

# Neighborhood Council Liaison Report

## January 2021

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### Hybrid Learning to phase in this month beginning with kindergarten

On Dec. 16, Gov. Jay Inslee, the state Department of Health and the state Superintendent of Public Instruction issued new guidance for all school districts across the state. Based on health data, the state loosened restrictions to allow more students to return to school—if specific safety protocols are followed.

Over the last several months, we have prepared by establishing consistent safety protocols and accumulating the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE).

Since October, we've followed health and safety protocols to provide in-person learning for about 750 students at all grade levels who require special education services. We know when our students, staff and families follow safety protocols, we can limit transmission of COVID-19 in schools.

Here is our timeline:

- Beginning Tuesday, Jan. 19, kindergarten students will start coming to school for in-person instruction two days per week—Monday-Tuesday or Thursday-Friday—in groups of up to 15 students. Kindergarten students, who have not yet had any in-school experience, will have the school mostly to themselves this first week, which will help them get comfortable with their school.

On school days when students do not attend school in person, they will have assignments from their teacher to work on independently from home.

- Beginning Monday, Jan. 25, preschool students will attend school two days per week in groups of up to 15 students.
- Beginning Feb. 1, kindergarten students would shift to four school days per week—but only if the COVID-19 case count in Pierce County drops below 350 cases per 100,000 residents for 14 days. Otherwise, they will continue to come to school two days per week.

- Beginning Monday, Feb. 8, first and second graders would return to school two days per week—Monday-Tuesday or Thursday-Friday—in groups of up to 15 students. Kindergarten and preschool will continue as described above.

In early 2021, we expect to announce plans to bring back first and second graders four days a week, expand preschool programming and phase in grades 3-5. To begin bringing back middle school and high school students, the Pierce County COVID-19 case count needs to drop below 350 cases per 100,000 residents, according to the new state guidance.

The district has started exploring ways to bring back middle school and high school students living homeless and others farthest from educational justice in small groups of up to 15 students, as recommended by the new state guidance.

NOTE: The state's new guidance limits student groups to a maximum of 15 students per classroom if the COVID-19 case count in the community exceeds 350 cases per 100,000 residents. In Pierce County, as of Dec. 30, the case count per 100,000 stands at 367, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

### **What do parents need to do?**

Some important steps parents must take for their students to return to school in person:

- Sign up now for our Family App, because each day your child comes to school, you will need to fill out a short online form stating your child is healthy and hasn't been exposed to COVID-19.
- Make sure your child has all the required non-COVID-19 vaccinations and that you have provided the vaccination records to your child's school nurse.
- If your child has any medical care plans, medications or physician's orders, you must provide those to your child's school nurse before the first day of in-person learning.

### **Stay up to date on COVID-19 metrics in Pierce County**

You can track the four metrics for school reopening monitored by the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at: <https://www.tpchd.org/healthy-people/diseases/covid-19-information-for-schools>

## January is Whole Child Month

Each year, January is declared Whole Child Month, which recognizes the work of our schools, staff and partners who support each and every student across Tacoma in being safe, healthy, engaged, challenged and supported.

The Tacoma School Board adopted the symbolic Whole Child Month resolution in December to call attention to meeting the needs of students that go beyond academics.

Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards will issue a proclamation Jan. 5 announcing Whole Child Month in the City of Tacoma.

As part of Whole Child Month, you can [nominate schools](#) for recognition of their work supporting the social and emotional needs of students.

Follow Tacoma Whole Child on Twitter so you don't miss anything:

**[@WholeChild253](#)**

## Reminder: Choice Enrollment deadlines approaching for 2021-2022 school year

Choice enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year continues. This is the time window when parents can apply to have their student attend a school other than their assigned neighborhood school.

Application closing dates:

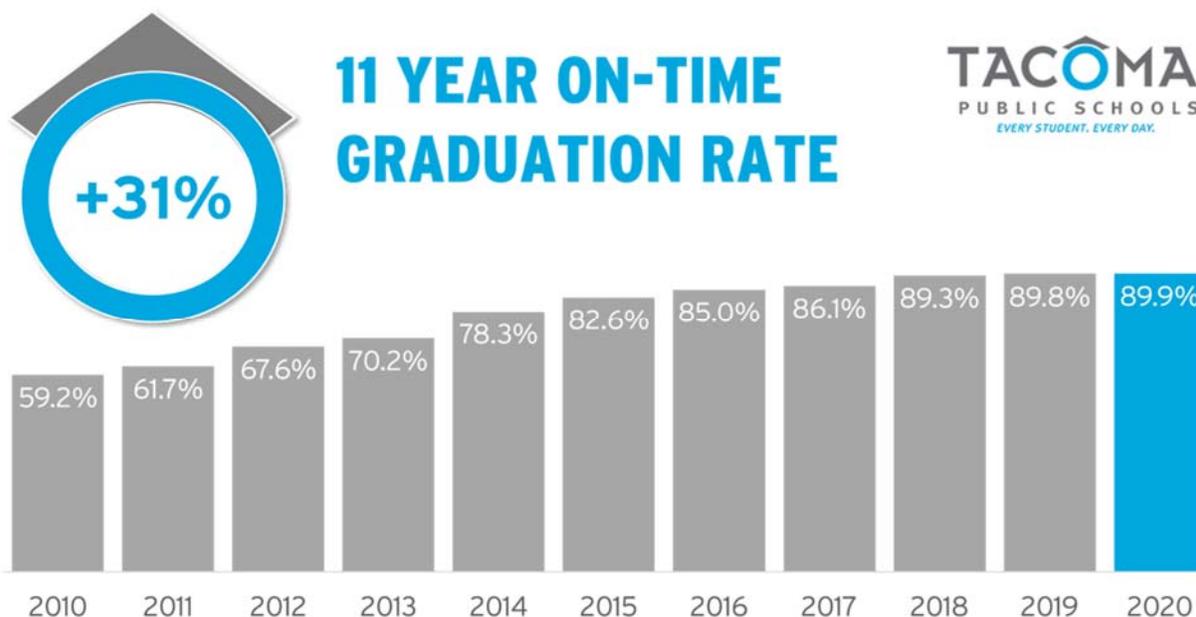
- Grades 1-12 - Jan 13, 2021
- Kindergarten - March 17, 2021

After the application period closes, we will stop accepting submissions.

Students will be placed into their choice school based on siblings already attending there, program availability, space, and staffing capacity, but there is no guarantee of placement. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, our schools have experienced enrollment shifts, which makes it more difficult to predict space availability. We will place as many choice students as possible.

To apply, visit: <https://www.tacomaschools.org/departments/enrollment>

## Graduation rate increases for 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year



Our Class of 2020—fresh off the pandemic shock that shifted them to virtual learning and the disappointment of no in-person graduation ceremony—still managed to set a Tacoma Public Schools record.

The 89.9% graduation rate for the Class of 2020 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> straight year of graduation rate increases for Tacoma Public Schools, according to rates published Dec. 16 by the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Tacoma’s graduation rate also continued a trend of beating the state average, which came in at 82.9% for 2020.

Superintendent Carla Santorno praised the leadership of high school principals, the hard work of teachers and guidance counselors and the support of caring staff members at all grade levels for looking out for “every student, every day” during those first months of the pandemic.

### January school schedule

- **Jan. 4:** School resumes after Winter Break.
- **Monday, Jan. 18:** Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, schools and district offices are closed. No meal distribution or delivery.

## **ICYMI in December: Veteran educator Kim Messersmith will serve as principal of the new Hunt Middle School**

Veteran educator Kim Messersmith will serve as principal of the [new Hunt Middle School](#), Superintendent Carla Santorno announced this week.

Messersmith currently serves as principal at Stewart Middle School. She will continue in that role until the end of the school year while also working on opening plans for Hunt.

Messersmith earned her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education K-8 from Washington State University. She earned her Masters in Educational Arts Integration from Lesley University and her Certificate in Educational Administration from University of Washington.

She began as an elementary school teacher in 2001, who eventually became a [National Board-Certified Teacher](#) in 2005. By 2007, Messersmith became an instructional coach before becoming a dean and teacher at Giandrone Middle School in 2010. Beginning in 2014, she served as assistant principal at Stewart Middle School before becoming principal in 2017.

The search for a replacement for Messersmith at Stewart will take place in January when the district traditionally begins its process to fill principal vacancies.

*Background on Hunt Middle School: Hunt, in West Tacoma, originally opened in 1958. In 2010, Hunt was identified as among the bottom 5 percent of Washington schools in student academic performance. Because of that designation, combined with low enrollment and the physical condition of the school, the district closed Hunt. Voters approved construction bonds in 2013 and 2020 to fund a new, \$48 million Hunt Middle School now under construction. The school will open in fall 2021 and alleviate overcrowding at Wainwright, Mason and Truman. Elementary schools that will feed into the Hunt boundary are all or some portions of Geiger Montessori, DeLong, Whittier, Franklin and Jefferson.*