



**THOMAS GREGG**  
NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL

## **History of the Near Eastside Innovation School Corporation**

In the summer of 2014, John Boner Neighborhood Centers (JBNC) assembled a coalition of partners to respond to a federal opportunity to receive a Promise Zone designation for the Near Eastside of Indianapolis. Building on past planning efforts, the IndyEast Promise Zone would allow the City of Indianapolis and local neighborhood leaders the opportunity to partner with the federal government to achieve neighborhood-defined goals. The IndyEast Promise Zone (IEPZ) designation was awarded in April 2015, resulting in five goals, each with three sub-goals. The five goals are categorized under Learn IndyEast (Improve Educational Opportunities), Live IndyEast (Create Affordable Housing Options), Buy IndyEast (Increase Economic Activity), Work IndyEast (Create Job Opportunities) and Safe IndyEast (Improve Public Safety). Upon receipt of the designation, the Learn IndyEast committee, co-chaired by Indianapolis Public Schools, United Way of Central Indiana, and Westminster Neighborhood Ministries (a neighborhood partner organization), began to explore the concept of creating an Innovation Network School in the neighborhood as a way to improve educational outcomes.

The IEPZ Learn IndyEast committee saw the Innovation Network School model as a way to give neighborhood residents a voice in the structure of a neighborhood school. Created under the Learn IndyEast committee, the Near Eastside Innovation School Steering Committee was made up of members who are dedicated to coordinating an inclusive and community-driven planning process to create a neighborhood Innovation School. The group of community members and leaders was driven to develop and advocate for a model that meets the needs of all students and families in the community. They worked to ensure that any changes for our neighborhood schools allow all of our children to achieve at high levels and to flourish academically, socially, emotionally and physically regardless of race, socioeconomic status, home language or any other group membership.

In 2016, as the Innovation School model became more fully developed and a school was selected to be the recipient of the extensive work, the Near Eastside Innovation School Corporation, a 501c3, was formed to support the transition and implementation of the proposed strategy.

## **Our Neighborhood: Key Contributors to Creating the School Model**

In January of 2016, over 250 community members attended the first ever Near Eastside Education Summit hosted at Thomas D. Gregg Elementary School. Working together, residents, parents, teachers, and staff provided insights into their dreams for education in the community. They shared their goals for the children in the neighborhood and improvements they hoped to see in the schools serving neighborhood residents. Participants were encouraged to share the barriers they believe exist for the neighborhood schools and the children they serve, and to consider solutions. A second Near Eastside Education Summit occurred on November 5, 2016 at Thomas D. Gregg Elementary School with over 150 community members in attendance. At this event, attendees were encouraged to share additional suggestions for improvement of the overall school model and day to day functioning in an attempt to ensure that the neighborhood's vision is kept intact.

In addition to neighborhood education summits, committee members hosted seven Dinner & Dialogue sessions with a total of 63 attendees to seek community input on the needs and desires of members with regards to education in the neighborhood. Themes arising from these efforts included the issue of trauma, toxic stress and mental health. Attendees repeatedly emphasized the need to address mental health issues among children and families due to their residence in an environment in which they witness or experience daily occurrences of child abuse, neglect, violence, criminal activity, substance abuse, homelessness and other issues affecting family and community stability.

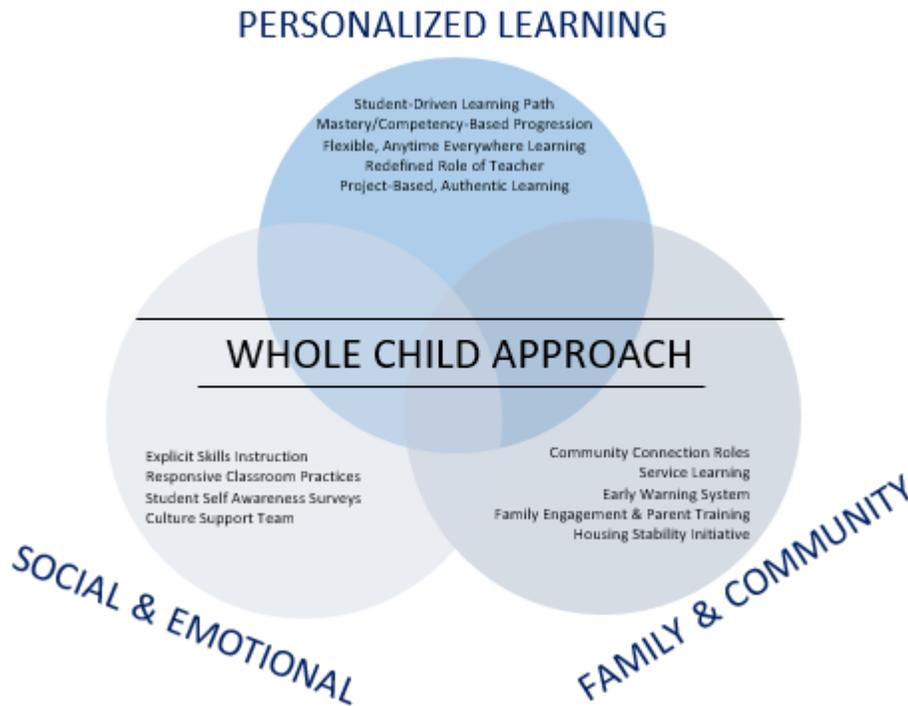
### **Selecting Our Near Eastside School**

For many years, IPS Thomas Gregg Elementary School #15 has struggled to meet the needs of students, families and the community. As shown below, in 2009, the performance of this school began to lag behind the rest of the IPS district's average assessment scores in English, language arts and mathematics. Since 2009, the performance of this school has consistently deteriorated. In the 2014-15 school year, only 68 students out of 337 total students passed the State's assessment tests, translating to a failure rate of 78.9% for the entire student population.

While children attending Thomas D. Gregg Elementary School reside within five miles of the prosperous city center, families and children who reside in the Near Eastside face a number of challenges. High poverty and high unemployment, low educational attainment, and high rates of violent crime create layers of adversity in the school, home and community for aspiring students. Adding to these layers of adversity is an environment in which access to the resources necessary to overcome these barriers is limited. Without significant, integrated efforts, children growing up in the neighborhood will unjustly suffer the consequences of beginning their lives with few opportunities for success.

## Our Neighborhood School Model

With feedback provided from the many neighborhood engagement opportunities and through extensive research into essential elements attributed to school success, the Near Eastside Education School Corporation has embraced the following model to support the implementation of what will become Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School.



### ***Whole Child Approach***

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) defines the Whole Child Approach as “an effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children.” Our goal as a greater school community is to ensure that every Thomas Gregg student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged (ASCD).

Our approach to educating the whole child centers on three key facets that work collaboratively and in a coordinated way to attend “to cognitive, social, emotional, physical and talent development of children” (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010). Academic offerings will be personalized in such a way that all students are highly engaged, challenged and attuned to their individual strengths and talents. Social/emotional education will inspire our young people’s compassion, self-awareness and empathy for others. Finally, our two generation supports will bring together a personalized set of local resources to

wrap around both the child and their family to help them feel safe, healthy and supported. These 3 components are described below.

### Personalized Learning

Our students deserve to be presented with rigorous, engaging and personalized academic programming that will promote mastery, address individual learning and developmental needs and prepare all students to become productive members of society, beginning at a young age. Through implementing new programs and being innovative in scheduling, we are able to maximize student exposure to core content, while also providing teachers sufficient time for data teams, grade level planning and professional development. The following describes the five components of personalized learning at Thomas Gregg.

- Student-Driven Learning Path
  - Students experience four modes of instruction in each core content area daily: whole group instruction introducing new content, small group learning with an instructor reinforcing skills, independent work on choice activities from their personalized learning plan, and e-learning programs on student devices.
  - Instruction is customized via learning profiles that include must-do activities as well as student selected learning activities based on specific strengths, needs, interests, and goals. It allows for differentiation of pace, path, place, and modality based on learning needs, goals and preferences and is updated each instructional cycle.
  - Learning profiles and instructional priorities are informed by regular assessment.
- Mastery/Competency-Based Progression/Pace
  - Students follow a structured learning pathway that allows them to master skills at their own pace.
  - Supports and interventions in the form of small group and one-on-one tutoring are available to ensure students are progressing towards mastery.
  - Data will be analyzed and used to build and update each student's personalized learning profile to reflect the student's most current areas of need and interest.
  - Students collaborate with their teacher to track their own data and set goals for themselves.
- Flexible, Anytime, Everywhere Learning
  - Students will use various e-learning programs daily within instructional blocks to support their skill development in literacy and math.
  - Students have access to 1-1 devices throughout the school day on which they can access their personalized learning profiles, assignments, recorded lessons, classroom notes, etc. via our learning management system. Students have access to the same programs outside of school to continue supporting everywhere and anytime learning.
- Redefine Teacher Role and Expand "Teacher"
  - Instructors are seen as facilitators of student learning and mentors designed to support students as they work to accomplish their learning goals.
  - Educators use data from formative assessments and student feedback in real-time to differentiate instruction and provide robust supports and interventions so that every student remains on track to meet their mastery goals.

- Flexible teacher to student ratios throughout the building will ensure students receive more small-group and individual attention during critical core content instruction or when demonstrating higher academic need.
- Project-Based & Experiential, Authentic Learning
  - Students learn through lab-style instruction in Science and Social Studies. Offering a project-based approach for learning in these subject areas promotes authentic, experiential learning of standard-based concepts.
  - Students will engage in service learning in an effort to authentically engage with and apply academic standards. Students will work alongside community partners to identify, design and implement the projects and student roles are selected based on readiness, strengths and personal preferences.

### Curricular Programs

Our model will maximize instructional time spent on ELA through integrated literacy instruction via Pearson ReadyGEN where students explore standards at grade level and then again at their current readiness level. Additional reinforcement of skills in ELA come through self-paced e-learning tools. Instruction in math via Eureka Math will focus on the students' conceptual development and will be reinforced with Zearn, a technological component where students can explore concepts in greater depth and at their own pace.

### 12-Day Instructional Cycle

Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School will operate on a 12-Day Instructional Cycle that promotes thorough instruction by offering elongated and rotating time blocks. Ten of the twelve days in the instructional cycle are considered the core instruction days and contain two reading blocks, one math block and a dedicated time for personalized learning needs. Day six and day twelve of the instructional cycle provide flexibility by allowing time for in-depth science and social studies labs as well as project based service learning.

### Embedded Professional Development & Extended PLC

Ensuring that our teachers continuously strive to refine their craft is a critical component to promoting student achievement. Informal observations of instruction will be conducted by building administrators and instructional coaches via the instructional coaching cycle. Data from informal observations will be used at the building level to inform teacher professional development. Teachers will have the opportunity to observe each other, provide feedback surrounding building level initiatives and even gain strategies to implement in their own instruction via PIVOT Rounds. Administrators will provide teachers with formal observations and feedback using the Danielson rubric for teacher evaluation. Our instructional cycle allows teachers time to participate in a three and a half hour Professional Learning Community meeting dedicated to reflecting on the instructional cycle, disaggregating student assessment data, discussing student needs and planning instruction for the upcoming cycle.

### Social-Emotional Learning

We realize that developing children into well-rounded individuals requires an emphasis on social/emotional learning. Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School hopes to utilize the following

programming and practices to help students find an intrinsic desire to live by the school's three guiding principles: Take Care of Yourself, Take Care of Others, Take Care of This Place. Social/emotional skills will be taught explicitly through a comprehensive curriculum entitled Second Step. This program focuses on specific skills students need to be successful in social interaction and in managing their own wellbeing. This will be intentionally taught in special area classes and reinforced in the classroom.

### Responsive Classroom Practices

Infusing Responsive Classroom practices into every classroom will emphasize to staff and students the connection that exists between academic achievement and social/emotional competencies. We will require all staff utilize Responsive Classroom approaches in student interaction and family engagement to help students become intrinsically motivated, engaged and self-reflective in learning. The responsive classroom approach will require teachers to operate around four key domains: Engaging Academics, Positive Community, Effective Management and Developmental Awareness. These four key domains lead to a class classroom environment in which students feel safe and can thrive ([responsiveclassroom.org](http://responsiveclassroom.org)).

### Culture Support Team

A Culture Support Team will be implemented to ensure that our students have appropriate, personalized support surrounding self-management and social interaction. This team will also ensure that our staff has the capacity to effectively implement best practices and build positive relationships. The Dean of Culture will work collaboratively with the classroom teachers to develop individualized, tiered support plans for student behavior. The Social Worker and Academic Case Manager will work together to support students in a variety of ways, some of which include advocating for academically or behaviorally at-risk students and monitoring grades and attendance via the Early Warning System in order to proactively address areas of concern.

### Two-Generation Supports

Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School believes that in order to educate a child well, we need to acknowledge and address all aspects of the child's life. This means it will be imperative to bring focus on the community and family into the school to encourage the creation of a coalition working toward a common goal. This will be accomplished through incorporation of the following components.

### Community Connection Roles

It is our goal that community based services will be integrated in Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School through partnerships to ensure that families are connected to appropriate supports that can provide what they need to thrive. A Community Connector will work with families to increase awareness of all that is available to them within the community to aid in their success. This person will work in a team approach with families to conduct a needs assessment and to identify and align specific resources. A Community School Coordinator will be responsible for identifying community programs that benefit students and ensuring effective onsite program implementation. This person will also coordinate school training sessions for teachers, administrators, service providers and partners to increase awareness and ensure alignment of available resources and programs.

## Housing Stability Initiative

Having stable housing results in a stable mindset for our students. Through partnering with NEAR and John Boner Neighborhood Centers, in-need families attending Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School will be given opportunities to secure stable housing in the community. Because of this support, students will be afforded the opportunity to stay at Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School, where they can focus on building relationships and thriving under a routine as opposed to carrying the stress that comes from instability. Already, 63 single family Section 8 support homes or doubles have been designated for families from Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School, and funding has been secured to build a 35-unit multifamily apartment building to serve additional families.

## Family-School-Community Partnerships

The Near Eastside Innovation School Corporation believes that a critical component in promoting academic achievement and the social emotional development of the child is the partnership of the family, the school and the community. Multiple lines of communication and opportunities to convene will be put in place to ensure that this partnership is able to not only develop but also thrive at Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School.

Engagement with parents and caregivers of the school's students is essential for ensuring both the student and the family receive the services needed to be successful. The school model utilizes a variety of tactics and strategies to ensure strong engagement with those supporting students at home and away from schools. The following strategies will be employed to ensure strong engagement:

- **Family/School Compacts:** Signed annually, the compact will serve as an acknowledgement of and agreement to the roles that each individual party plays in the achievement of the student. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities will set the groundwork for a successful school year for all involved.
- **Parent/Teacher Conferences:** Designed to ensure that parents and families are kept abreast of student academic progress and school happenings. Parent teacher academic conferences will occur three times annually. Students will be able to set goals alongside their teachers and parents and, with this tri-annual approach, follow up on progress throughout the year or set new goals as necessary.
- **Parent Teacher Organization:** The PTO will bridge the gap between parents and teachers and work together to locate needs for the school and implement plans to welcome new families, share opportunities to get involved and aid in fostering the school culture surrounding the three guiding principles.