWCI). In September 2018, the partnership launched a five-year study and investment at 12 TPS pilot elementary schools and their associated expanded learning organizations.

Now in the second year, the study is examining the central question: Will students benefit if urban schools and their afterschool partners work together to improve and align experiences and climate to foster children's social-emotional learning?

The schools engage 24 community organizations offering expanded learning opportunities through the Tacoma Whole Child partnership. With this new connection point, students now have on-site access to visual and performing arts, dance, robotics, STEM learning, mentorship, sports, and more. Programs take place before, during, and after school, providing a safe place for students to learn new skills, build positive relationships, and connect with their community. Additionally, staff and faculty who interact with students model and support the same social and emotional practices across the board.

Through the TWCI, participating schools and organizations can share information and data to support continuous improvement — learning from each other what works well and which practices need to be strengthened. As this partnership aligns systems and identifies measurements of success, we should see a baseline for this indicator emerge.

Visit [GTCE.org](https://gtce.org) to learn more about the Tacoma Whole Child partnership and how community organizations are working with schools.

# SAFE & HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

**AIMING HIGHER GOAL:** Increase safe, healthy, and nurturing environments for students in the community.

A key factor to social-emotional learning is a child's environment. This is an area Graduate Tacoma is also monitoring for measurement opportunities. One organization we have seen steer this work is Safe Streets.

Last fall, Safe Streets launched the Whole Neighborhoods study to better understand the role that neighborhoods have or could have in a child's development. The project builds on the Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning developed by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning). Similar to the work highlighted at left, the framework defines five core competencies for teaching Social-Emotional Learning. It also identifies three contexts: classrooms, schools, and **homes and communities**.

While the role of homes and communities in whole child development is widely recognized, there is little to no effort being made to extend the important work of schools and out-of-school learning programs into neighborhoods. Safe Streets is particularly well-positioned to lead the effort around this third context. By engaging neighborhoods within Tacoma's Whole Child Initiative catchment area — covering everything between Jennie Reed, First Creek, and Sheridan Elementaries — the study aims to identify current perceptions and the future visions of neighbors, families, and partners in the area.

Following the study, Safe Streets will use their findings to engage neighbors and build family-community partnerships that ultimately cultivate an environment centered on the whole child.

As Safe Streets moves this work forward, their position is that whole child development is, in the end, about creating a positive climate, inclusive culture, and supportive relationships for every child. All are intrinsically tied to Safe Streets' mission to unite and inspire youth, neighbors, and business to build safe, healthy, and thriving communities. Safe Streets is currently analyzing findings, and we look forward to seeing how their effort can help identify a measure with reliable data for tracking.