



Tulsa Area **Community Schools** Initiative

*Successful students, healthy families, engaged communities*



***Community schools' successes generate excitement and support!***

# Community Schools: A Bold Vision Requiring A New Way of Thinking and Doing Business

## ***In the COMMUNITY...***

The community schools approach is based on a new mindset about achieving success for students and their families. The challenges today's families and students face in their daily lives often become serious barriers to student success. To overcome these barriers by addressing the needs of the "whole" child demands a purposeful partnership involving the entire community, families, and the schools, in order to assure the best opportunities for all children.

The **Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative (TACSI)** was established through the Tulsa Metropolitan Human Services Commission (MHSC) in 2007. It is administered by the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa (CSC) and guided by a community advisory board. The TACSI Resource Center at CSC staffs a Management Team with leaders from the two participating school districts (Union and Tulsa) and other key partners. This structure assures focused, accountable leadership within the community and key institutions for implementing and supporting this new way of doing business.

## ***...in the SCHOOLS...***

More than nine thousand students and their families are impacted by the eighteen TACSI Title 1 elementary schools in low income neighborhoods throughout the Tulsa area. Each school has a school based structure and culture effectively integrating a quality academic program with an array of community support resources. The principal and community school coordinator share leadership of the school's site team of school and community partners, working together to plan and implement their school's unique program.

Services and activities in a community school are provided as a part of a larger vision with specific goals focused on improvements for the school, the individual student, the family, and at times, the surrounding neighborhood. This work extends *beyond the provision of services* to efforts designed to *impact conditions affecting learning and student development* (e.g., community safety, housing, transportation).

## ***...and all across the COUNTRY.***

Community schools are now thriving in communities in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

TACSI is part of a vibrant national network, coordinated through the National Coalition for Community Schools.



### **A New Community Mindset**

*"The reason I'm so excited about Community Schools is because it gives every person an opportunity to be at the education table and make a difference in providing quality education."*

Tulsa Mayor, Kathy Taylor



### **A New Infrastructure**

*"What we found in Baltimore was that the ideas around Community Schools were alive already in the community. Parents want services and activities in the building. Community residents want their schools to be essential, vital hubs of the community. However the name Community Schools and the infrastructure to make it work was not present. In order to bring that, we needed to do the kinds of planning and development that you've done here in Tulsa."*

Jessica Strauss, Baltimore Community Schools and National Technical Assistance Consultant



### **All Focused on New Realities and Better Results**

*"The community schools initiative in Tulsa grew out of a clearer recognition that many students enter our classrooms with much larger personal baggage than their backpacks... Community schools recognize this fact and engage in aligning and developing community resources within the school environment to address specific unmet family and student needs. TACSI and the Resource Center assure this engagement occurs, in conjunction with the leadership and work at each school site. In addition, the Center facilitates establishment of research based standards for defining the makeup and operation of a community school to insure that the community school model is more results than rhetoric."*

Ed Payton, Member, Union Public Schools Board of Education, and Member, TACSI Advisory Board

A **community school** is both a **place** and a network of supportive **partnerships** between the school and the community. It provides a **web of support** that nurtures the development of children and adults, creating the **conditions for learning**.

TACSI schools focus on seven **core components**: (1) early childhood development and education, (2) health and health education, (3) mental health/social services, (4) youth development/out-of-school time, (5) family/community engagement, (6) neighborhood development, and (7) lifelong learning.

By sharing expertise and resources, schools and communities act in concert to **educate the whole child**—academically, physically, socially, and emotionally. These schools often become **centers of their neighborhoods** with community partners providing resources, services and opportunities for students, families, and their neighbors.



## ***Innovative programs, strong partnerships***

**Effective neighborhood and volunteer involvement...** Organized by **TACSI SCHOOL COORDINATORS** and **RESOURCE CENTER** staff, caring individuals from dozens of area health, social service, recreation, youth development, business, and faith-based organizations can be found in individual community schools before, during, and after school and in the summer, providing help and enrichment opportunities for students and their families.

**Mentoring...** TACSI coordinates the **MAYOR'S MENTORING TO THE MAX** initiative. Launched in 2007 with financial support from Bank of America, it has provided ongoing relationships with caring adults for over 1,200 elementary school children in all eighteen TACSI community schools. Bank of America and the Walton Family Foundation through Arvest Bank are providing support for the 2009-10 school year. Mayor Taylor invites local musicians to volunteer for a new program, **MENTORING TO THE MAX WITH MUSIC**.

**Global Gardens...** Several TACSI schools partner with **GLOBAL GARDENS**, a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to engaging low-income students and communities in new learning and service opportunities through community gardens. The **JUNIOR LEAGUE of TULSA** has selected Rosa Parks and its Global Gardens as a signature project.

**Faith-based partners...** More than 45 faith-based groups provide volunteers, support and activities for TACSI schools. They come together through TACSI-sponsored roundtables for peer support and to exchange service ideas.

**Seniors in schools...** **TULSA AREA AGENCY ON AGING** and **SODEXHO** (the food provider for both the schools and the senior nutrition program) partner with some TACSI schools to bring neighborhood seniors and students together in school cafeterias, sharing lunches and relationships across the generations for the benefit of all.

**Higher education partnerships...** School-based **HEALTH CLINICS** staffed by **OU-TULSA MEDICAL STUDENTS** provide on-site primary health care for students, siblings, family members, and school faculty and staff ... **OU-TULSA URBAN DESIGN STUDIO** graduate students and TACSI created a **NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING ACADEMY**, training school facilitators to organize neighborhood residents to plan and act together ... The **OU-TULSA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK** supplies graduate student interns to work with TACSI families to help solve problems at home which interfere with their children's learning at school ... **OU-TULSA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION** professor Dr. Curt Adams is working with TACSI to create a community schools evaluation ... **OU-TULSA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT** is the country's first **REGIONAL TRAINING CENTER ON UNIVERSITY-ASSISTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS** ... **TULSA COMMUNITY COLLEGE NORTHEAST CAMPUS** mobilizes faculty and staff to assist TACSI schools, and hosts campus visits and family events to introduce college and career opportunities.



## ***TACSI earns recognition and support***

**Connecting early childhood with first years of school...** Tulsa is one of three cities nationally to receive a **W.K. Kellogg Foundation EARLY CHILDHOOD AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS LINKAGE GRANT** to build a coordinated continuum of child development and learning which improves both school readiness and early school performance.

**Expanding out-of-school time programs...** The City of Tulsa and TACSI were awarded a **NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES** technical assistance grant to develop a city-wide system for quality and accessible out of school time activities. **The FORUM FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT** and the **OKLAHOMA AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK** selected Tulsa as one of two Oklahoma cities to work in partnership with **QUALITY COUNTS/READY BY 21**.

**Enhancing summer reading and enrichment...** Over 150 neighborhood students have attended a summer **ACADEMIC AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAM** at McKinley elementary, organized by TACSI with funding from Bezalel Foundation, George Kaiser Family Foundation, Hille Foundation, and ZINK Foundation.

**Receiving national and local recognition for TACSI's leadership and progress...** TACSI's expertise is frequently sought for **PRESENTATIONS AND CONSULATION** at the local, state, and national levels. Groups from other communities visit Tulsa to learn about TACSI as a model community schools initiative. TACSI is a member and leader in the **NATIONAL COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**, and is currently working with them to address chronic absence. The **TULSA METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** honored TACSI programs and staff as Partners in Education.



### **TACSI**

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***"The community school is the best vehicle for effectively mobilizing community assets to support student learning."***

- Ira Harkavy, a national community schools leader; Director, University of Pennsylvania Netter Center for Community Partnerships