



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

THA's Education Project: A Summary

Last Revised September 25, 2014

1. PURPOSE OF THA'S EDUCATION PROJECT AND PROPOSITIONS TO TEST

THA's Education Project has two main purposes:

- it seeks to help the children it houses succeed in school;
- it seeks to promote the success of the schools serving low-income students.

THA seeks these outcomes for **three** reasons.

First, THA's strategic mission is to help people succeed not just as tenants but also as "parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets who can live without assistance." THA wants families to come to its housing and prosper. In this way, it wants their time with THA to be transforming and temporary. It wants this especially for the children. School success is part of this transformation.



Second, THA is a real estate and community developer. The financial and social success of its developments requires successful neighborhood schools.

Third, public schools face challenges that low-income and homeless children bring to the classroom. The schools cannot solve this without help. THA seeks to do its part.

The Education Project is an experiment to learn if a housing authority can so spend its housing dollars, not only to house families, but also to promote school outcomes for their children and to promote the success of schools that serve low-income children. THA begins this experiment surmising that it does have an influence to exercise. This surmise arises from facts that are true for most public housing authorities:

- Except for the school district and the public assistance agency, THA serves more poor children than any other organization in Tacoma. It houses about 1 of every 7 Tacoma public school students and about 1 out of every 4.5 low-income students;
- In serving these families, THA is already deep into their lives, as landlord, provider of highly regulated rental assistance, and provider of supportive services. This gives THA an influence over behavior and choices.
- THA owns communities that can be staging grounds for educational initiatives.
- THA resources can lever reforms and investments from schools districts and others.

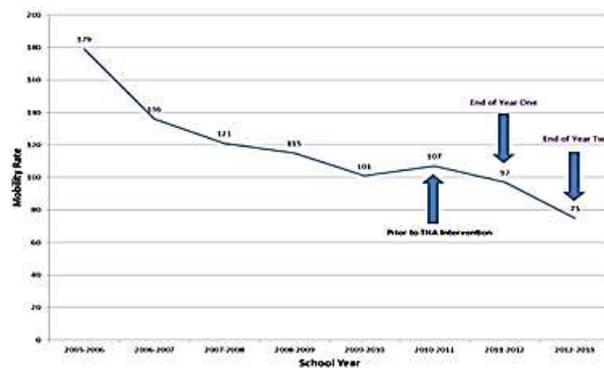
THA tries this experiment in full partnership with Tacoma Public Schools (TPS), Tacoma Community College and other service providers and funders. The results should be interesting to other public housing authorities, school districts and educational institutions. To learn more go to: www.tacomahousing.org

2. SOME ELEMENTS OF THA'S EDUCATION PROJECT

There are many elements to THA's Education Project. Some are underway. Others are in planning. Here is a short description of some of them:

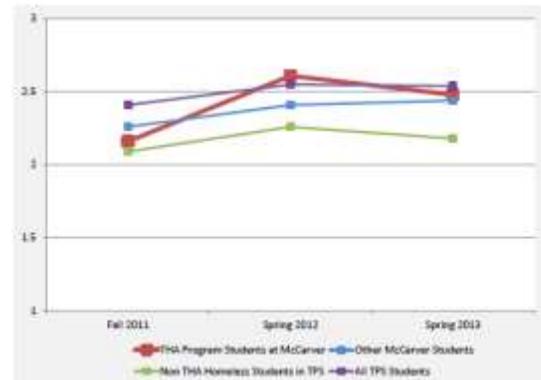
2.1 THA's McCarver Elementary School Housing Initiative (underway)

The student population of McCarver Elementary School is the poorest in the region, possibly the state. It has more homeless students than any other elementary school in the region, possibly the state. It has the highest annual turnover rate of students. This rate has ranged in recent years up to 179%. This turnover results from homelessness, deep poverty and



the accompanying family challenges. THA and TPS's initiative has five parts. (1) To help stabilize the school, THA provides rental assistance and individualized case management to 50 homeless McCarver families with children enrolled in kindergarten, first or second grade. Their 85 children constitute a fifth of the school. This assistance

starts by paying most of the rent and tapers down to zero after 5 years. (2) The Project asks the participating parents to commit to keep their children enrolled at McCarver. They commit to participate actively in their children's schooling. They commit to invest in their own education and employment prospects. (3) THA and its service partners provide services to help the parents do all this. (4) TPS invested the considerable resources to bring the Primary Years International Baccalaureate Program to McCarver. (5) A third party evaluator tracks an array of outcomes. The outcomes from the first two years of the project (2011-2013) are promising: school annual mobility rate declined from 107% prior to THA's initiative down to 96% after the first year and down further to 75% after the second year.



Reading scores for cohort children went up 22% in the first year, three times faster than comparable cohorts. In the second year, the cohort children retained those gains, performing above all other children at the school, and well above other homeless children in the district. 61% of them are reading on grade level. The mean earned income of the families doubled. THA and TPS are awaiting the third year of data. If it is as positive as they expect, they will expand the program to scale, encompassing the other elementary schools in Tacoma with ruinous student transience rates due to homelessness and housing instability.

2.2 THA's College Bound Scholarship Enrollment Project (underway)

THA seeks to sign up all of its 8th graders each year in Washington State's College Bound Scholarship Program (CBS). CBS is a promise the state has made to every low-income child in the state: if he or she graduates from high school, with at least a 2.0 G.P.A., stays out of serious trouble and enrolls in a post-secondary program, the state will ensure that tuition is affordable. There is a catch. The student and the parent/guardian must sign up for it by the end of 8th grade. When the program began, nearly half the state's eligible children missed this chance. THA started by adding the CBS application to the forms families fill out yearly as participants in its housing programs. Within 3 years THA reached 100% sign up rate:

Students Enrolled in the Washington State College Bound Scholarship Program by the End of Eighth Grade*					
	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Washington State	55%	68%	75%	77%	81%
Tacoma Public Schools	77%	90%	Approx. 100%	Approx. 100%	Approx. 100%
THA	83%	91%	Approx. 100%	Approx. 100%	Approx. 100%

Recently, THA has folded its efforts into an aggressive citywide program that now enrolls virtually all Tacoma's eligible 8th graders yearly.

2.3 Asset Building Programs for the Children and Youth of Salishan (in planning)

Individual development accounts (IDA) for children increase their incidence of school success and college enrollment. They help a family get accustomed to saving, help unbanked families into mainstream banking and help a child and the family regard the future positively. Salishan is THA's largest community.

- *Matched Savings Program for the Children of Salishan*
For each child attending Salishan's Lister Elementary School, THA will open an IDA. THA will match the family's deposits to \$400 each year through 5th grade. The schools will incorporate financial literacy curricula, which should be more effective since the children will have real money to contemplate.
- *Scholars' Incentive Program for the Youth of Salishan*
THA will invite each Salishan youth attending First Creek Middle School to enroll in the Scholar's Incentive Program (SIP). A counselor and the student will devise an individualized plan taking the student from 6th grade through high school graduation, with academic milestones along the way, e.g, certain attendance rate, certain grade point average, taking challenging courses, taking the PSAT, SAT, and ACT, filling out the FAFSA, applying to a post-secondary program, graduating from high school, and enrolling in a post-secondary program. Upon hitting each milestone, the student will receive a small cash payment and a larger deposit into his or her IDA (up to \$700 per year). The account balance will grow as the student reaches successive milestones. Upon completing the journey, the student will receive the account balance for educational or training purposes.

2.4 Tacoma Community College Housing Project (underway)

Tacoma Community College (TCC) is the largest post-secondary institution in the Tacoma region. It is particularly accessible and welcoming to low income students, many of whom are the first in their family to attend college. A notable number of enrolled students are homeless. THA will provide them with rental assistance during their enrollment, conditioned upon adequate academic progress that TCC will judge.

2.5 Educational Services in THA Communities (underway and in planning)

THA communities can be a good staging ground for important educational services. Like other services, educational services are more effective if they are available as a part of the local, walking neighborhood. For example, THA's community of New Salishan has Lister, Roosevelt and Blix elementary schools and First Creek Middle School either within its borders, next door or just down the street. Other educational services at THA properties include or will include:



- The Salishan Core will have a public library, a child care provider, and programming to take a youth or adult further in their education or training.
- THA's summer lunch and literacy program in three public housing sites
- Head Start program at THA's new Bay Terrace property
- computer labs at all family communities, with tutoring.
- mentoring and tutoring programs provided by community partners

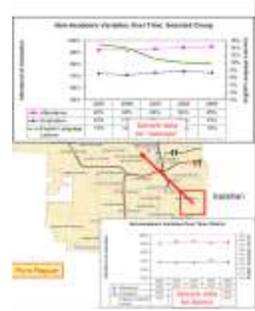
2.6 Campaign of Expectations (underway and in planning)

School success depends in part on what students feel people expect of them. A community can be a useful source of expectations. This is most likely in a discrete community of families that already identifies itself in positive ways. THA's housing communities provide that chance. For example, THA will seek to embed the expectation in New Salishan that its children shall read on grade level and graduate from high school. This campaign of expectations will include the following efforts:

- THA's College Bound Scholarship Enrollment Project
- make sure every THA student has a library card
- include educational expectations in THA's individual case management plans
- public educational campaigns and events, *e.g.*:
 - ~ "Reach Out and Read" program at all THA offices
 - ~ "Lights On for Study" campaign
 - ~ "Show Me the Math" campaign
 - ~ Read Across America on Dr. Seuss Day
 - ~ Free Books Program at all public housing sites
- celebrate graduations from elementary school, middle school and high school, and college send-offs.

2.7 Data Collection and Performance Measures

THA tracks performance measures to assess its Education Project. THA's data sharing agreement with the Tacoma Public School District is critical for this purpose. This allows THA and the school district to track education outcomes of various populations, including all THA students, THA students in discrete THA communities or programs, THA students attending particular schools, and THA students by cohorts reflecting the time they spend in THA housing programs. The data system will compare them with populations of non-THA students in Tacoma.



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