

2008-09 School Performance Report
Tacoma School of the Arts
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www.tsota.org

Welcome to Tacoma School of the Arts

The Tacoma School of the Arts (SOTA) is a small public arts high school located in Tacoma's urban core. Students study visual art, music, dance and theater as part of a rigorous academic program for sophomores, juniors and seniors. Beyond the arts focus, three things set this school apart from the typical comprehensive high school. First, the school is small in size; a maximum of 450 students will make up the SOTA population. Second, the school is built on community partnerships with established arts and cultural organizations. And finally, the faculty and staff collaborate with neighborhood organizations to create coursework with real-life applications.

Tacoma School of the Arts is not for everyone. We sincerely believe that SOTA's unique learning community provides opportunities for students to take real ownership of their education. Motivation in both arts and academics and a willingness to commit to active participation in our learning community are key factors in admission decisions. SOTA operates with an alternative schedule to accommodate the longer hours of study and practice required of all the art forms. The coursework and collaborative commitments at the Tacoma School of the Arts are an integral part of the philosophy. Faculty and students alike benefit from an interdisciplinary, team approach to teaching and learning.

In addition to all Tacoma Public Schools high school graduation requirements (23 credits), students graduating from the Tacoma School of the Arts are advised to complete a full course of study in a particular arts focus (four to six credits). Further, to maintain the integrity of SOTA's program and each student's educational experience, students are expected to attend full time; that is, they must enroll in a minimum of six courses each semester.

Mission statement

The mission of the Tacoma School of the Arts is to establish an urban center offering a creative path of learning which emphasizes human expression through the visual and performing arts as central elements in academic achievement and lifelong endeavors. The Tacoma School of the Arts will:

- Stimulate higher-level thinking and problem solving;
- Provide advanced training in the arts;
- Prepare students to meet the challenges of the 21st century;
- Incorporate experiential and innovative approaches to learning;
- Use both public and private facilities;
- Connect students to the larger community; and
- Build this creative learning community in Tacoma's urban core.



Working together: Home, school and community

The Tacoma School of the Arts is a learning community. We take the task of cultivating community very seriously. We are based in community so we rely on the commitment of the Tacoma Public Schools, community partners, staff, students and parents to ensure our continued success. To build and strengthen our program, SOTA requires participation from all invested members. Our goal is to promote a greater understanding of what it takes to provide students with the highest level of academic and arts education the community has to offer. We encourage you to explore some of the many ways that you can actively participate in the future of education.

Located in Tacoma's urban core, SOTA enjoys partnerships with existing cultural organizations. Students have access to resources at the University of Washington Tacoma, the Tacoma Art Museum, the Washington State History Museum and the Museum of Glass. The list of school partners grows daily, and as our relationships evolve, we anticipate opportunities ranging from student internships to the sharing of equipment, facilities and staff.

SOTA students are motivated, creative sophomores, juniors and seniors primarily from the Tacoma School District. Students apply for admission beginning in November of their freshman year and enter the program as sophomores. Information nights about the school are scheduled November to January to encourage interested students and parents to find out more about SOTA.

Sophomores enter SOTA as full members of the learning community. They become part of the humanities core, sitting alongside juniors and seniors. Students take math, science and Spanish courses at their appropriate level. In the arts, they are expected to build a broad foundation, experiencing a range of essential courses in music, visual art, theater and dance. Juniors move deeper into the community. In addition to their academic core classes, they are encouraged to find a focus in the arts and take classes that broaden and deepen their craft. As a culminating experience of their high school education, seniors will be expected to finish strong academically and pursue their arts focus at great depth.



Demographics

Enrollment (October 2008)

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Grade 9 | 10 |
| Grade 10 | 181 |
| Grade 11 | 122 |
| Grade 12 | 138 |
| Total | 451 |

Ethnicity

| | | |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| African-American | 49 | 10.9% |
| Asian | 17 | 3.8% |
| American Indian | 10 | 2.2% |
| Hispanic | 19 | 4.2% |
| Pacific Islander | 1 | 0.2% |
| White | 355 | 78.7% |

Staff

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Administrators | 2 |
| Instructors | 23 |
| Para-educators | 1 |
| Nurse | 0.2 |
| Custodians | 2.2 |
| Office | 2 |
| Campus Liaison | 1 |
| Interpreters | 2 |

High school WASLs

Tacoma high schools are committed to assisting 10th graders in meeting Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) standards in reading, math and writing on the 10th grade WASL. This is especially important now that students scheduled to graduate in 2008 and beyond must pass these standards. There are many strategies designed to assist students, including the following: Reading 180 class that targets students reading below grade level, Math which provides the math foundations for students who are not meeting the standards on the WASL, and before- and after-school tutoring for every student who needs more focused assistance. All ninth, 10th and 11th grade students who failed to meet any of the standards on the WASL must have a Student Learning Plan. The purpose of a Student Learning Plan is to personalize the student's education and give them support to be successful. Also, in an effort to work more closely with parents/guardians, high schools will be having student-led conferences this coming school year.

WASL test scores comparison

For Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) results and detailed demographic information about the Tacoma School District and its individual schools, please go to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Web site at www.k12.wa.us, then click on the School Report Card link or go directly to: <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores are listed for the last six years along with the state and district averages.

| Year | Reading | | | | | | Mathematics | | | | | | Writing | | | | | |
|----------|---------|----|----|----|----|----|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|---------|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 |
| SOTA | 91 | 85 | 90 | 93 | 87 | 93 | 63 | 55 | 48 | 64 | 46 | 52 | 95 | 80 | 86 | 94 | 96 | 95 |
| District | 53 | 60 | 64 | 70 | 71 | 73 | 29 | 33 | 32 | 36 | 32 | 31 | 53 | 55 | 66 | 70 | 81 | 81 |
| State | 64 | 73 | 82 | 81 | 81 | 81 | 44 | 48 | 51 | 50 | 49 | 45 | 65 | 65 | 80 | 84 | 86 | 86 |

| Year | Science | | | | | |
|----------|---------|----|----|----|----|----|
| | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 | 08 | 09 |
| SOTA | 57 | 45 | 38 | 59 | 47 | 54 |
| District | 20 | 23 | 21 | 24 | 27 | 26 |
| State | 32 | 36 | 35 | 36 | 40 | 39 |

High achievers

Graduation highlighted the importance and benefits of working towards personalizing education. It was overwhelming for all of the staff and students to know every student who walked across the stage. We are still receiving comments from audience members who tell us that the graduation ceremony "was the best they have ever been to." This can only be attributed to the fact that we have built a true sense of community, and we have made connections with students. Students feel that the personalized education they have received at SOTA will help them with their post-high school plans and achieving their lifelong goals. As a part of their culminating project here at SOTA, senior students showcased their exit projects by selecting appropriate venues along the Tacoma Light Rail line. Art exhibits, live music and dance performances in local shopping areas and outdoor amphitheatres, as well as film and stage debuts in theatre spaces made available by community partners provided a unique "come and discover" attitude for interested viewers. Instructors model respect and responsibility on a daily basis, reinforcing the positive culture that has been created. Instructors actively seek opportunities in the community for students to be involved.

On-time graduation rate (2006-07): 93.2 %

Extended graduation rate (2006-07): 99.8%

Annual drop-out rate (2006-07): 1.7%

Free/reduced price meals (May 2008): 14.0%

Academic expectations

The Tacoma School of the Arts is built around a particular vision: we believe that students make the most of their learning when they take ownership of their education—when students intentionally choose to take on the challenge real learning entails. We further believe that this ownership most naturally develops within a learning community, encouraged by others who share that commitment. It is that simple. Creating such a learning community is not simplistic. While our common vision has evolved as the school has grown, a few foundational commitments continue to shape our program. While much of American schooling tends to compartmentalize and overspecialize, we are committed to integration—we want students to see their learning, their world and their lives as a whole. Thus, we seek to help students make connections within academic disciplines, between the academics and the arts, between their lives now and their lives as they enter the larger global community in very few years. With this holistic vision firmly in mind, we also believe students deserve the opportunity to go deep—to develop and pursue a particular passion at increasingly greater depth, guided by mentors in our community who can encourage excellence. Through the support of the SOTA partners and local community members, the Adjunct Artists Program adds a vital and authentic dimension to SOTA's arts curriculum. This program brings professional artists to work with students in SOTA's classrooms. Recent courses taught by adjunct artists include world dance, creative writing, jazz improvisation and film studies. Adjunct artists share their talent and experience; students benefit from personal contact with dedicated professional artists in intensive small classes.

Community connections and integration are what the Tacoma School of the Arts does best. The staff and students are able to take advantage of cultural resources on a daily basis, accessing museums and the University of Washington Tacoma campus. Students have access to nearby resources at the Washington State History Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, Museum of Glass and the University of Washington Tacoma library. The school uses downtown resources extensively—performance facilities and public spaces are used for large-group gatherings. Students move among SOTA's facilities using Pierce Transit buses, Tacoma's new Link Light Rail and on foot. All-school events are often held at the historic Rialto Theater in partnership with the BCPA. On Friday afternoons, the entire student body may gather at the theatre for a meeting and impromptu performance.

SOTA teachers continue to increase their use of performance-based assessment. The students rehearsed, choreographed, costumed and staged each scene and held two performances at the end of the semester. Students collaborated with the theatre director and students handled the technical aspects of all shows. The theatre production students researched the history of fair trade products, created a performance based on their research, and sold fair trade products at their shows.

The art department at SOTA has been committed to cross-curricular integration from the inception of the school. Because students come to the school riding the wave of their creative passions, the assimilation of math, history, language and science with the arts becomes a fundamental part of their daily experience and drives their desire to learn.

In striving to create a more compassionate society in our young people, we at SOTA believe that helping young people learn about international humanitarian issues will encourage them to grow into adults dedicated to working for positive change. To this end, SOTA art students have joined the Memory Project. This organization brings together highly skilled high school art students with children living in orphanages all over the world. Students work from photographs and create portraits that are returned as a gift to the orphan in the photo. Given that these children who have been abandoned, neglected, abused or orphaned usually have few personal keepsakes, the purpose of the portraits is to provide them with a special memory of their youth and to help honor their heritage and identity. As artists, the students have embraced the project and taken on a special affection for their "adopted" giftee.

Other information

The staff continues to try and find more time to collaborate on curriculum design and student voice. Arts integration in all subjects continues to be a goal that everyone strives for. Students had the opportunity to showcase their musical talents through a recital series featuring small ensembles versus a large orchestra. SOTA students had the chance to work on a piece of sculpture based upon the Feng Shui principle of "red door" in conjunction with 15 well-known local sculptors.

Students designed and executed a three-dimensional, three-door obelisk that will be placed and rotated periodically within the community to re-ignite interest in the other sculptural installations. SOTA hosted the reception and art party for the opening in one of our new facilities, becoming a mark on the map in the burgeoning visual arts community. The project also served as a benchmark for other collaborative projects involving our community partners, the staff and the students.

The vision of the school continues to focus on building relationships and partnerships within our community. The Tacoma School of the Arts students are seen as an important asset to our downtown. As we look forward, we continue to increase the number of adjunct artists who add to all of the arts programs and seek more collaboration and opportunities for student success in the community. Sustainability of the program has become a high priority, combining the resources of our parents and community partners to focus energy and passion on the same vision. We also understand that by giving students the chance to have a real voice in the direction and vision of the school, it empowers them to continue to build community and take ownership of their education. We are working to build programs that fit the vision of SOTA encouraging students to be lifelong learners. To this end, departments are working to build comprehensive programs at SOTA that engage students and help them to not see subjects in isolation, but as an important part of the world around them.

About Tacoma School District No. 10

The Tacoma School District No. 10 is the third largest district in Washington state. There are 55 schools serving nearly 30,000 children in kindergarten through grade 12. Tacoma Public Schools has 37 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, five comprehensive high schools, and six alternative learning sites. The district encompasses 56 square miles and is located on the southern end of Puget Sound in the shadow of Mount Rainier. As of July 15, 2009, the district had 2,077 teachers, 27 certificated management-level staff members, 87 principals, 1,453 regular classified employees, 57 exempt classified employees, 340 classified non-regular/substitute employees and 495 certificated non-regular/substitute employees.

2008-09 district improvement goals

1. Increase achievement for all students each year by 10%. (Based on the difference between the 2007 WASL scores and 100% of students meeting state standard.)
2. Decrease the gap between underperforming subgroups and the district average performance on the WASL by 10% annually.
3. Decrease the dropout rate by 10% annually.
4. Reduce the number of students not graduating by 10% annually.

Financial data

Revenues 2008-09:

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------|
| State..... | \$198,646,947 | 62.8% |
| Federal | \$37,501,591 | 11.9% |
| Local taxes | \$69,537,415 | 22.0% |
| Local non-taxes | \$6,922,079 | 2.2% |
| Other | \$3,706,252 | 1.1% |

Total revenues budgeted \$316,314,284

Expenditures 2008-09:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Teaching activities..... | \$192,683,624 | 59.8% |
| Other support activities..... | \$54,764,192 | 17.0% |
| Teaching support | \$32,516,545 | 10.1% |
| Central Administration | \$21,225,856 | 6.6% |
| Principals' offices | \$21,104,940 | 6.5% |

Total expenditures budgeted \$322,295,157

Average per pupil expenditure 2008-09\$11,960

The information in this report is a requirement of our state's legislature. The Tacoma Public Schools supports this sharing of educational information with the community. If you have questions about district policies or programs, contact the Public Information Office at 253.571.1015.

The Tacoma Public Schools Web site: www.tacomaschools.org



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