

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Public Housing Authority-School District Partnerships Initiative

King and Pierce Counties, Washington

Challenge

Research has shown that low-income children lag behind their more affluent peers in education outcomes such as test scores and grade-level reading competencies. These disparities persist as children age, with older youth consistently faring worse on metrics such as high school graduation and college attendance. Such inequalities set children up for lifelong repercussions.

Innovation

The Pacific Northwest Housing Authority-School District Partnerships Initiative is an effort to improve educational outcomes for children growing up in Section 8 and public housing. The Initiative is based on the idea that intentional, purposeful partnerships between housing authorities and school districts have the potential to dramatically increase academic achievement among those students served by both systems and to disrupt intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Overview

The Initiative supports partnerships in King and Pierce Counties in the Puget Sound region involving the Seattle, Tacoma, and King County Housing Authorities and the Seattle, Tacoma, Highline, Kent, and Bellevue School Districts. All of these partnerships have based their efforts on groundbreaking data-sharing agreements between the housing authorities and their school district partners. These agreements are beginning to allow them—for the first time—to understand precisely how many students in subsidized housing are being served within each school district, which specific schools these students are attending, and how these students are doing academically compared to their nonsubsidized peers. Armed with these data, the partnerships are collaboratively working to design measurable interventions that will lead to improved educational outcomes for these co-served students through measures aimed at, for example, reducing chronic absenteeism, improving parent engagement, and increasing kindergarten readiness. In addition to measuring the programmatic effectiveness of such interventions, the Initiative is also closely documenting and evaluating the systemwide, cross-sector changes to institutional practice and policy necessary from both sectors to implement successful partnerships.

PUBLIC-SECTOR PARTNERS

Seattle, Tacoma, and King County Housing Authorities; Seattle, Tacoma, Highline, Kent, and Bellevue School Districts.

OTHER PARTNERS

Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA).

