



COMMUNITY-BASED NETWORKS

Supporting student success

*"Now more than ever, we know
that schools cannot do it alone.
One organization cannot do
what it needs to do in siloed work.
It has to be a coalition model,
connection and collective."*

REGINA ELM

Executive Director, SPEB

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Relationships are the foundation for place-based networks to thrive

Relationships matter. Communities — especially communities of color, immigrant communities, and low-income communities — have always known this. When schools build strong relationships with their communities, they can ensure that families receive support both inside and outside of school to help students thrive.

Two years ago, the Renton School District began their **collective impact work** with four elementary schools: Bryn Mawr, Highlands, Campbell Hill, and Lakeridge. The goal was to build networks that allow for greater collaboration and trust between the district, schools, community-based organizations, and families. As these connections grew, it became clearer how vital relationships are in supporting all students. Renton's place-based strategy was built as an ecosystem of support around students in the early years of their education. Encouraged by Renton's early successes, Tukwila launched their own network at the three elementary schools in their school district.

In spring 2020, when schools closed abruptly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, families and students needed support in new ways. In places like Renton, organizations and schools were ready to rally around their communities, propelled and supported by the work that had occurred over the past two years. Even in times of urgency, isolation, and uncertainty, communities have power. When relationships are foundational, communities can be equipped to respond with collective care.

This report highlights the second year of the Renton networks and the first year of building networks in Tukwila. It showcases the power of local collaborations and the ability of communities to support their own in moments that test their resilience. Importantly, it underscores that sustainable, place-based work means understanding and respecting that communities know what they need to thrive.



ABOUT THE ROAD MAP PROJECT

The Road Map Project is a collective impact initiative that began in 2010 to improve student achievement from cradle through college in South King County and South Seattle.

Through multisector and community collaboration, it aims to increase equitable policies and practices in education systems to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, and for 70 percent of our students to earn a college degree or career credential by 2030.

As the backbone organization for the Road Map Project, the Community Center for Education Results works alongside school districts and community based organizations to help networks achieve positive outcomes for low income elementary students and students of color within the Road Map Project region.



Tukwila School District



The power of connection and relationships in general is so important. The fact that they have intentionally created this network ... is just phenomenal! To me, it feels like a landmark. Every community should have something along these lines in order to really facilitate impactful changes."

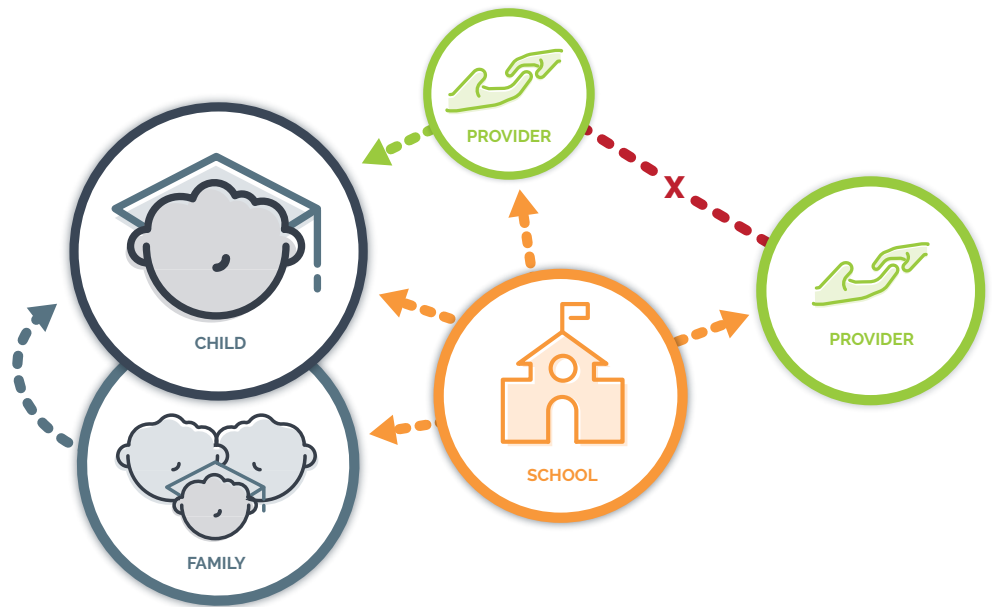
DAMITHIA NIEVES

Owner & Instructor, Thrive Yoga

Collective impact through local networks

COMMON SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Schools typically work directly with children, families, and community providers, yet due to capacity limits, schools and providers don't always communicate with each other about student needs. Within this common system of support, efforts to support all students aren't working.



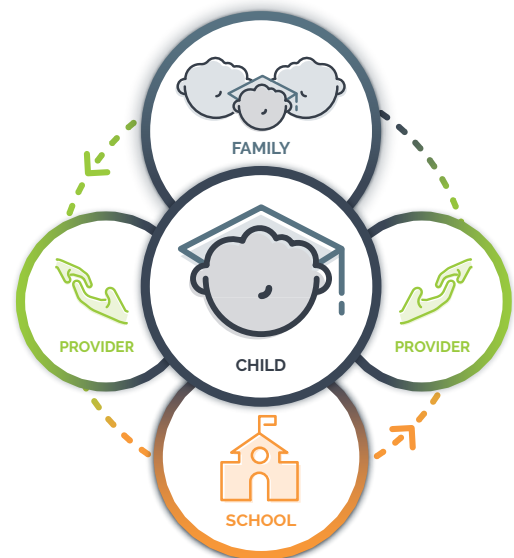
By bringing together district leaders, school teams, and community organizations, networks allow these groups to break down siloes and provide consistent and quality support for students and their families in and out of school. Networks increase communication, collaboration, and transparency between schools and community organizations, so that everyone responsible for a student's success is now working together to support students and families within their local context.

Another key component of networks is honoring the expertise and knowledge of community members. Lasting change requires the leadership and participation of community members; they know what they need and what barriers they face. Networks leverage local strengths by creating structures that allow schools and partners to work together to tailor responses to specific community needs.

Core to this work is the use of continuous improvement tools, which help schools and community organizations tackle both small and large problems, increasing the network's effectiveness in delivering equitable outcomes for all students.

NETWORKS

Within the network model, everyone responsible for a child's success is now working together, breaking down siloes, and increasing collaboration in an effort to support students and families.



WHAT IS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT?

Within the context of producing more equitable outcomes for all students, continuous improvement is a process that tackles large-scale systems change through repeated small-scale changes. On a local level, schools and community organizations first work with a small group of students to test new practices, assess what works, and refine them before expanding successful improvements to support more students.

Renton Networks **Year 2**

Renton's collective impact strategy is made up of three learning networks: Social and Emotional Learning, Math, and Partner. The first two networks are composed of school staff across all four schools, while the Partner Network is composed of local community-based organizations.

Entering their second year, the goal of the **Social and Emotional Learning Network** was to apply last year's learnings to the wider school community. These learnings included four core strategies they wanted to expand in each school:

- **Relationships matter**
- **Shine a light**
- **Self-regulation**
- **Engaging families as partners along the way**



There has been a shift toward more collaboration among the community-based organizations. We now have a better understanding of what partners are working with students and have been given the opportunity to think about how we complement one another."

JAIME GREENE

Executive Director, Communities In Schools of Renton-Tukwila

The Social and Emotional Learning Network members identified specific strategies to implement in their schools. For example, partnership coordinators chose to focus on "shining a light on students," meaning seeing and embracing students for who they are, while family liaisons chose to focus on "relationships matter" and "engaging families as partners along the way" to help them improve family connections to school. Family liaisons applied the strategy "relationships matter" in various ways, depending on the needs of their students. One family liaison built peer connections between students of different ages by creating leadership roles for older students. At another school, the family liaison focused on connecting with students to deepen understanding of any barriers between students and their education. When reflecting on the core strategies, team members emphasized the importance of recognizing students and families in multi-dimensional ways in order to connect and support them more fully.

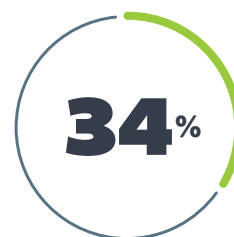
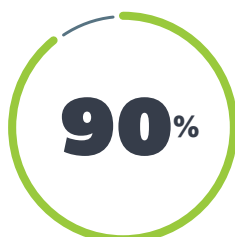
Meanwhile, the **Math Network** embraced students as sense makers, centering students' agency in their own learning. Formative assessments were developed that honored a student's learning and focused on ensuring that students had a conceptual understanding of math and a continued desire to learn. The Math Network also continued their work supporting teachers to adapt teaching strategies based on student learning.

The **Partner Network** expanded to 11 organizations, bringing in community organizations focused on movement, arts, and prevention services. Partners provided tailored support to students in response to requests for creative expression, mindfulness techniques, or mental health counseling. Additionally, partners continued to work with schools and with each other, strengthening their relationships. As a result, they were able to leverage the trust they built to better support students and families when schools closed.

1,606
Students in Renton
Network schools

The race/ethnicity breakdown for students is: Latinx (31%), Black/African American (29%), Asian (19%), White (10%), Multiracial (9%), Native American (1%), Pacific Islander (1%).

Source: OSPI Report Card Data Files for the 2019-20 Academic Year.





➤ RENTON NETWORK STRUCTURE

Math

- 5 coaches
- UW facilitator

Social and Emotional Learning

- School administrators
- Counselors
- Behavior interventionists
- Family liaisons
- Social and emotional learning coaches
- Partnership coordinators

Partner

- Partnership coordinators
- 11 Community-based organizations:
 - African Community Housing & Development
 - Baile Dior Studios
 - Centro Rendu at St. Vincent de Paul
 - Communities In Schools of Renton-Tukwila
 - Renton Area Youth & Family Services
 - Sound Discipline
 - Somali Parents Education Board
 - Somali Youth & Family Club
 - Techbridge Girls
 - The Silent Task Force & Construyendo Juntos
 - Thrive Yoga



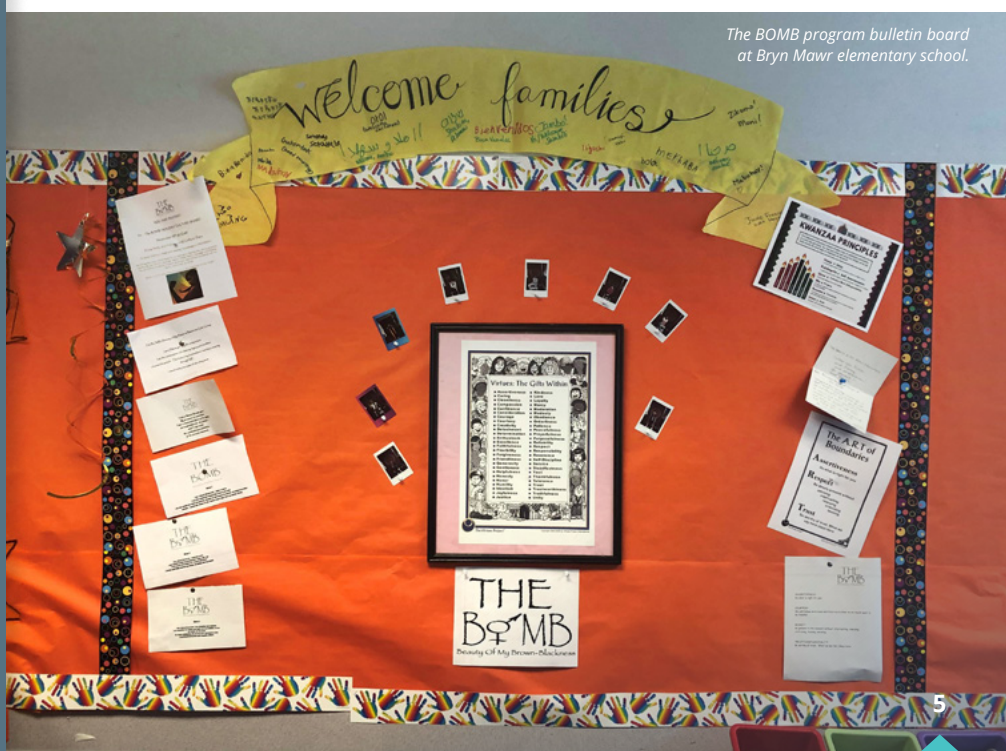
THE BOMB PROGRAM PROVIDES MENTORSHIP FOR GIRLS AT BRYN MAWR

"Silent Task Force did The BOMB [The Beauty of my Black and Brownness] mentoring program for 5th grade girls that started right before winter break. La Tanya, executive director of Silent Task Force, has been certified in facilitating the "Values Based Program," and would start each session facilitating conversations around a value. They also had another piece that was around history and identity work or just around what it's like to be a girl in 5th grade. It was just a really fruitful conversation. I think the girls really quickly started to trust La Tanya and Mary, her partner at Silent Task Force who co-facilitated with her. It was just a really cool, empowering space for students. They would ask really bold questions, and have really frank conversations. And the room was always full. Girls really enjoyed that space a lot. They had a bulletin board where they would do celebrations, like for Black History Month and Kwanzaa.

We noticed the participants' attendance was higher [on days they had the BOMB]. They knew when Ms. La Tanya was coming, and all of them came. There was just an excitement in the room to have that space together to be their authentic selves and feel safe enough and brave enough to talk about whatever is on their minds. It was evident that the girls really appreciated having that time together with Ms. La Tanya and Ms. Mary."

KIM SHELL

Partnership Coordinator, Bryn Mawr and Campbell Hill Elementary Schools



The BOMB program bulletin board at Bryn Mawr elementary school.

Tukwila Networks **Year 1**

A core component of place-based approaches is the understanding that 'one size will never fit all' and that the structure of networks is created based on local context—the needs and conditions that are unique to each community.

As a small district, Tukwila needed a network structure that aligned with their staff's capacity. This meant laying the foundation by starting with networks at each school, to first build a culture of collaboration and strengthen relationships within and between schools. School based networks offered teams the opportunity to work together around a joint outcome and collaborate with staff they would not normally

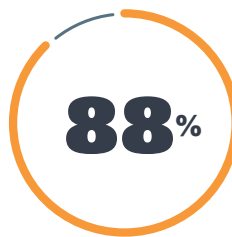
work alongside. At the same time, they established new lines of communication by sharing learnings between school teams.

Tukwila launched networks at each elementary school: Cascade View, Tukwila and Thorndyke, focusing on learning trauma-informed restorative practices while building their knowledge and skills in continuous improvement. In fall 2019, each school used a continuous improvement approach to improve attendance for a small group of students (about 50 students). Over the course of four weeks, school teams improved attendance by an average of 61 percent through providing tailored support for these students.

1,410 students in Tukwila Network schools

The race/ethnicity breakdown for students is: Latinx (30%), Asian (25%), Black/African American (23%), White (12%), Multiracial (7%), Pacific Islander (3%), Native American (1%).

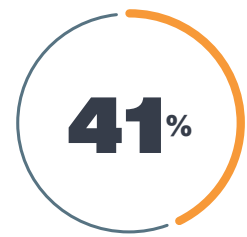
Source: OSPI Report Card Data Files for the 2019-20 Academic Year.



1,246
Students of Color



1,151
Low Income Students



585
English Language Learners

TUKWILA NETWORK STRUCTURE

Cascade View, Thorndyke, and Tukwila elementary schools each had a school-based network that included:

- Principal
- Grade K-2 teacher
- Grade 3-5 teacher
- Math interventionist
- Social worker
- Education support professional
- Communities In Schools of Renton-Tukwila coordinator



Tukwila School District

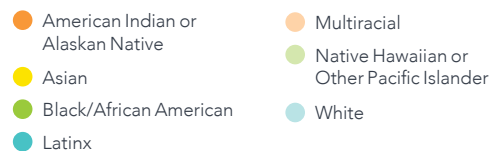
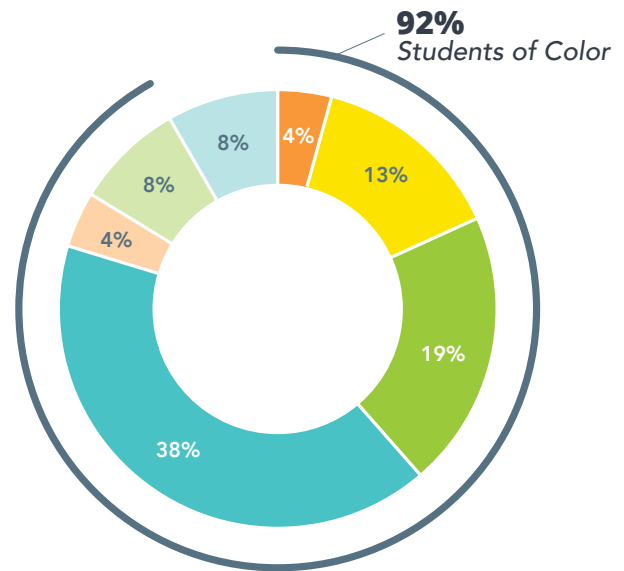


Because it's such a tight-knit relationship in this work, it helps us get along. If there are tiffs or disagreements between teams in the school, it doesn't matter because when we come together ... we are working to solve these problems together."

KATIE MAHAN

Teacher, Cascade View Elementary School

Demographics of Tukwila students who participated in attendance programs



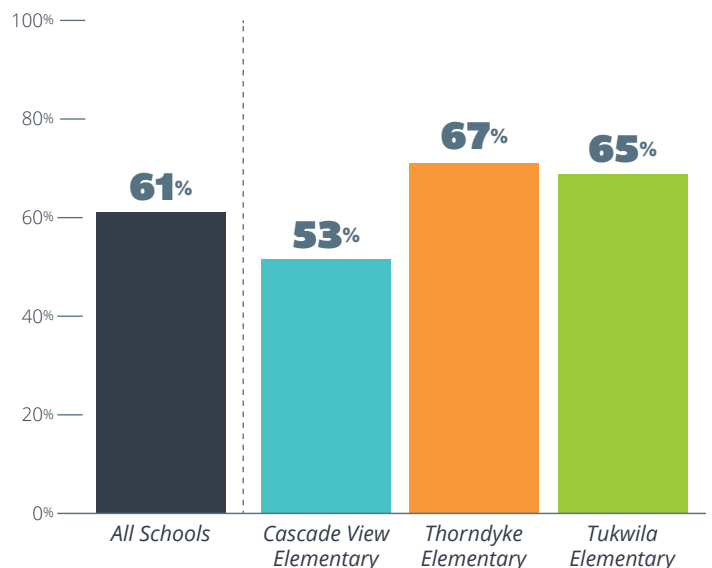
Source: Tukwila School District.

At all three Tukwila schools, the majority of participating students increased their attendance. Attendance increased for 53 percent of participating students at Cascade View, 67 percent at Thorndyke, and 65 percent at Tukwila Elementary. Attendance was measured for equal amounts of time before and after the attendance programs, which took place December 2019 to January 2020.

Encouraged by their early success, each school team met monthly, reviewing data to select a specific focus area to support with a small group of students for the remainder of the school year. Focus areas included improving math outcomes for English language learners, improving the student referral system, and improving adult relationships with students as well as with each other. Additionally, all three school teams met monthly to share learnings and collaborate with each other.

Percent of students with fewer absences after attendance programs

Attendance programs took place December 2019 to January 2020. Absences were measured for equal time periods at each school before and after the programs.



Source: Tukwila School District.



Tukwila School District



THORNDYKE'S CONTRIBUTIONS PROGRAM CENTERS STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Thorndyke's team planned a Contributions program focused on improving attendance by offering a small group of students daily jobs to increase a sense of belonging to the school community.

"For the program, I made lanyards and ID badges that looked like the staff's. The students would wear them when they were walking through the halls and show them off because they looked very official. They each had job titles to try to integrate some career exploration into it as well. One of the students that I worked with was a first grade student and his job was the "Child Development Assistant," helping with the Head Start program. He would meet the preschool kids at the bus, lead the line into the classroom, and take attendance before they entered the classroom. He really took it seriously. At a community holiday event, I was telling his mom how great it was to have him doing this leadership program. And she was like "Oh my gosh, he feels really included, and he talks about the preschoolers all the time!" It was really successful and his attendance did improve and it also helped build the parent-school relationship. She saw that we see him as a leader who can take on something like that."

KIMBERLY GOODMAN

Social Worker, Thorndyke Elementary School

Tukwila School District



It was nice looking at ways to navigate through things to get the work done. In an intervention when something is not working the way it's supposed to, there is an opportunity to adjust if necessary. There was an ability to celebrate small and big accomplishments when looking at the data — those small accomplishments are often underestimated. The work is a long process, but if implemented with fidelity, it can make big changes."

MICHAEL CROYLE

Behavior Specialist, Tukwila School District

Communities adapt amidst school closures

Networks increase collaboration and build trust between community members as they come together around a shared goal. When schools closed, the networks in Renton and Tukwila were able to leverage what was learned to adapt and better support students.

In Renton, the networks began leaning on each other in new, deeper ways to support their students and families when schools closed in March. As a result of sincere trust and strong relationships built over the last two years, the Renton School District, schools, and the Partner Network had the infrastructure and routines in place to support and assist each other's efforts to help their community.

While the Renton School District and school leaders focused on distributing laptops and hot spots and engaging students and families in online platforms, partners leveraged each other's expertise and resources when responding to family needs. Several partners quickly developed short curriculum videos for STEM, mindfulness, movement, and family connection that Renton School District posted on their website for families. Some partners incorporated basic needs distribution and front porch home visits into their supports, adapting as needed to the state and county safety requirements and continuing much needed support for families and students.

In Tukwila, when it was clear that school buildings would remain closed for the remainder of the school year, school teams adapted to focus on problems that felt most urgent to their students and families amidst the increased stressors of COVID-19. One school focused on strengthening connections with students while distance learning, shaping engagement through the summer and the upcoming school year. Another school focused on increasing family engagement. The third school focused on supporting teachers and tracking math curriculum completion throughout distance learning so they could enter the classroom prepared to better support students in the fall.



HARNESSING THE NETWORK: SCHOOLS LEAN ON COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

"There was a family with multiple kids needing resources and technology access. Their school was feeling really overwhelmed, so the Assistant Principal said to me, 'I think I'm gonna reach out to Hamdi [Executive Director of ACHD] because they are a Somali family and I think Hamdi can help.' So Hamdi was able to go and support that family and get them resources.

That carried over to this year. There was a different family where the mom was thinking of pulling the son out of school because she's gonna have to go back to work, she can't stay [home], and she doesn't have enough support with technology. And the Assistant Principal said, 'We can't go over there and get him logged on. I don't want her to pull her kid out of school, so I am thinking I'll go back to Hamdi or Regina [Executive Director of SPEB]' and she did. Because that foundation of collaboration had been set up, they would reach out because they knew they could. COVID hasn't been easy for any school or community to deal with, but I feel like everybody didn't feel as alone — we're all in this, figuring it out together."

STACY LAPPIN

Director of Program, Sound Discipline

Tukwila School District



COMING TOGETHER TO COLLECTIVELY CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY

Traditionally, the Somali Parents Education Board (SPEB) [soon to be known as Supporting Partnerships In Education and Beyond] has not been a direct-service organization. However, when schools closed due to the pandemic and impacted families' employment and access to basic resources, SPEB drew upon their existing relationships within the community to initiate food distribution sites in the Skyway-West Hill neighborhood, where many Bryn Mawr, Campbell Hill, and Lakeridge Elementary families live. They knew they could spark the work, but to fuel it, they would need others in the community with more capacity. They partnered with Renton Innovation Zone Partnership (RIZP), the Renton School District, Northwest Harvest, and local faith organizations. Together, they have been distributing food boxes to local families multiple days per week, and eventually created a similar weekly food distribution in Highlands.

“

I'm really proud of the nimbleness and flexibility of the organizations. An example is, Silent Task Force and SPEB really collaborated with the school district and RIZP to quickly pivot and partner with farmers to bring fresh produce to our food pantries in the Skyway-West Hill and Sunset neighborhoods. And then again around brainstorming the distribution of books. And with other organizations around thinking innovatively about tools or systems supports we can provide for families so that it's not just one organization doing it on its own and having to lift that whole capacity by yourself.”

REGINA ELMU

Executive Director, SPEB

➤ CONNECTING COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO SERVE FAMILIES DURING COVID

When schools closed, Communities in Schools of Renton-Tukwila (CISR-T) immediately expanded services to connect families to community resources. In partnership with the Renton Innovation Zone Partnership (RIZP), they created an online form for their COVID-19 Emergency Fund for families to request support. Between families using the form and referrals from school staff, CISR-T team members immediately began distributing support to Renton families; providing weekly check-ins to support their social emotional needs; distributing emergency funds; and providing weekly food deliveries. CISR-T used the strength of their partnerships with schools, RIZP, and community partners to reach as many families as possible. Between March 19 and October 16, they distributed \$119,593 of Emergency Fund donations to 527 local families in the form of grocery store gift cards, rental assistance, utility assistance, and cell phone support. Over the course of 30 weeks, they had 78 volunteers offer over 800 hours to help distribute weekly food and gift cards to families in Renton. The dedication and mobilization of the CISR-T team and their collaboration with community members helped limit gaps in services that occurred when schools closed and again when the school year ended.

Communities in Schools of Renton-Tukwila distributing food and supplies to families in Renton.



Lessons Learned

Even though the structure of the Renton and Tukwila Networks differed based on their local context, there were important lessons learned in both networks. These lessons are being and will continue to be built on in both networks.

➤ LESSON ONE:

Collaboration between schools and community organizations can create an ecosystem of support around students and families.

Strong partnerships between schools and community based organizations allowed them to respond rapidly when schools closed. The Renton network was able to quickly address the needs of students and families, with some organizations adapting services to provide access to basic needs or housing, and others offering mindfulness and social and emotional learning support virtually. Networks helped to create an ecosystem of support for their community, with schools and community partners working together to ensure students and families had what they needed during this time of crisis.



When schools closed, almost all of the partners went into rapid response mode, coming up with funds so that people could tap into it for whatever was going on in their personal life. That was the beauty and the strength of the network...It was less about academic support or enrichment support and more about being there for basic needs for our community. For every family who came to the school with a need, I was able to talk to one of those partners and somehow the need was met."

KIM SHELL

Partnership Coordinator at Bryn Mawr and Campbell Hill Elementary Schools.



Renton School District

➤ LESSON TWO:

Systems change needs to occur at all levels.

The collaboration in Renton began with one school, Lakeridge Elementary, working to transform its school community by providing ongoing professional development in social and emotional learning and math to improve outcomes for students. Their success was the catalyst that launched the collective of four elementary schools—Bryn Mawr, Campbell Hill, Highlands, and Lakeridge—working together with the community to support their students and families. The focus of the networks in Renton and Tukwila both started with small groups of students to understand how to better support them before expanding their work to support the larger school population. For example, one school changed the messaging on the standard student absence letter to be more empathetic and supportive as a way to increase connection with families. This small change was adopted at other schools and changed the way school staff engaged with families about student absences in an effort to build stronger relationships with them.

“

One of the huge successes of the network is the shift — at the school level, at the cross-school level, at the partner level — that there's been an openness and a willingness to learn from each other and share their work. The network made space for people to think 'Oh my gosh, that is a really cool thing that you did over at Bryn Mawr. We're going to take that over to Highlands and we're going to make it work for our community. And then Campbell Hill is going to do it next.' Networks give schools and partners the space to collaborate, see what is possible and build off of each other's learnings."

STACY LAPPIN

Director of Program, Sound Discipline

Tukwila School District



➤ LESSON THREE:

Place-based networks must honor the leadership and expertise of the local community.

Communities know what they need and what works best for their context. The nature of place-based networks ensures that local context and expertise is honored, allowing members to be more nimble and adapt to the changing needs of students and families. Local leadership matters more today than ever as COVID-19 impacts our communities differently, and across areas of life outside of education. Community organizations and schools have established countless new supports for families, and continue to use the networks to better support their students.

➤ GOING THE EXTRA MILE: BRYN MAWR ELEMENTARY AND THRIVE YOGA

“There was a kid at Bryn Mawr, two kids actually, who started out in Damithia’s [Thrive Yoga] class, which was a second grade mindfulness and movement class. We wanted them to build their toolbox around mindfulness and movement. And she saw that right off the bat and she came to me and said, “Kim, I really think I just need more time to build relationships with these two outside of the group space.” That class happened right after the kids’ lunch, so Damithia would come in an hour before. And every other week, she would spend one whole hour just with that kid in lunchtime, building relationships. She didn’t get paid for that. She did that because she really cares about the kids and this work. And she gets that it’s all based on relationships.”

KIM SHELL

Partnership Coordinator, Bryn Mawr and Campbell Hill Elementary Schools

Tukwila School District



“

We need to allow each other to be heard since we all bring different perspectives to the table. Everyone's voice matters - that was a huge takeaway for me this year. Honoring and celebrating each team member's voice in the work is important."

MICHAEL CROYLE

Behavior Specialist, Tukwila School District

➤ LESSON FOUR:

Trust and strong relationships must be built before deep collaborative work can begin.

Prior to the launch of the Renton network, schools were building a culture of innovation and collaboration around math instruction and social and emotional learning. Due to this work, the Social and Emotional Learning and Math networks were able to launch first, leveraging the strong relationships that had already been built. The Partner Network began their first year collaborating with schools as well as forming relationships with each other. These relationships allowed them to successfully work with each other and with schools to improve the lives of students and families. In their first year, the Tukwila network started building that foundation of trust and strong relationships within and between schools, working together to create a culture of collaboration.



Robin Martin, former assistant principal at Bryn Mawr Elementary, with Hamdi Abdulle, executive director of ACHD, at an All-Network Meeting.

What's Next

As the networks in Renton and Tukwila entered this school year, communities faced challenges with virtual learning. The networks continue to address these challenges together and have shifted their focus to academics, social and emotional learning support and addressing racial inequities in the classroom. The networks that are developing in Renton and Tukwila illustrate the value of collective impact initiatives that are led by the local community. The different structures and approaches that have formed allow networks to be flexible and responsive, and highlight important lessons as place based efforts to support students and families expand in the Road Map Project region.



My hope as an individual, as an executive director, as a community member, as someone deeply invested in South King County, is that I want to see community led networks in every district because I know that there are multiple neighborhoods in our districts that have been furthest away from access."

REGINA ELM

Executive Director, SPEB





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