



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

THA's Education Project: A Summary

Amended January 28, 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 THA's communities.

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

First, THA's strategic mission is to help people succeed not just as tenants but 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 THA's communities. 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 nearly 1 out of every 7 Tacoma public school students and about 1 out of every 4 low-income students;
- THA is already deep into the lives of these families 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.

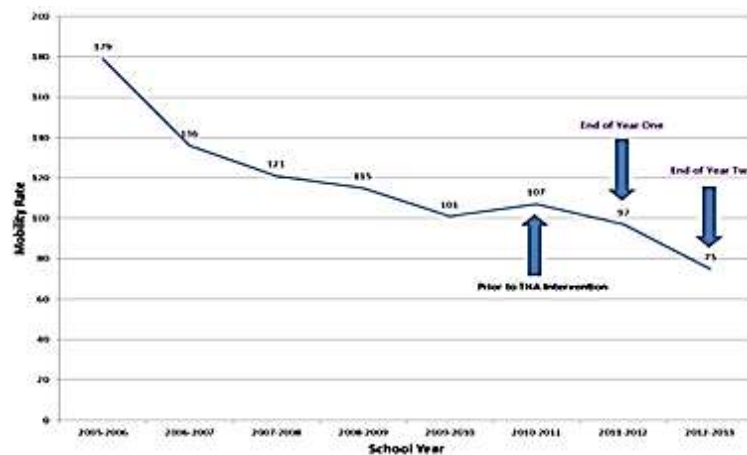
THA tries this experiment in full partnership with Tacoma Public Schools (TPS) and many other service providers. The results should be interesting to other public housing authorities and school districts. To learn more go to: www.tacomahousing.org

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:

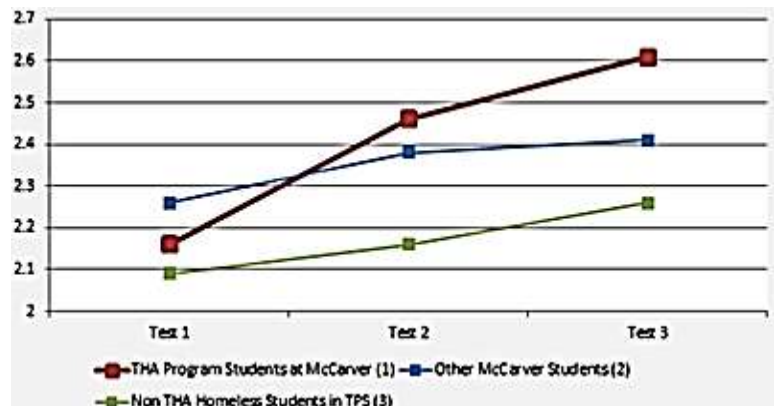
2.1 THA's McCarver Elementary School Housing Initiative (underway)

McCarver Elementary School serves Tacoma's poorest population. It has the largest number of homeless students. It has the highest annual turnover rate of students. This rate has ranged in recent years up to 179%. THA's initiative has four parts. (1) To help stabilize the school, THA provides rental assistance and individualized case management to homeless



McCarver families with children enrolled in kindergarten, first or second grade. THA's partners provide enriched services for the children and families and extensive support for the parent's own educational and economic success. This rental assistance and support will last up

to five years. (2) The Project has expectations of both the parents and TPS. The parents must keep their children enrolled at McCarver. They commit to participate actively in their children's schooling. They commit to an individual plan to make the family self-sufficient when the assistance ends. (3) TPS has committed to bring the Primary Years International Baccalaureate Program to McCarver. (4) A third party evaluator tracks an array of outcomes. The outcomes from the first two year 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 other children at the school. 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. The mean earned income of the families doubled.



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 reach 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 8th graders yearly.

2.3 Scholars’ Incentive Program (in planning)

THA’s Scholars Incentive Program (SIP) seeks to keep THA’s College Bound Scholarship (CBS) enrolled students engaged in their schooling through high school graduation so they are ready for the post-secondary programs the CBS now makes affordable. All SIP students will have an individualized plan with intermittent milestones from 8th grade to high school graduation. Upon attaining each milestone, the student will receive two types of payments from THA: a cash payment; and a deposit into an individual development account in the student’s name. The balance in that account will grow as the student reaches successive milestones. The student will receive the account balance for educational purposes if and when he or she completes his or her plan upon graduation from high school.

2.4 Tacoma Community College Housing Project (in planning)

Tacoma Community College (TCC) is a very important post-secondary institution in the Tacoma region. It has a number of enrolled students who are homeless. THA and TCC are planning a project that would have THA provide these students with rental assistance during their enrollment.

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 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 expectation. 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 individual case management plans
- public educational campaigns and events, *e.g.*:
 - ~ “Reach Out and Read” program at 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 has chosen performance measures for its Education Project. It uses a data exchange with the Tacoma School District to track them for 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.

