

## Healthcare Careers Academy

(HCA) provides equitable access to high school students to prepare for a wide-range of healthcare careers leading to a family livable income. Located in Tacoma, WA, the Academy is a unique collaboration of Tacoma Public Schools (TPS), healthcare industry, higher education and nonprofits. Hear from HCA Steering Committee members in this [video](#), as they speak to a coordinated approach to invest in today’s youth to fulfill growing opportunities in healthcare.

This four-year program uses a cohort model. It is part-time program where students are grouped together for three periods a day.

HCA is unique to TPS and serves as a beacon to attract students. The academy is offered at two comprehensive high schools - Stadium and Mount Tahoma High School - with plans to expand in the future. Career technical classes are designed specifically for HCA alongside state Science and English core classes modified with a healthcare focus. [Click here](#) to see 4-year class sequence. HCA students engage in 10 coordinated pathways and credentialing programs (see fig. 1).co-located within [Tacoma’s Medical Mile](#).

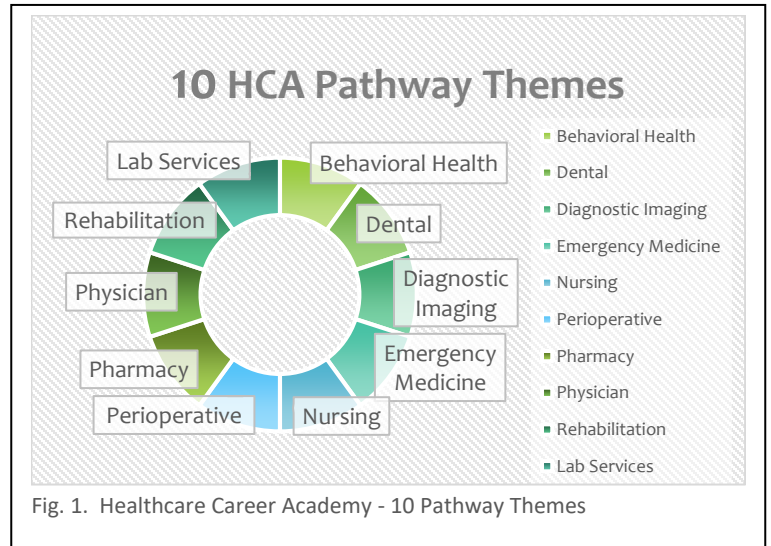


Fig. 1. Healthcare Career Academy - 10 Pathway Themes

### Grade 9 - Healthcare Focused Classes and Experiential Learning Opportunities

Students make connections to healthcare careers through six experiential learning activities or more such as: field trips to healthcare industry locations, guest speakers, campus tours, and career fairs. Students experience hands-on learning in a three-period block including: Allied Health/Healthcare Careers, English and Biology – all state required classes but with a healthcare spin.

### Grade 10 – Healthcare Courses and Career Connections

Small themed pathway groups engage with career mentors in no fewer than six field observations at healthcare and higher education institutions to dive deeper into their career interests. Throughout the four years, students obtain industry recognized certificates (IRCs).



## Grade 11 and 12 – Healthcare Volunteer Internships and Focused Course Work

Students explore specific careers and receive hands-on experiences in a chosen healthcare industry through the TPS NextMove Internship Program. Students are supported by their industry mentor, academic tutors, and a career internship teacher who provides post-high school coaching and preparatory work.

## Post High School

Upon graduation, pathways are designed to move students directly into a job with potential for growth and/or higher education. Both avenues will steer students toward a family livable wage.

## Tacoma Public School, Tacoma, WA

Tacoma Public Schools is the fourth largest district in Washington State with over 5000 employees serving approximately 29,000 students predominantly of color. Of the state’s 296 districts, Tacoma is the only one designated as an Innovative School Zone by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, with 18 innovative schools.

In 2007, TPS high schools were labeled 'dropout factories' in the national press and in 2010, the graduation rate reached its lowest point at an unsettling 55%. To disrupt this trajectory, district leadership set a [strategic plan](#), a comprehensive accountability framework with investments in community and student engagement, social and emotional [whole child](#) learning, academic rigor, student choice, and data literacy. As a result in 2019, the district met [Tacoma’s graduation goal](#) of 89.8% - four years earlier than planned. Tacoma’s graduation rate exceeds the state’s goal of 77.2%, the overall state average of 79%, and the national average of 84.6%. Furthermore, Tacoma’s graduation rate went up for every racial demographic.

TPS meets the challenge of a 63% poverty rate through many initiatives, including moving more students of color into advanced placement classes and funding SAT and International Baccalaureate exams for all students regardless of need.

“I had the opportunity to spend a lot of one-on-one with a patient. He needed a wheelchair escort around the hospital to get several tasks done and I was more than happy to accompany him. It was a great opportunity for me to work on my communication with patients, and to help me learn more about the hospital and the layout”.

Danny Casino, Student at MultiCare Cancer Center

## Healthcare Careers Academy Leadership and Collaborations



The TPS superintendent is leading the work of HCA, alongside K-12 Assistant Superintendent, and district and school staff that include CTE allied health and general education teachers. Other internal partners include Career Technical Education, NextMove Internship Program, Public Information Office, Grants Management Office, and the Community Partnership Office.

HCA governance comprises a 25-member steering committee with five subcommittees. Each community partner institution annually donates to the HCA fund started by the Chief Community Executive of MultiCare. Many more institutions and non-profits have expressed interest in joining the HCA collaborative and these will be explored as the program grows.

## Current partners

- [MultiCare](#)
- [Bates Technical College](#)
- [CHI Franciscan](#)
- [Greater Tacoma Community Foundation](#)
- [Goodwill Olympics and Rainier Region](#)
- [Tacoma Community College](#)
- [University of Puget Sound's](#)
  - [School of Occupational Therapy](#)
  - [School of Physical Therapy](#)
- [University of Washington Tacoma](#)

## Community Collaborations

- [City of Tacoma, Community and Economic Development Department's Local Employment and Apprenticeship Training Program](#)
- [College Success Foundation](#)
- [Area Health Education Center for Western Washington](#)
- [Inland NW Health Services, Spokane, WAGoodwill Olympics and Rainier Region](#)
- [Graduate Tacoma](#)
- [NEWTECH Skills Center, Spokane, WA:](#)
  - [Pre-Nursing Program](#)
  - [Pre-Medical Assisting](#)
  - [Pre-Dental Assisting](#)
- [CTE Department, Puyallup School District](#)
  - [Rogers High School](#)
  - [Puyallup High School](#)
- [RAIN Incubator](#)

## WA State Healthcare Careers - Overview & Opportunities

Healthcare is the third largest employment sector in the Tacoma metropolitan region and the United States overall. WA Governor Inslee's [Career Connect Washington Strategic Plan](#) describes existing gaps between high school graduates and a family livable wage. HCA is designed to fill these gaps.

### Identified Gaps According to WA Governor Inslee's Career Connect Washington Strategic Plan

- WA high school youth unemployment (14%), worse among underserved groups where future funding can be tapped into
- 70% of WA jobs require industry recognized certifications (IRCs) post high school, but only 40% of WA students achieve this
- Employers cannot find talent that meets their needs
- Employers have trouble finding diverse candidates

### Healthcare Career Academy Designed to Fill Gaps

- Special outreach and enrollment of underserved student populations
- To date, the program provides five IRCs, including an optional 4-week nursing assistant certification
- HCA partners will assist to build student talent and link them to high demand healthcare employment opportunities
- Over 50% of the HCA student body are students of color. Some are also bilingual and can fill language and cultural accommodations healthcare providers seek

## HCA Nursing Pathway

As an example, the HCA nursing pathway has an optional CTE certified nursing assistant program for juniors and seniors. This pathway capitalizes on existing articulation agreements among three HCA partners: University of WA Tacoma, Tacoma Community College & Bates Technical College. The agreements have several purposes, including: 1) partners share components such as: prerequisites, courses, enrollment, and admission standards, to help students make a smooth transition when moving from one institution to another 2) partners hold seats for students in the pathway; a key component in the competitive world of nursing programs.

## HCA Students

Tacoma and Washington State overall, has a high demand for a diverse and bilingual healthcare workforce. In the 2019-2020 school year, HCA enrollment was nearly 150 students - both high schools combined. The inaugural class will graduate in 2022. Over 45% of HCA students are male and over 50% are students of color, (see fig. 2). 8<sup>th</sup> grade student recruitment occurs among the district's 10 feeder middle schools, in partnership with high school and middle school principals, school counselors and teachers.

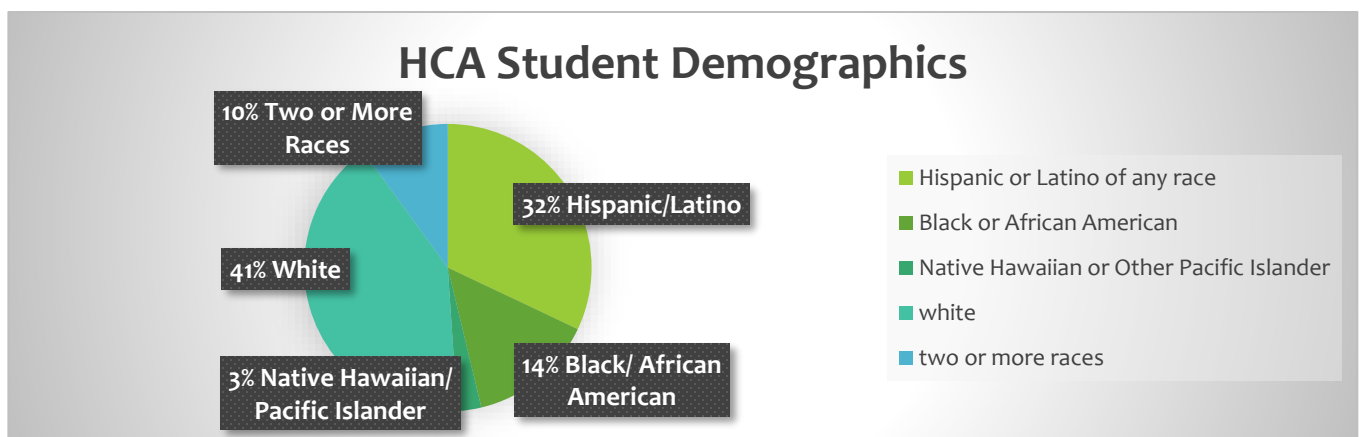


Fig. 2. Healthcare Career Academy Student Demographics

## Opportunity for Growth

Healthcare Careers Academy will increase enrollment at the two current high schools. The program will be brought to more high schools across the district and continue to appeal to diverse populations both racially and economically. This will require increased resources.

### Moving Forward

- Onsite social and emotional support for students
- Near peers and industry mentors
- Scholarships
- Student cohorts with mentors to navigate post-high school education and beyond

## More Information

Visit the HCA website at <https://bit.ly/3aohFdz> or contact:

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