



THE DIMON DISTINGUISHED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AWARD



THE FEDERATION FOR  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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THE FEDERATION FOR  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



The Federation for Community Schools brings together individuals and organizations who support community schools throughout Illinois. Through collaboration, we promote policies that support quality, full service community schools, serve as a clearinghouse of community school best practices, and facilitate the professional networking of community school practitioners.

## OUR MISSION

Our vision is that every school in Illinois will partner with its community to provide high-quality programs, during the regular school day and out-of-school time, which enrich students' educational experiences and achievement, support families, and strengthen communities.

## OUR VISION

The Federation for Community Schools is a collaborative that advocates for policies that develop and sustain community schools, which support children, youth, families, and communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Federation for Community Schools would like to acknowledge JP Morgan Chase Foundation and the James and Judy K. Dimon Foundation for their creation and support of the Dimon Distinguished Community Schools Award.

The Federation also would like to recognize Chicago Public Schools for its unwavering commitment to expanding community schools throughout Chicago as well as the many other school districts in Illinois who have made a similar commitment of resources, vision, and staffing.

The Federation for Community Schools thanks its funders for their continued support and participation in the Federation: The Polk Bros Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, and JP Morgan Chase Foundation.

We also acknowledge and thank our coalition members throughout Illinois – without your commitment to community schools, to children, to families, and to the work you do every day, none of our work would be possible. Thank you for the difference you are making in people's lives across Illinois.

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# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS —

## PILLARS AND OUTCOMES

Community schools are schools that: align out-of-school time programming with classroom learning; bring schools, families, and communities together and working towards common goals, and; coordinate the access to and provision of resources to children and families using schools as hubs. As the following profiles illustrate, each of the ten Dimon Distinguished Community Schools accomplishes this alignment, this coordination, and these partnerships in unique, creative, compelling, and highly-effective ways. Raising the work to this level yields powerful and lasting outcomes.

To reach these outcomes, the ten Dimon Distinguished Community Schools, as well as all community schools, organize initiatives and outcomes around four pillars of development. By working to meet the needs associated with each pillar, community schools develop the “whole child,” and enable children to: come to school ready and motivated to learn; achieve academic success; live, learn, and thrive in safe, strong and supportive communities, and; participate themselves as active, positive members of their communities.

### ***The pillars around which community schools are organized are:***

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – through their commitment to meeting the academic needs of students and adults, and with the goal of creating academically successful life-long learners, community schools' programs range from remediation and tutoring to adult education classes such as English Language Learning and computer skills to enrichment activities such as visual arts programs and science clubs.

- **Strengthening Families** – recognizing that a family under stress puts children under stress, making it nearly impossible for them to focus on learning, community schools work to support the whole family by providing access to programs ranging from case management and basic needs assistance to family literacy nights to parenting workshops.

- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – many children do not have access to even the most basic physical and mental health care, and most children do not have access to the physical activity and social-emotional supports they need. Community schools marshal and provide the physical and mental health resources and programs that children and families need, ranging from access to basic care via health clinics (on-site and through partnerships) to organized and regularly-scheduled physical education classes to social-emotional learning programs and mental health services.

- **Community Involvement** – because it truly “takes a village,” community schools also organize initiatives and activities in ways that encourage community involvement with the school and student and family involvement in the community, and that establish mutually-beneficial partnerships between the school and the community. Examples include opening up adult education classes to community members and community service projects undertaken by students, as well as community participation in leadership and decision making at the school.

# BURROUGHS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL—

THIS SCHOOL BELONGS TO THE COMMUNITY



## School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in Chicago's Brighton Park neighborhood on the Southwest side
- 550 students in Pre-K — 8th grades
- 95.4% low-income; primarily Latino
- Strong community partnerships
- Lead partner: Brighton Park Neighborhood Council

## Community School HIGHLIGHTS

Burroughs Elementary School promotes a culture of commitment. The prevailing philosophy embraced by school leadership, staff, parents, and partners is that the school belongs to the community. This message is reinforced across the board, from how it factors into hiring decisions to the inclusiveness of the algebra program (it's open to all children in the community, not just Burroughs students). Burroughs also embraces a culture of consistency. No separation exists between the regular day and the out-of-school time programs. Rather, the school considers itself as operational from early in the morning to late into the evening, with formal and informal channels of communication linking staff members responsible for different parts of the day and staff development for everyone.

Using data-driven decision making processes, the leadership team evaluates needs, assesses available resources, and makes connections between the two. Their evaluation of needs and identification of resources stretches beyond the school itself. Burroughs is focused also on supporting parents by

providing both adult education and parent engagement opportunities, as well as promoting the concept that parents and the school are "on the same team," working towards children's healthy development and academic achievement.

By viewing itself as a community resource as well, Burroughs forges mutually beneficial partnerships with local businesses, including AAA and a local bottling company. For example, companies provide resources for Burroughs' programs, and the school opens its gym doors for employee sports leagues. The school certainly benefits from the resources local businesses provide, but the businesses and their employees also benefit from being involved with Burroughs.

Perhaps one of the most telling signs of the culture of inclusiveness at Burroughs is the fact that Burroughs' graduates return frequently to participate in the Teen Transition program – to volunteer as tutors and to work at Burroughs.

## Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Shared Leadership** – decisions are made through collaboration; expectation from the Principal to the staff is that everyone is committed to Burroughs being a community school, and everyone works together to move Burroughs, its students, and the community toward that goal.
- **Culture of Commitment** – embracing and living the philosophy that Burroughs school belongs to and is a reflection of the community.

## Programming HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – Tutoring and homework help support academic achievement; arts and drama classes broaden students' horizons.
- **Strengthening Families** – Parents are part of the leadership team; opportunities for parents to learn, grow, and develop their own strengths; family literacy activities.
- **Community Involvement** – Local companies donate resources for school programs; algebra enrichment program open to students from the entire community, not just Burroughs students.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – Using Safety Network funding, Burroughs has organized parent patrols, walking school buses, and similar initiatives (in partnership with other schools) to make sure children are and feel safe getting to and from school.



## Take Home LESSONS

Making professional development available to all people working in the school can help reinforce a climate of consistency.

Think about assessing community needs, and how to leverage the school's resources to meet those needs as well.



# DVORAK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL —

Dvorak Elementary School

PARENTS = PARTNERS



## School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in Chicago's North Lawndale community
- 600+ children in Kindergarten - 8th grades
- 97.9% low-income; Primarily African American
- Community faces challenges, but is committed to the school
- Lead partner: Family Focus

## Community School HIGHLIGHTS

At the core of the Dvorak adult community (staff, leadership, parents, and community members) is a collaboration focused on doing whatever can and needs to be done to benefit the children. The leadership team at Dvorak, which includes parents and the Resource Coordinator, works hard to meet the needs of the student and parent population in creative and integrated ways. The out-of-school time programs focus on academic support and enrichment, as well as on fun and structured physical activities. Learning activities link to those undertaken in the classroom and serve to enhance students' academic experiences (examples include the use of the Kids' College program and Family Focus' agency-wide use of curriculum alignment tools to map programs to Illinois State Board of Education learning standards).

The team at Dvorak also focuses on parent involvement and developing parent capacity. Parents

staff many activities, as both volunteers and as paid employees. Parent University serves to provide parent education programs, and parents are always present at the Saturday basketball games. Community members also provide support, ranging from purchasing new uniforms for the cheerleading squad to leading the large and active Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts troops.

Dvorak also operates a culture of consistently high expectations. Children are expected to achieve academically (and are supported to do so), and are expected to be respectful, safe, and responsible at all times – whether they are in the classroom or playing in a Saturday basketball league. This creates a Dvorak culture that, in essence, serves to establish a seamless “school day and year,” stretching from before-school programs, through the after school programs, to Saturday events and field trips.

## Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Parents as Partners** – developing the capacity for parental involvement in the school by training parents as volunteers and staff members, and by making parental engagement with the Saturday programs a mandate.
- **Seamless Day** – behavioral and achievement expectations are clear, consistent, embraced by all staff members, and non-negotiable at all times, ranging from time in the classroom to out-of-school time, throughout the day, week, and year.

## Programming HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – Tutoring and homework help support academic achievement; arts and drama classes broaden students' horizons.
- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – alignment with the tools used in the classroom; focus on curriculum alignment with ISBE learning standards.
- **Strengthening Families** – Parent University, parents' involvement with the school as both volunteers and as program staff; focus on capacity building with parents.
- **Community Involvement** – Reaching out to the community to share the opportunities to participate with Dvorak programs yields volunteers and support.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – Organized and structured physical education and sports programs; access to healthy, hot snack in the afternoons.



## Take Home LESSONS

Implement the same behavior management strategies throughout the entire day; train out-of-school time staff on the school's expectations and systems.

Develop parent capacity by providing meaningful opportunities for involvement – ask parents what they are good at, what they enjoy, and if they would be willing to share their skills with students.



# GEMINI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL —

Gemini Junior High School

## PREPARING FOR TRANSITIONS



### School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in Northwest Cook County
- 800 7th-8th graders
- 40+% low-income
- Very Diverse, changing community
- Lead partner: multiple community organizations, District 63 staff

### Community School HIGHLIGHTS

Gemini Junior High School serves all of the children in the East Maine School District 63 system. It is their transition point between elementary school and high school, and the programs that the Total Learning Community offers at Gemini (and the District's elementary schools) serve to promote student development, support families, and prepare middle schoolers for successful high school transitions and experiences. Programs also engage community members with students (the seniors-students computer class, for example).

The Total Learning Community programs began as a 21st Century Community Learning Center grantee, and today (without remaining 21st Century funds) serve children attending all of the elementary schools in District 63, as well as the students attending Gemini. In order to meet the needs of working families and provide additional academic and enrichment activities, the Total Learning Community programs both maximize out-of-school time – including after school, winter and spring breaks, and summer vacation time –

as enrichment time and provide safe, supportive, and engaging activities for children during traditional work (and unsupervised) hours. Programs are focused on academic development and integration with and support of classroom academic goals. Activities encourage cultural competence to reflect and support the school and community's large immigrant population.

Programs are offered primarily in partnership with community organizations. Needs are identified among the student and family populations, and resources are sought through partnerships. For example, Oakton Community College provides adult English Language Learning classes and family literacy programs. Spring Fling, a program that takes place over spring break, exposes students to a variety of fun and enriching experiences and through partnerships with the University of Illinois Extension, Lutheran General Hospital, Home Depot, the Niles Fire Department, Junior Achievement, the Urban Fishing Program, and school staff.

### Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Preparing students for successful transitions** – providing middle school students with the tools, resources, experiences, and skills they need to become successful high school students, and to manage the transition to high school in positive ways.
- **“Other people’s money”** – maximizing community partnerships and resources to meet program needs, provide access to resources, and bring enriching experiences to students and families.

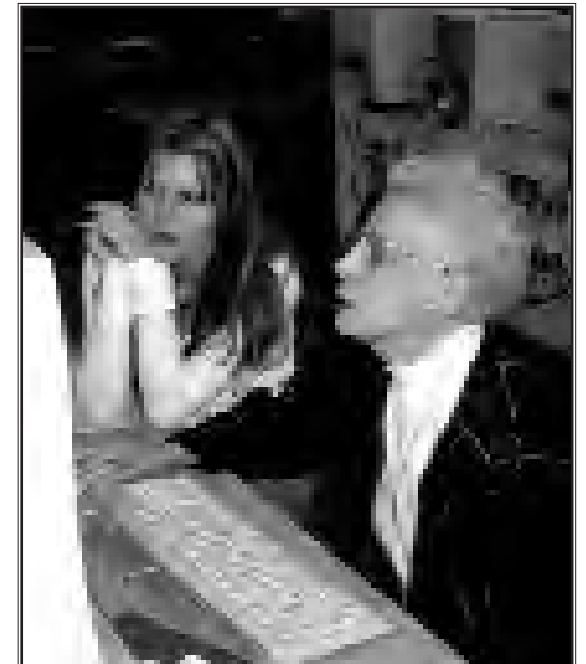
### Programming HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – meeting children “where they are” academically and providing support when and where it is needed to raise achievement.
- **Strengthening Families** – supporting working families by providing safe, structured, and enriching programs for children during traditionally un-and-undersupervised, risky, after school and vacation hours.
- **Community Involvement** – engaging community partners in community school development and program implementation both as providers and as leadership team members.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – partnering to meet students' health needs; bringing the Family Medical Clinic to Gemini families.

### Take Home LESSONS

Reach out to community organizations to identify resources and programs that can be provided to the school for “free,” using those organizations' grants, mandates, and goals to meet programming needs.

Provide developmentally appropriate activities for middle school students and maximize opportunities for them to take on increasing responsibility for their choices.



# GOLDBLATT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL —

Goldblatt Elementary School

## ENGAGING RESOURCES



### School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in Chicago's North Lawndale community
- 350+ students in Pre-K — 8th grades
- 94.3% low-income; African American
- Community working to overcome challenges
- Lead partner: Chicago Area Project

### Community School HIGHLIGHTS

As an early-start school, Goldblatt Elementary completes its regular school day at 1:45, but that does not end the learning day for students and adults alike. Goldblatt remains open and operational until well into the evening, with students participating in tutoring, sports programs, and enrichment activities. The amount and richness of programs that Goldblatt offers, as well as the school's ability to extend the operational day into the evening, results directly from a strong commitment from every adult involved with the school, from the Principal and Assistant Principal, to the lead partner agency staff, to the school classroom and building staff, to parent volunteers.

In the interest of out-of-school time alignment with classroom learning, each program throughout the day is aligned with the school's curriculum, academic goals, and learning objectives. These goals are clearly articulated to all staff and providers, including Supplemental Education Services providers and volunteers. This focus on consistent curriculum goals

serves to enhance children's educational experiences and improve their academic performances.

The demonstrated and obvious commitment that the adults around them have to children's development, achievement, and access to positive experiences is apparent to the students as well. So much so, in fact, that students are able to turn their attention to helping others. Through their participation in the O Ambassadors' program, students researched conditions for their peers in Asia, and discovered that many children contract serious illnesses due to unsafe drinking water. So Goldblatt students are raising money for Asian children to access to safe drinking water.

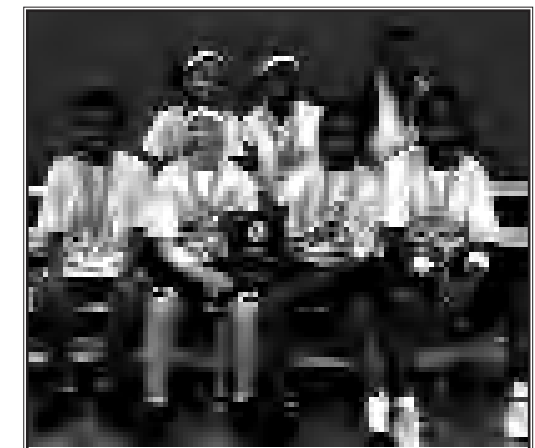
Students are able to access these experiences not just because of the commitment of the adults around them, but also because of Chicago Area Project's work to identify and maximize resources beyond the school and community to the benefit of both.

### Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Leveraging Resources** – Chicago Area Project is a strong partner and integral presence in the school, working to leverage resources that the school would otherwise not be able to access.
- **Fully Engaged School Staff** – school staff participate in and lead community school programming which helps to ensure that teachers are supportive of and engaged in out-of-school time activities and work to ensure curricular consistency throughout the day.

### Programming HIGHLIGHTS

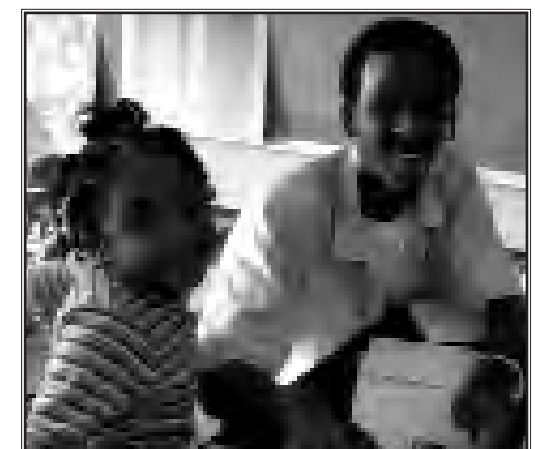
- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – all programs are aligned with the state academic standards; objectives and expectations are clearly and consistently communicated to children and adults leading to increased academic achievement.
- **Strengthening Families** – academic expectations are clearly communicated, so parents can be active participants in their children's learning experiences; parent volunteers participate in programs.
- **Community Involvement** – Chicago Area Project reaches out and leverages resources from within and outside of the immediate community, beyond what the school could access on its own.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – a well-organized sports program staffed by committed school employees in a less-than-perfect basketball facility increases students' daily physical activity as well as provides an opportunity to team build and create school spirit.



### Take Home LESSONS

Bring the Community to the School – open up school programming to in-school children as well as others in the community, like the Goldblatt's basketball team.

Curriculum alignment takes place when all staff members – regular day, out-of-school, and program-specific alike – are clear on the school's curricular goals and achievement mandates, while regular school staff working in the community school provide consistency.



# NETTELHORST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL —

COMMUNITY CENTER

Nettelhorst Elementary School



## School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located on Chicago's North side
- 500 children in Pre-K — 8th grades
- Diverse student population
- 39% low-income
- Changing community, changing neighborhood
- Lead partner: Hull House

## Community School HIGHLIGHTS

Meeting the needs of a diverse population can be challenging; Nettelhorst accomplishes this in a variety of creative ways. Nettelhorst promotes a culture that has the school at the heart of its community. Parents and community members are welcomed into the school as partners in children's education and as partners in the development of all people the school touches — children, staff, parents, and community members. Nettelhorst's Community Kitchen and Tot Time programs are examples of Nettelhorst's culture of inclusiveness beyond the traditional school day programs, as is its commitment to enabling every child to participate in every program available, regardless of resources.

Classroom learning is coordinated with out-of-school time activities because of the commitment of the school's leadership team and staff, and because of the integration of the Resource Coordinator with the

school's leadership team. Without this level of cooperation and collaboration, such tight links between classroom learning and after school programs would not be possible. Nettelhorst operates within a culture of shared leadership, commitment, and responsibility between in-school and after school staff.

The team at Nettelhorst identifies programs by talking and listening to its teachers, students, and parents. The team focuses on meeting program needs by marketing both its offerings and needs to parents, community members, and local businesses. Nettelhorst has found creative and mutually beneficial ways to involve the community in the school. When a need arises or is identified, the leadership team responds with a "let's just ask" mentality — they reach out to parents and their networks, local businesses and community organizations to ask for assistance with the resources required to meet needs.

## Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Just Ask** — markets the school as an asset by letting community residents and businesses know how the school is benefits the community and how community members can be welcomed partners in the school, and asks for support with the school's programming needs.
- **Program Variety** — programming addresses multiple levels of needs and interests, with a commitment to providing programming to everyone, despite fee-for-services.

## Programming HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** — foreign language classes are offered for different levels; participants (whether students or parents) have the opportunity to learn and advance.
- **Strengthening Families** — Community Kitchen provides space for parent groups, parent educational programs, and parent support services for Nettelhorst and community parents.
- **Community Involvement** — Outreach to local businesses yields volunteers (e.g., local gym trainers volunteer to teach cardio classes) while school provides space for community meetings and activities.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** — Nutrition classes for children and adults offered during the regular school day and during out-of-school time, organized physical education program.



## Take Home LESSONS

Dedicate some space in the school building to welcome parents — provide them information, support, and activities so that parents become engaged partners in the school.

Ask local businesses, neighbors, and organizations to be involved — be clear about what the school is doing to support children and the community and the benefits to involvement, and be specific about what kind of participation would be helpful.



# N. KENWOOD/OAKLAND CHARTER SCHOOL —

North Kenwood/Oakland Charter School

*FUN, PERMANENT LEARNING FOR ALL*



## School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located on Chicago's South side  
Changing community
- 335 students from Pre-K — 5th grades
- 75% low-income
- Linked to resources through the University of Chicago
- Lead partner: University of Chicago

## Community School HIGHLIGHTS

North Kenwood/Oakland Charter School (NK/O) provides developmentally appropriate curriculum and activities from morning until evening, aimed at promoting the highest level of academic achievement by its students. As a leadership team, the Principal and Resource Coordinator work together to put in place programs and initiatives that provide developmentally appropriate but challenging learning opportunities for children and adults alike. Out-of-school time programs, among other things, integrate different disciplines into one activity, maximizing learning and exposure to new experiences.

NK/O also focuses on staff development opportunities for anyone involved with the students and families, including out-of-school time staff. The Resource Coordinator and the out-of-school time staff are considered integral members of the school leadership team and staff, and as such, participate in shared leadership and decision making, professional

development, and maintaining high expectations. This, too, contributes to the alignment of classroom curriculum and out-of-school time activities.

Parent and family engagement and involvement is also a core component of NK/O's programs, and the school provides unique ways for parents to get involved. NK/O provides opportunities for parents to spend time together, support each other, and have fun through initiatives like their Fathers' Basketball League and their Mother's Day Luncheon. Opportunities for entire families to explore a new things and have fun together through outings like their annual ski trips are also offered. These programs give families opportunities to expand all of their horizons and have fun together, something often taken for granted. Parents are also more likely to be active partners in their children's educations when they feel welcomed into and supported by the school and school staff.

## Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Focus on Child Development** – programs center on providing developmentally appropriate and enriching learning experiences for children and their families.
- **Family Learning and Fun** – the school provides opportunities for parents and their children to have fun and learn together by exposing the whole family to experiences beyond their communities.

## Programming HIGHLIGHTS

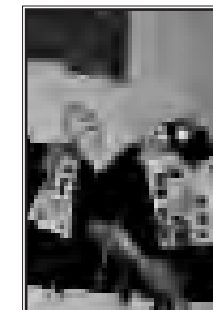
- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – programs provide integration among different disciplines. For example, art and history are taught in a program that explores the cultures of ancient civilizations.
- **Strengthening Families** – out-of-school activities – such as the yearly ski trip – provide opportunities for children and their parents to share a fun, learning experience.
- **Community Involvement** – the REAL Village initiative gives children the opportunity to participate in real-world community roles, such as banker, reporter, business manager, police officer, and mayor. Children learn what it means to be active, productive, and positive community members.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – Families are encouraged to participate in activities that promote physical health for all, children and adults alike.



## Take Home LESSONS

Create opportunities for student leadership experiences through activities like REAL Village that engage them in "learning-through-doing."

Consider integrating different disciplines in one activity, such as an art and history together in one program.



# LUKE O'TOOLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL —

Luke O'Toole Elementary School

## SPHERES OF INFLUENCE



### School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood
- 770+ students in Kindergarten — 7th grades
- 97.4% low-income
- Community faces challenges ranging from safety to asset development
- Lead partner: Metropolitan Family Services

### Community School HIGHLIGHTS

O'Toole Elementary School creates a sphere of influence that extends beyond the school's walls into the community. It supports and encourages students whether they are in the school gym or the store down the street. The neighborhood surrounding O'Toole provides challenges to children's safety at times, and the school and parents work as partners to ameliorate those challenges by creating a safe, caring place for all children and adults.

The school works to meet parent needs as well as those of the students and to provide opportunities for parents to learn and share together. In some cases, programs build parents' self-esteem and self-efficacy so that they can foster those characteristics in their children. Initiatives like the parent resource center, dedicated solely to parent activities and support, serve to help parents overcome any obstacles in their path to involvement, from their own experiences with schools to adult education needs. By providing a place and a space dedicated to parents, O'Toole encourages their

own life-long learning, which, in turn, fosters academic achievement among students.

The leadership team at O'Toole also focuses on creating a climate of high expectations for all (students and adults alike), and on having this culture stretch seamlessly, throughout the entire day and week (O'Toole has Saturday programming and field trips as well). The O'Toole team operates from a shared leadership foundation; programs aren't developed in a vacuum. Rather, programs are developed based on identified needs and feedback from parents, staff, and students. The Principal also "walks the community," and shares his team's vision for student success with community members. The outcome of this shared leadership is a tight link between classroom learning and out-of-school time activities, which are aimed at building upon and expanding student learning by using technology, the arts, and recreation as tools for academic development.

### Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **O'Toole's Sphere of Influence** – high expectations are set by the Principal and the entire school staff, and the expectation is that these standards will be maintained by all members of the O'Toole community, both within the school walls and beyond.
- **Place for Parents** – the parent resource center is operated by and for parents, and designed to meet needs ranging from workshops to adult education to access to information and problem-solving resources.

### Programming HIGHLIGHTS

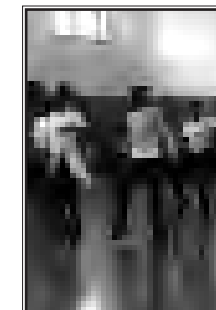
- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – out-of-school time activities focus on academic development Monday through Thursdays, providing support and learning opportunities.
- **Strengthening Families** – Parents have access to resources they need and programs they design, as well as dedicated space in the school.
- **Community Involvement** – the Principal shares his team's vision for student success with community members so that they can reinforce the school's efforts.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – staff-to-student ratio is kept low so that each child can receive individualized attention and support.



### Take Home LESSONS

Share with community members (and local businesses) the school's expectations for student achievement and behavior, and ask them to be partners in this development.

Encourage parents to take ownership over programs and activities aimed at them, and at students, by putting in place communications channels and shared leadership opportunities.



# PULASKI FINE ARTS ACADEMY —

Pulaski Fine Arts Academy

THIS BELONGS TO US



## School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in Chicago's Bucktown/Portage Park neighborhood
- 870+ students in Pre-K — 8th grades
- 93.6% low-income
- Community faces challenges rising from rapid gentrification
- Lead partner: Columbia College Center for Community Arts Partnerships

## Community School HIGHLIGHTS

At Pulaski Fine Arts Academy, everyone that the school touches – students, parents, staff, and administration – share responsibility for the school, its initiatives, and its culture. The philosophy of “this belongs to us” underlies all of the programs and is expressed in different ways, ranging from the “Student Crew” program advisory board to the school service and improvement theme underscoring the summer activities. This level of ownership also extends out into the community, and the school is engaged in community development and problem-solving through the Resource Coordinator’s participation in the Bucktown Community Organization.

Through its partnership with Columbia College’s Center for Community Arts Partnerships, Pulaski focuses on integrating the arts into its classroom and out-of-school time curricula, including programs aimed at adults and families. Arts integration also contributes to the alignment between the classroom curriculum and the out-of-school time activities, since direct links

take place because almost all of the staff of the out-of-school time programs work at the school in the classrooms during the regular school day. The arts integration also enables children to participate in activities aimed at supporting academic development while building self-esteem – for example, the drama program promotes literacy and culminates in a performance. The school’s rock band, Little Kids Rock, engage children in music and self-confidence building.

Parents are also empowered to participate in and lead programs at Pulaski. For example, parents teach both the adult technology classes and the sewing classes. More often than not, the parents teaching these courses are volunteers. Parent support is provided through Pulaski’s Parent Information Resource Center, and parents are encouraged to take leadership roles in shared decision making. Students are also encouraged to volunteer, not just through participation in the Student Crew, but also by mentoring younger students and assisting with their activities.

## Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **This Belongs to Us** – the school is an integral player in the community and in community development. The students and families take ownership over the school and its initiatives.
- **Student Crew** – student leadership teams guide program development.

## Programming HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – Because one-third of the out-of-school time staff also work in classrooms during the regular school day and the remaining two-thirds are teaching artists also staffed at Pulaski, the academic and curricular focus remains the same across different elements of the students’ days.
- **Strengthening Families** – English Language Learning classes are available, and the content studied is tied directly to promoting an understanding of students’ school experiences, ranging from how to read a report card to ways to assist with homework.
- **Community Involvement** – the Resource Coordinator is an active participant in the Bucktown Community Organization, and she spearheaded the effort to create an education committee within the organization. Her participation yielded 4, \$1000 grants for area schools.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – through partnerships and outreach, Pulaski brings eye, dental, and immunization clinics into the school.



## Take Home LESSONS

Consider establishing “student crews” to assist with program development and evaluation and to promote student leadership development.

Build a bridge between the school and the community by participating in local chambers of commerce, community councils, and the like.



# SULLIVAN HIGH SCHOOL —

Sullivan High School

## ENGAGING KIDS IN THE COMMUNITY



### School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in central southern Illinois
- 350 students in 9th — 12 grades
- Rural community
- Lead partner: community businesses, citizens
- District 300 staff

### Community School HIGHLIGHTS

At Sullivan High School, community service and the educational opportunities it affords are critical components to students' high school experiences. The community education programs do not just benefit the students themselves, but expand throughout the school community. Some of community benefits include the collection of 42 tons of recyclable waste that would have otherwise ended up in a landfill, seven days of national disaster relief, hundreds of flowers planted, bags and bags of litter on the streets collected, businesses supported by student volunteers, and citizens engaged through these programs. In addition, the school reaps tangible, financial benefits: last year, student and adult volunteers completed 1500 man hours of on-site grounds work, saving the school more than \$10,000.

With one of the lowest per pupil education expenditures in the state, Sullivan also has one of

the highest test scores (in the top 10%) in the state. The community service component of Sullivan High School's out-of-school programs encourage mentoring, in-the-field learning, and responsibility in a safe and structured place — the school — for students. All of these components support academic achievement and development, as does the responsibility, citizenry, and leadership skills that students develop through their participation in the service programs.

In addition, community involvement begets community involvement. By being ambassadors for the school, Sullivan High School students have encouraged community members to be involved with the school as well, through participation in adult education opportunities and in the formation of a new, all-volunteer advisory council.

### Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Student Ambassadors** — through their community education work, students in Sullivan engage community members in the school, in education in general, and in positive involvement with young people in their town.
- **This is How We Operate** — the community education model is “institutionalized” as a part of how Sullivan High School functions and operates. It is entrenched in the school's culture and educational strategies; it's not an add-on, but an integral part of education.

### Programming HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** — students “learn by doing” and gain real-world experiences through the services they perform; gain self-esteem through their work.
- **Strengthening Families** — structured and enriching out-of-school time programs support working families, and adult education components support all families.
- **Community Involvement** — Sullivan's young people are positive contributors to their community, which fosters community involvement in the school and its programs.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** — students develop responsibility by being given responsibility, and through their service activities also develop their leadership skills and good citizenry.



### Take Home LESSONS

Consider identifying developmentally appropriate community involvement activities in which children can participate to both develop their citizenship and to foster community involvement in the school.

Make a school-wide commitment to giving back to society through community volunteerism.



# TELPOCHCALLI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL —

Telpochcalli Elementary School

## LIFE LONG LEARNING



### School Demographic INFORMATION

- Located in Chicago's Pilsen Community
- 280+ students in Kindergarten — 8th grades
- 94.8% low-income
- Diverse community with high number of recent immigrants
- Lead partner: SGA & TCEP

### Community School HIGHLIGHTS

Telpochcalli Elementary School has its roots in community organizing and development. As such, the school is committed to meeting the needs of its students, children in the community, parents, and other adults through a wide range of programs and services.

Telpochcalli provides adult support, education, and capacity building in a number of ways. Programs targeted to adults include English Language Learning classes that incorporate elements of "school speak" designed to help parents navigate the educational system and an adult writing workshop hosted by the Community Writing Project that publishes parents' reflections on everyday, real life. The Telpochcalli leadership team assesses needs of adults in the community. The team seeks out partners, volunteers, and community resources that can fill these needs, and does so in intentional and strategic ways. For example, available grant money does not shape the types of programs Telpochcalli offers. Rather, the needs of the community Telpochcalli serves drives the

types of funding the team seeks and the type of partnerships it builds. By sharing leadership and decision making and maintaining open and clear lines of communication, the Telpochcalli team is able to operate in a coordinated and efficient manner, in spite of the large number of partnerships and people involved in implementing Telpochcalli's programs. These partnerships include other schools in the community, and programs sponsored by Telpochcalli often benefit students from other schools. Conversely, Telpochcalli has established relationships with other schools that enable Telpochcalli to access their resources, such as the computer lab at nearby Sprye.

Telpochcalli's focus on providing adults with learning and for development opportunities also establishes a culture of life-long learning that helps Telpochcalli students themselves develop into life-long learners, improving their academic performance and exposing them to positive adult role models.

### Distinguishing CHARACTERISTICS

- **Life-long Learning** – programs are aimed at meeting the educational and developmental needs of children and adults in the community and at establishing a culture of life-long learning and development.
- **School-to-School Partnerships** – Telpochcalli and other schools in the area partner to best serve all of their students and families, maximizing and sharing each other's resources.

### Programming HIGHLIGHTS

- **Academic Development & Enrichment** – programs integrate the arts into learning; students' academidevelopment is supported by adult education opportunities.
- **Strengthening Families** – capacity building initiatives, adult education, and shared leadership opportunities are all targeted towards adults in the community.
- **Community Involvement** – Telpochcalli sources programs and services through a wide network of community partnerships, including other area schools.
- **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – social services and support programs address the social-emotional needs of the Telpochcalli community.

### Take Home LESSONS

Reach out to and organize meetings with representatives from other nearby schools to start a dialogue about sharing resources, opening up programs to community members, and building networks of support.

Keep in mind the critical role that open and clear lines of communication play in establishing and sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships.



## TAKE HOME LESSONS

- Making professional development available to all people working in the school can help reinforce a climate of consistency.
- Think about assessing community needs, and how to leverage the school's resources to meet those needs as well.
- Implement the same behavior management strategies throughout the entire day; train out-of-school time staff on the school's expectations and systems.
- Develop parent capacity by providing meaningful opportunities for involvement – ask parents what they are good at, what they enjoy, and if they would be willing to share their skills with students.
- Reach out to community organizations to identify resources and programs that can be provided to the school for “free,” using those organizations’ grants, mandates, and goals to meet programming needs.
- Provide developmentally appropriate activities for middle school students and maximize opportunities for them to take on increasing responsibility for their choices.
- Bring the Community to the School – open up school programming to in-school children as well as others in the community, like the Goldblatt’s basketball team.
- Curriculum alignment takes place when all staff members – regular day, out-of-school, and program-specific alike – are clear on the school’s curricular goals and achievement mandates, while regular school staff working in the community school provide consistency.
- Dedicate some space in the school building to welcome parents – provide them information, support, and activities so that parents become engaged partners in the school.
- Keep in mind the critical role that open and clear lines of communication play in establishing and sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Ask local businesses, neighbors, and organizations to be involved – be clear about what the school is doing to support children and the community and the benefits to involvement, and be specific about what kind of participation would be helpful.
- Create opportunities for student leadership experiences through activities like REAL Village that engage them in “learning-through-doing.”
- Consider integrating different disciplines in one activity, such as an art and history together in one program.
- Share with community members (and local businesses) the school’s expectations for student achievement and behavior, and ask them to be partners in this development.
- Encourage parents to take ownership over programs and activities aimed at them, and at students, by putting in place communications channels and shared leadership opportunities.
- Consider establishing “student crews” to assist with program development and evaluation and to promote student leadership development.
- Build a bridge between the school and the community by participating in local chambers of commerce, community councils, and the like.
- Consider identifying developmentally appropriate community involvement activities in which children can participate to both develop their citizenship and to foster community involvement in the school.
- Make a school-wide commitment to giving back to society through community volunteerism.
- Reach out to and organize meetings with representatives from other nearby schools to start a dialogue about sharing resources, opening up programs to community members, and building networks of support.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Successful outcomes are emerging from community schools in both academic/student performance and in the positive impact on families and communities. These positive outcomes strongly suggest policy changes that support current community schools and expand upon them in a comprehensive way that continues, improves, and enhances their efforts. The Dimon Distinguished Community Schools Award recognizes only ten of the hundreds of community schools and their districts throughout Illinois.

Clearly, there are also thousands more schools in Illinois that should make the transformation into community schools so that students succeed at school and in life, but the resources are limited and the will may be weak.

To address these two general barriers to the implementation of community schools throughout Illinois, the Federation for Community Schools promotes the following policy changes:

### State of Illinois:

Make the commitment of Every School, a Community School. Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) should require that each school start down the path of becoming a community school by demanding its schools demonstrate real parental involvement, active community partnerships and expansion of school programs and services to meet identified needs.

Illinois needs to establish a dedicated funding stream to support the costs associated with making the transformation from schools to community schools. Costs to accomplish this may vary from as low as \$75,000 to upwards to \$400,000, but in general a school requires \$150,000 to hire a full time dedicated staff member and set up initial programming. Illinois needs to make a minimal initial investment of \$30 million so that schools in economically disadvantaged communities or communities with limited resources can make the transformation.

When ISBE is granting 21st Century dollars, it must no longer penalize community schools who have successfully moved their students from not meeting AYP to meeting and surpassing AYP. Community school programming, which is implemented in part to improve students’ test scores, should not be eliminated because of ineligibility for 21st dollars after that very programming made the difference in so many children’s lives. ISBE must change its policy to no longer make community schools that now make AYP ineligible for 21st Century dollars.

Educators in Illinois must embrace the community school model, where parents and community are embraced as part of the solution to the ever increasing demands on schools to make Illinois’ children succeed and thrive.

### Federal:

The Full Service Community Act, which has a budget line of \$5 million, must be expanded so that the hundreds of schools which applied for funding have an opportunity to access necessary funds to provide comprehensive community schools in their neighborhoods.

The community school model must be held up as an educational model to address the ever-increasing needs of students at school. The tenets of parental and community engagement must be articulated clearly as important goals for educators.

The 21st Century Community Learning Center Block grant must be preserved and increased to the level necessary to meet the pressures established by No Child Left Behind. Right now, schools are asked to accomplish great feats without funds needed to make that transition. Increasing the 21st Century Block grant is a way to work with schools and their students in a promising, meaningful way.

