



**FOUNDATION FOR
TACOMA SCHOOLS**

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December 9, 2011

Mr. Bill Holt, Managing Partner
Board of Directors
Gordon, Thomas, Honeywell
Wells Fargo Plaza
1201 Pacific Avenue, Suite 2100
Tacoma, WA 98402

Dear Bill:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Foundation for Tacoma Schools, I want to personally thank you for the incredible generosity of Gordon, Thomas, Honeywell in helping us establish the legal incorporation of the Foundation as well as the use of conference room space for our Directors' meetings.

It's been a productive year of strategic planning as the Foundation prepares to launch in the Spring of 2012 and hopefully establish our own office in downtown Tacoma. You may be interested to know that in recent months, Brad Cheney has agreed to chair an Advisory Board to the Foundation including 15 other deeply rooted and committed civic leaders.

Please find attached an Overview of 2011 and our plans for 2012 along with the materials that have been developed for the Foundation, including our mission and goal to graduate all students in Tacoma by 2020. Community outreach and real civic engagement is at the core of what this Foundation is all about. We believe our goal is bold and ambitious and will take the entire community working together to make it a reality.

At our first Advisory Board meeting in November, we talked about how it's time for Tacoma to establish a meaningful community partnership that supports high student achievement for every student. Forty-seven other school districts across Washington currently partner with a community school Foundation to bring focus and support from the community and help all children succeed. That's the only way we will move the graduation rate and help prepare our young people to be the kind of smart thinkers, productive workers, and contributing citizens to this great community.

At our meeting in November, we were asked a fair question. Where will we start and how will we know if it's making a difference? It's the same question the board has been debating in recent months.

I've been in education my entire career. The data is compelling. As Mayor Strickland noted, 66% of Tacoma students are on free and reduced lunch. Far too many children are not arriving at their first day of kindergarten ready to learn. And we know where they live and the schools they attend. I am absolutely convinced early childhood education is critical here. Reaching these young children and their families early is the only way these students will be reading and achieving at or above grade level by 3rd grade. Students not reading at grade level by third grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school on time. And disadvantaged students who fall behind by third grade are 13 times less likely to graduate with their peers.

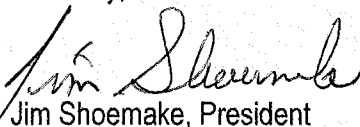
The other place we start is with our classroom teachers. As Holly Hunt pointed out to me after the Advisory Board meeting, there is no one who can stretch a dollar further than a teacher. That's where it all happens. It's up to our teachers, every day, to keep students engaged and stretching them to reach their potential. And while the Foundation needs to reserve significant granting for programs and initiatives that directly impact academic achievement at the five key education milestones we discussed, we believe small classroom and school grants can inspire some of the biggest outcomes.

There is a deep and abiding commitment to education in this community. We see dozens of initiatives and efforts underway across the city to help our youth. The Foundation can play a critical role in helping navigate and leverage the talents and resources of our entire community.

Since our meeting, I have spoken with outgoing Superintendent Art Jarvis as well as Deputy Superintendent Carla Santorno who will officially take the lead for the District in January. Jim Walton and Bill Baarsma have recently met with our incumbent school board members. They plan to meet with the newly elected board members shortly. Without exception, the leadership of the District has embraced the mission and goal of the Foundation and they are committed to working in strategic partnership.

Again, thank you for the incredible generosity of Gordon, Thomas, Honeywell as we work to bring the community together around this most important goal. We wish you and your families a happy holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,



Jim Shoemake, President