



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

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**Tacoma Housing Authority's Education Project  
Receives Grant to Help Children Succeed in School  
*\$450,000 to provide three years of support***

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded Tacoma Housing Authority \$450,000 for three years of support for THA's innovative Education Project. "The purpose of THA's Education Project is to find out how a public housing authority can help the children it houses succeed in school and help improve schools that serve its communities. If this project is effective, its strategies will be instructive for thousands of public housing authorities and school districts and their community partners," explained Michael Mirra, THA's executive director. To learn more about THA's Education Project go to [www.tacomahousing.org/programs/services/education.html](http://www.tacomahousing.org/programs/services/education.html)

The McCarver Elementary School Initiative is an important part of this project. The students at this Tacoma school have an annual 115% turnover rate, largely because of families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In partnership with Tacoma Public Schools and the school's leadership, faculty and parents, THA will provide special housing vouchers to stabilize the school's population. This initiative has been approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and requires some additional detailed advanced planning, which will occur throughout this spring and summer. THA expects to condition this assistance on the families' commitment to their children's education progress at McCarver and toward their own economic self-sufficiency. This investment in McCarver will complement the reform efforts the school district has committed to make in the school. It will augment substantial community commitment of the Tacoma Hilltop Promise Neighborhood Coalition and Tacoma 360 to this neighborhood. It

will also complement Tacoma Public Schools' efforts to restructure schools throughout the district as a part of its recently awarded School Improvement Grants.

Dr. Arthur Jarvis, Superintendent of Tacoma Public Schools, commented, "I am confident the partnership between Tacoma Public Schools and the Tacoma Housing Authority will be very powerful for our students. THA's support for family stability at McCarver, one of our schools most impacted by student mobility, and the commitment of the McCarver staff to respond with enriched learning opportunities, has the potential to change the whole school and significantly improve life in the neighborhood. Our partnership with THA builds the power of both agencies to achieve that goal."

The McCarver Elementary School Initiative will benefit the Hilltop neighborhood of Tacoma, one of the region's poorest. This Initiative is timely. The revitalization of the Hilltop is the subject of several efforts. The Hilltop is the focus of THA's effort to rebuild the Hillside Terrace housing community. This initiative will also include significant innovation in curriculum and instruction at McCarver. All of these revitalization efforts require McCarver Elementary School to be successful. In this way, THA's whole Education Project is an important part of the revitalization of the Hilltop.

"The partnership between the Tacoma Housing Authority and the Tacoma Public Schools will provide a solid foundation to improve student performance and graduation rates in our city," said Mayor Marilyn Strickland.

THA and its partners began planning the Education Project in 2009. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Sequoia Foundation provided funding to support the first years of this planning effort.

This project directly supports two of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's strategic initiatives. **First**, it supports the Foundation's efforts to address family homelessness. In particular,

the project's McCarver Elementary School Initiative will coordinate with the Pierce County Plan to End Family Homelessness. In addition, once the McCarver Initiative is up and running, THA's special housing vouchers will be worth approximately \$360,000 per year. **Second**, THA's Education Project will support the Foundation's efforts to promote school success through school and community partnerships.

"We are pleased to support the Tacoma Housing Authority's Education Project through this three year grant. The collaborative partnerships between THA, the Tacoma Public School District, Pierce County and the City of Tacoma and the innovative thinking that has gone into this initiative hold great promise for improving academic outcomes of students throughout the community, and we're looking forward to tracking the results of the project over the next few years," said Kollin Min, program officer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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### **About Tacoma Housing Authority**

Established in 1940, Tacoma Housing Authority engages in a wide range of efforts to help its City meet the growing need for affordable housing. THA develops and manages real estate. It provides rental housing. In partnership with thousands of private landlords, it helps families pay the rent in the private rental market. It delivers supportive services to help families succeed as tenants, parents, students and wage earners who can live without assistance. It helps them purchase their first home. THA seeks to do its work in ways that help neighborhoods be attractive places to live, work, attend school, shop and play, and that help its City be prosperous, healthy and just. For more information about THA, go to [www.tacomahousing.org](http://www.tacomahousing.org).

### **About Tacoma Public Schools**

Tacoma Public Schools (TPS) is the third largest district in Washington State serving more than 28,000 children in kindergarten through grade 12. The district has 37 elementary schools, nine

middle schools, five comprehensive high schools, and 14 alternative learning sites. TPS has more than 3,500 employees and is one of the largest employers in Tacoma.

### **About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. Learn more at [www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org) or join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).