

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

*Getting Started in Tulsa:
What It's Going to Take*



**Launching & leading
the planning process ...**

Planning for community schools in the Tulsa area ... leadership:

- **Planning/policy/advocacy organizations**
 - Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa
 - Metropolitan Human Services Commission
- **Leading school districts**
 - Tulsa
 - Union





The Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa (CSC)

Since 1941, leadership for community-based planning & mobilization to address health & human service needs

Functions:

- community research & planning
- policy & resource development
- community mobilization
- information & referral
- promoting volunteerism

Overall focus: *prevention*



Tulsa Metropolitan Human Services Commission (MHSC) ...

- Since 1981, a planning & policy partnership which:
 - coordinates funding, planning & policy decisions affecting human services in Tulsa County
 - provides overall leadership in guiding the use of partners' resources in addressing major community issues & concerns
 - promotes public policy action needed for prevention & effective service delivery
- Partners:

City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Tulsa Area United Way, Okla. Dept. of Human Services, Tulsa Public Schools, Union Public Schools, & Tulsa City-County Health Dept., with representatives also from the business & faith communities.
- Community Service Council provides staff support

MHSC priorities for 2006:

- Early childhood development
- Preventing child abuse & neglect
- School, family, neighborhood collaboration
- State/local collaborative decision making

School leaders ... the keys to success.

“Tulsa Alliance for Families (TAF) was the most empowering program a school leader could experience. The process gave you an opportunity to dream outside the box: to envision and work side by side with community agencies in building a neighborhood culture focused on school success. The family collaborative gave all families the support needed in order for their children to seek and sustain lifelong learning.”

- Diane Hensley, Principal, Mark Twain Elementary - Tulsa



**Improving student outcomes
requires a change in thinking,
beyond “school reform.”**

Community schools and strong community partnerships are critical to this change.

Success will require a focus on working together like never before.



This change in thinking recognizes two essential *realities* ...

- More and more families cannot fully meet their children's multiple needs critical to their academic success.
- Schools alone cannot overcome all of the barriers to learning.



Many families cannot meet students' multiple needs ... *key challenges*:

- Financial difficulties
- Changing family patterns
- Unstable living arrangements/housing
- Movement of children among different households, including grandparents
- Frequent household moves
- Substance abuse; mental illness; incarceration
- Neighborhood deterioration
- Immigrant families' cultural & language issues



Schools alone cannot overcome all barriers to learning ... *key challenges:*

- Poor education outcomes; widening achievement gaps
- Disengaged parents & community
- Dramatic demographic changes
- Growing cultural & language diversity
- Staff frustration/morale
- Finding & retaining qualified professionals
- School violence concerns
- Disconnected students & families not living in immediate school area
- Students' health & mental health problems

Continued ...



Challenges affecting schools, continued:

- Poor public image
- Increased scrutiny due to “No Child Left Behind”
- Concerns about poor return on public investment
- Disconnect between schools & their neighborhoods/
community
- Public apathy/disconnect due to declining households
with children
- Lack of public understanding of schools’ challenges



These challenges can be more effectively addressed by a new approach & new thinking ... *community schools*.

Schools alone can't overcome all the barriers to learning. But, with **community partners**, they can significantly improve:

- student learning
- family involvement
- neighborhood development



***“No matter how
great the challenges,
schools & communities
can pool their resources
to help children achieve.”***

- Wendy Puriefoy, President, Public Education Network;
from “Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice”

Introducing Community Schools

“Community schools--with a focus on academics, health, and social services--offer the most promise for ensuring that every child can succeed, and that we spend precious public dollars as efficiently & effectively as possible. Schools can and should be the centers of every community.”

- Congressman Steny H. Hoyer
from “Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice”

What is a community school?

A community school is both a place and a partnership approach that mobilizes an array of resources, services, supports and opportunities leading to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities.

-- Coalition for Community Schools



A committed partnership; a shared goal

Community schools make students' academic success a shared goal and a shared responsibility among:

- the school district
- parents
- community organizations
- community leaders in all sectors

... and providing three key sets of supports & opportunities:

- a strong, coherent core instructional program during the school day
- supports & services that address & remove barriers to learning
- enrichment opportunities during and after school hours that build students' motivation & capacity to succeed in school



The community school concept ...

key components:

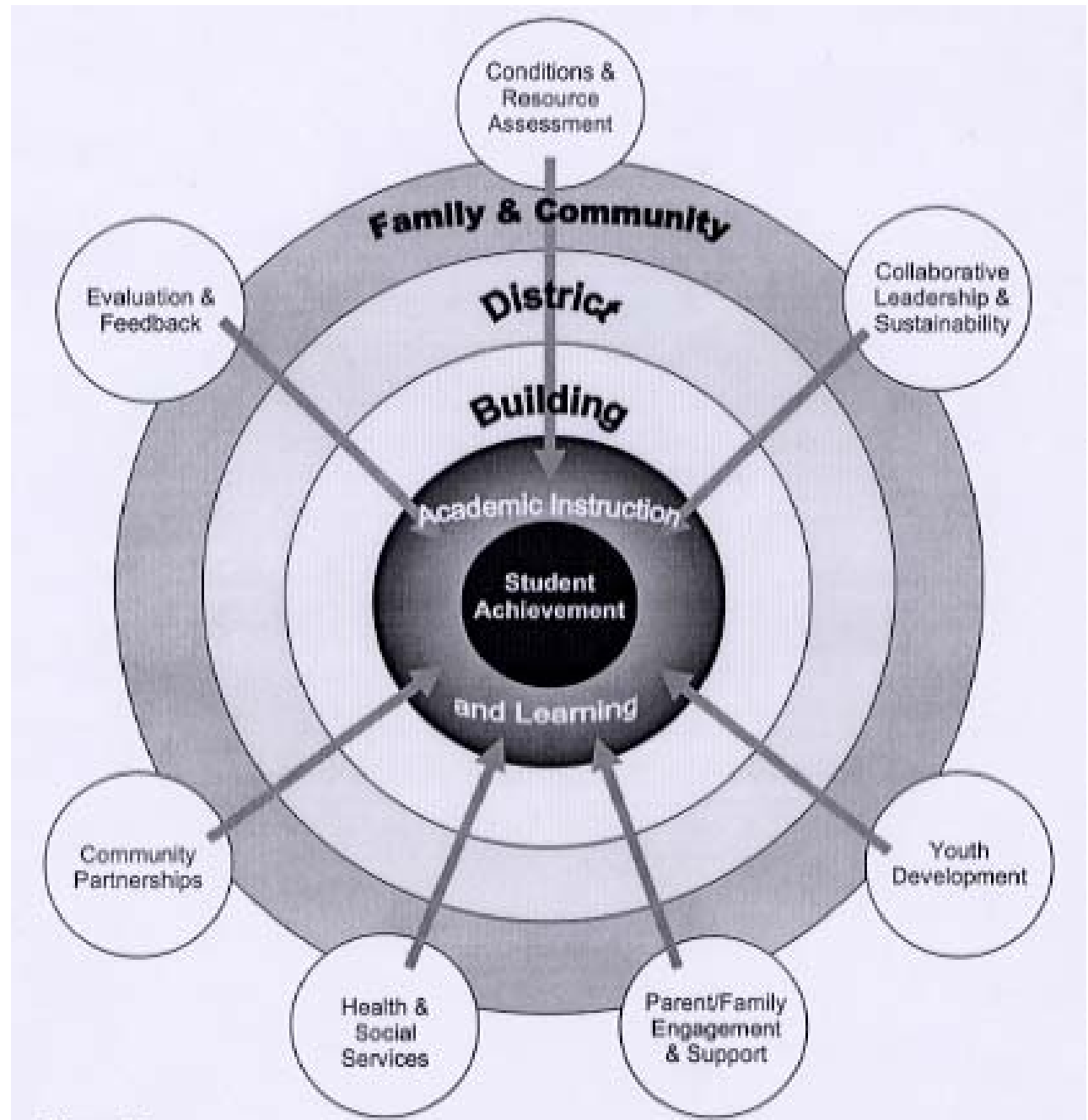
- Early childhood development
- Quality education & community learning
- Family support & engagement
- Health promotion & care
- Youth development, i.e. before/during/after school care & enrichment
- Neighborhood development & community engagement



How it all fits together

“The big picture”
for student success

The Ohio Community
Collaboration Model for
School Improvement



Working together ...

Educators

School employees

Students

Families

Neighborhood leaders, volunteers, residents

Health & social service agencies, public & private

Youth development organizations

Civic & religious groups

Higher education

Government

Businesses

Foundations

Others committed to children



Strengthening Schools, Families and Communities

Community Schools:
A National Perspective

*“Never in our nation’s history
has it been so essential
that the public and private sector, families,
neighbors, business leaders, & educators alike
join together to focus on what has become
this country’s most urgent civil rights issue,
educating our youth.
Community schools use the best practices,
research, & experience of others
to answer that call.”*

- Hon. David N. Cicilline, Mayor, Providence, Rhode Island;
from “Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice”

Community schools ... a growing national movement.

National organizations

coordinate & support the community schools movement

- Coalition for Community Schools
- National Center for Community Education
- National Community Education Association



Building on & linking promising initiatives used in other cities:

CONCEPTS...

School of the 21st Century

Family Resource Centers

Caring Communities

Communities in Schools

School-based/School-linked

Community Education

Full Service Schools

PROGRAMS...

Children's Aid Society

Schools Uniting Neighborhoods

Bridges to Success

Beacons Schools



Strengthening Schools, Families and Communities

Community schools ... a growing national movement.

Community schools ...
thriving in small, medium & large communities
all across America

- Evansville, IN
 - Boston, MA
 - Lincoln, NE
 - Chicago, IL
 - Portland, OR
 - Indianapolis, IN
- ... and many others.



Nationally, a long history ... laying the foundation for community schools:

- 1930** Community education pilot program-- Flint, Michigan
- 1960's** Birth of NCCE (Natl Center for Community Education)--leadership development, training & technical assistance
- 1970's** Federal support: Community Schools Act
- 1980's** National school/community models emerge
- 1994** Community school approach presented as part of school reform



National history, continued:

- 1997** Coalition for Community Schools begins to take shape
- 1998** 21st Century Community Learning Centers; major funding; “Community Schools: Partnerships for Excellence” report
- 2000** Major reports: first evaluation findings; advantages of community schools & conditions for learning
- 2002** No Child Left Behind federal legislation
- 2005** Full Schools Community Schools Act introduced as federal legislation

Community Schools:

A Local Perspective

Tulsa ... laying the foundation for successful community schools.

- 1980's Initial focus on improving child care
- 1990's Coordinating services for children & families, focusing on prevention & school partnerships
- Late 90's Formal neighborhood/school partnerships; Tulsa Alliance for Families (TAF), with TPS; developing a system of early care & education through community partnerships (i.e. among Tulsa Public Schools, Tulsa Children's Coalition, Head Start, etc.)
- 2000's Beginning to put it all together: formal action plan



What we've learned: *collaboration*

- Collaboration takes tremendous amounts of time, patience & fortitude
- Community partners need to have constant communication & continual education
- The public systems (DHS, TPS, THA, Health) may not adjust quickly to changing family & community needs
- New policies have to be developed to overcome natural resistance to change



What we've learned: *governance & leadership*

- Clear definitions, critical for all partners
- Leadership & front-line staff: both necessary for success
- Sustainability must be a focus from the beginning



What we've learned: *management & staff*

- More resources for evaluation and monitoring, training, neighborhood engagement and a common information sharing system
- Front-line staff need to be visible, accessible, & familiar (low turnover is very important)
- Staff needed more supervision, feedback & support



What we've learned: *families*

- Growing number of families impacted by severe financial difficulties
- Families in crisis don't plan long-term but deal with "at the moment" issues
- Consistent crisis management for a few families takes staff away from other families with problems
- Families have little time & energy for traditional family nurturing & enrichment



What we've learned: *families*

- We can meet a need, but unless the core cause of that need is addressed it will come back
- Hard to get many parents involved
- Families most easily connect first through engaging in early childhood programs



What we've learned: *evaluation*

- Effective collaborations improve communication & commitment to shared goals
- Progress is being made in many critical areas
- Difficult to determine which variable led to the outcome obtained because multiple interventions/services were involved



Community Schools:

*Moving Beyond the
Traditional Approach*

Community schools are different:

- **Staff leadership** ... a well-trained community schools coordinator for the district, and one at each school
- **Designed comprehensive partnership approach** ... intentional, not ad hoc; formally integrated into the life of the school; based on trusting & long-term working relationships both inside & outside the school; formal commitment by partners, each holding the others accountable



Community schools are different:

- **Shared responsibility for success** ... school, partners, & broader community -- for funding, programs, & accountability
- **Expanded community access** ... extended days & hours
- **Extensive community curriculum** ... community learning opportunities integrated into instructional programs



Shared leadership...*vision, trust, inspiration, & mobilization spur progress*

- At the school level
 - Principals & Community Schools Coordinators
 - Site-based school teams
- At the school district level
 - Superintendent
 - Board of Education
- At the neighborhood level
 - Broad-based community advisory councils
- At the community-wide level
 - Mayor
 - Funders
 - MHSC as catalyst
 - Oversight committee



Shared governance...oversight, *monitoring, policies, procedures, agreements*

- Community-wide steering committee
- Community partners from core components
 - early childhood
 - family support
 - health
 - after school
 - etc.



From the beginning, a shared commitment to lasting change:

- Willingness to go beyond “business as usual”
- From the first, planning for sustainability
- Long-term view--maintaining the momentum
- Persisting despite obstacles & setbacks
- Producing authentic change in policies & programs
- Building political capital & creating the political will motivating officials to take new direction



Community Schools:

*Making an Impact
... Getting Results*

Research shows community schools make a difference in 4 important areas:

- Student outcomes (academic & non-academic)
- Families' engagement with their students & schools
- The school environment
- Neighborhood vitality & family/community engagement

*-- Source: Coalition for Community Schools,
"Making the Difference: Research & Practice in Community Schools"*



Community schools ... making a difference in *student outcomes*

- Addressing needs of the whole child --
physical, emotional, academic

Measured by: improved grades in school courses, scores in proficiency testing

- Creating environments that fulfill all the conditions of
learning

Measured by: improved attendance, reduced discipline problems, greater compliance with school rules, increased access to physical & mental health services, greater contact with supportive adults



Community schools ... making a difference in *families' engagement with students & school*

- Access to services & opportunities as leaders & learners that make them better partners in their children's education

Measured by:

- improvement in communication with schools & teachers
- family stability & ability to provide basic needs to children
- attendance at school meetings
- confidence in ability to teach their children



Community schools ... making a difference in the *school environment*

- Helping schools function more effectively by improving the overall school environment

Measured by:

- perception of safety
- number of on-site services & programs
- more parents involved in student learning
- services well-integrated into daily operation of schools



Community schools ... making a difference in *neighborhood vitality, community engagement*

- Active presence as a community hub: opportunities for family involvement; the community as a resource for learning; a place for community problem-solving

Measured by:

- community knowledge of the community school initiative
- increased use of the school building
- awareness of community agencies
- improved security & safety in surrounding area
- community pride



**Creating
Community Schools
for the Tulsa Area:**

*Planning and Action
for Individual Schools and the
Overall Community*

Principals: the essential catalysts for success ...

- Championing the community schools approach
- Providing overall leadership & accountability
- Sharing ideas, knowledge, recommendations
- Facilitating & implementing a local school/community plan
- Contributing “front lines” experience during the creation of a community-wide plan



... with strong support from:

- Superintendent
- Board members
- School site administrative staff
- School site instructional staff
- School site support staff
- Community organizations
- Neighborhood parents & leaders
- Other community school partners
- Community-wide leadership group



Creating community schools in Tulsa ... where we are, and what's next:

MHSC: catalyst for action (*top-down & bottom-up*)

Proposed steps:

1. School districts allocate staff leadership; training
2. Principals' work groups, Union & Tulsa school systems
3. School & neighborhood input
4. Lead school action plans & implementation
5. Steering committee & structure for supporting implementation



First, assess the needs & strengths of your students, families, school, & neighborhood.

- Collect available demographic data to better understand conditions & needs
- Reach out to residents
- Tap expertise of leaders & professionals
- Look at existing services
- Identify strengths as well as needs



Schools, ask ...

- What conditions (*school, community*) are affecting student learning?
- What actions could make a difference?
- What barriers do we face?
- What needs to happen at our school to make needed changes happen?
- Who is already involved?
Who else do we need & how can we engage them?
- What is our action plan?



**Creating
Community Schools
for the Tulsa Area ...**

***Thank you for your
involvement & support!***