



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

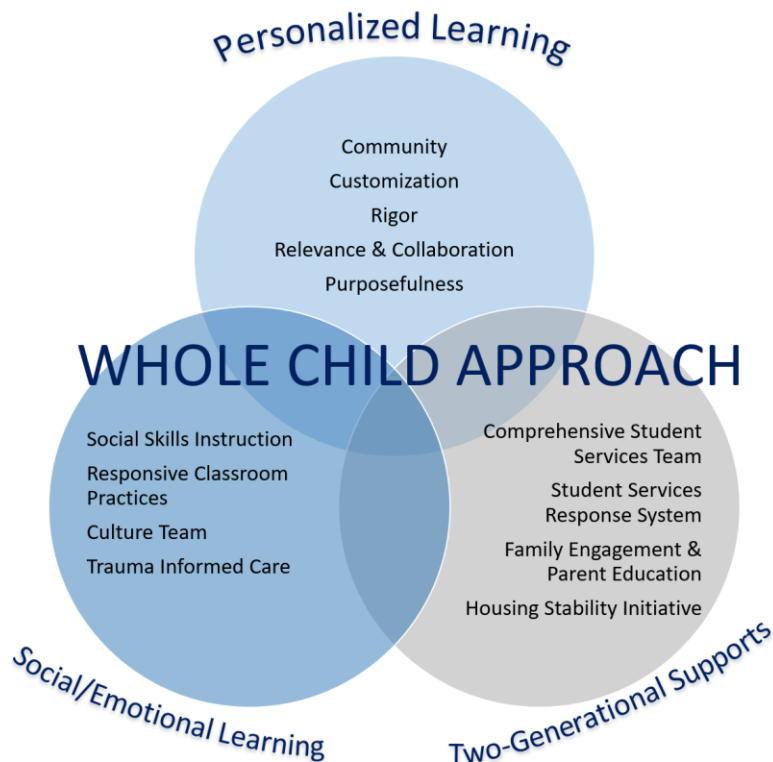
With feedback provided from the many neighborhood engagement opportunities and through extensive research into essential elements attributed to school success, the Near Eastside Education School Corporation has embraced the following model to support the implementation of what has become Thomas Gregg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

Vision

Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School strives to prepare students to positively contribute to the quality of life of their community

Mission

Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School prepares students through a whole child approach that encompasses two-generational supports, social/emotional development and personalized learning.



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 are personalized in such a way that ensures all students are able to access grade level content where they see themselves in the curriculum and are provided opportunities to engage in learning that is meaningful. Social/emotional education inspires our young people’s compassion, self-awareness and empathy for others. Finally, our two generation supports brings 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 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.

- *Community*
 - Teachers are intentional in creating an environment of respect and rapport; where students feel like they are seen and are important members in a larger classroom community.
 - Consistent routines and explicit procedures lay a foundation for academic exploration.
 - Morning meetings and Responsive Classroom practices assist in building community amongst students and create opportunity for meaningful social-emotional learning.
 - Emphasis on building student capacity to do rigorous work through acknowledging and celebrating cultural and linguistic diversity.
- *Customization*
 - 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 1-to-1 student devices.
 - Instruction is customized 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.
 - Flexible teacher to student ratios throughout the building ensures students receive more small-group and individual attention during critical core content instruction or when demonstrating higher academic need.
 - Instruction follows the gradual release model with a school-wide framework outlining the release to independence where students are systematically supported through a combination of remediation, reteaching, reinforcements until they are ready for a higher DOK.
- *Rigor*
 - Instructional priorities are identified through data teams and student progress is tracked through regular assessment that is used to inform instruction.
 - Elongated and rotating instructional blocks (12-Day Instructional Cycle).
 - Teachers are members of cross-grade level teams that include a subset of instructional support staff dedicated to improving outcomes for two specific grade levels.

- 3-hour PLC meetings are used to set instructional priorities, create assessments, analyze student data and plan for instruction.
- Lessons have targeted objectives that meet DOK demands and are assessed for mastery through aligned tasks.
- *Relevance, Collaboration & Growth*
 - 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 engage in service learning to authentically engage with and apply academic standards. Students work alongside community partners to identify, design and implement the projects and student roles are selected based on readiness, strengths and personal preferences.
 - An emphasis is placed on continued growth for teachers through year-long professional development plans that focus on key initiatives identified through trends in observation data.
 - Teachers collaborate through Collegial Observations and Discourse, a process that provides teachers the opportunity to observe their colleagues alongside building leadership and participate in guided discourse surrounding the school's key initiatives and replication of critical strategies.
- *Purposefulness*
 - Students are included in their own data and goal setting through collaborative conversations with teachers where growth mindset is key.
 - Parents are integral partners in their child's education and are encouraged to attend conferences aligning with each reporting period to have in-depth conversations regarding their students' quarterly performance and goals.

Curricular Programs

Our model maximizes instructional time spent on ELA through integrated literacy instruction using Pearson ReadyGEN where students explore standards at grade level through quality literature. Additional reinforcement of skills in ELA comes through leveled literacy instruction and self-paced e-learning tools. Instruction in Math via Eureka Math focuses on the students' conceptual development and is reinforced with Zearn, a technology component where students can explore concepts in greater depth and at their own pace.

12-Day Instructional Cycle

Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School operates 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 are conducted by building administrators and instructional coaches via the tiered coaching model. Data from informal observations are used at the building level to inform teacher professional development. Teachers have the opportunity to observe each other, provide feedback surrounding building level initiatives and even gain strategies to implement in their own instruction via Collegial Observations and Discourse. Administrators 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-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

[SEL Curricula](#)

We realize that developing children into well-rounded individuals requires an emphasis on social/emotional learning. Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School utilizes 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 are taught explicitly through a comprehensive curriculum titled *Second Step*. This program focuses on specific skills students need to be successful in social interaction and in managing their own wellbeing. This is intentionally taught in special area classes and reinforced in the classroom. Students that need more targeted support receive small group instruction using *Curriculum Based Support Group*, a program that emphasizes 5 key messages shown to improve social/emotional wellbeing.

[Responsive Classroom Practices](#)

Infusing *Responsive Classroom* practices into every classroom emphasizes to staff and students the connection that exists between academic achievement and social/emotional competencies. We 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 requires teachers to operate around four key domains: Engaging Academics, Positive Community, Effective Management and Developmental Awareness. These four key domains lead to a classroom environment in which students feel safe and can thrive (responsiveclassroom.org).

[Culture Support Team](#)

The TGNS Culture Support team ensures that our students have appropriate, personalized support surrounding self-management and social interaction. This team ensures that our staff has the capacity to effectively implement best practices and build positive relationships. The Dean of Culture maintains all discipline records and works collaboratively with the classroom teachers to develop individualized, tiered support plans for student behavior. TGNS uses a Recovery Room to allow students time away from the classroom to reset where they are supported with both academics and social emotional skills by the Recovery Room Teacher and Recovery Room Assistant. The Social Worker and Student Support Specialist 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 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 is 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 is accomplished through incorporation of the following components.

[Community Connection Roles](#)

Community-based services are 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 Family Navigator works with families to increase awareness of all that is available to them within the community to aid in their success. This person works in a team approach with families to conduct a needs assessment and to identify and align specific resources. A Community School Coordinator is responsible for identifying community partners and programming that benefit students and ensures effective onsite program implementation. This person also coordinates school training sessions for teachers, administrators, service providers and partners to increase awareness and ensure alignment of available resources and programs.

[Student Services Team & Ticketing System](#)

TGNS employs a large group of individuals whose roles work collaboratively to support student and family needs. This team consists of the Social Worker, Dean of Culture, Social/Emotional Coach, Academic Coordinator, Family Navigator, Community School Coordinator, Student Support Specialist, Operations Manager and Director of Operations. Staff members can alert the Student Services team to student or family needs, concerns, etc. via the entry of a student service ticket. The ticket is then triaged and assigned to the appropriate member(s) of the team who then take lead on coordinating services to meet the need. This unique approach to student services allows for quick response, constant feedback and tracking of trends.

[Housing Stability for School Success Initiative](#)

Having stable housing results in a stable mindset for our students. Through partnering with NEAR and John Boner Neighborhood Centers, families attending Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School are given opportunities to secure stable housing in the community. Because of this support, students are 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 housing instability. Already, 63 single family Section 8 support homes or doubles have been designated for families from Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School, and construction has been initiated on a 30-unit multifamily apartment building to serve additional families beginning Summer 2020.

[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 have been 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 are employed to ensure strong engagement:

- **Family/School Compacts:** Signed annually, the compact serves 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 set the groundwork for a successful school year for all involved.
- **Parent/Teacher Conferences:** Designed to ensure that parents and families are kept informed of student academic progress and school activities. Parent/teacher academic conferences occur three times annually. Students are 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 Booster Club:** The Booster Club bridges the gap between parents and teachers and works 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.
- **Community Partners:** TGNS has a robust group of community partners that support our mission and vision. With our partners help, we are able to offer a variety of embedded and extracurricular experiences to our students. Our Community Council meets quarterly to review the school's progress, network, and collaborate together to strengthen our partnerships. Some of our key partners include the John Boner Neighborhood Centers, Englewood Christian Church, The Creek Church, The Patachou Foundation, East 10th Children and Youth Center, Indianapolis Public Library, Ambassadors of Hope and many more!

Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School Successes to Date

In the nearly three years since opening our doors to students and families, TGNS has achieved some incredible milestones that we are proud to share:

- Improved school grade from an F (2016-2017) to a C (2017-2018) to our current grade of A (2018-2019).
- Highest growth on ILEARN as compared to all schools in IPS and improved proficiency in 6 out of 8 grade levels and subject areas
- Consistently average over 83% parent attendance at tri-annual Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Consistently average over 80% staff retention from year to year since 2017.
- Annual family satisfaction surveys indicate that over 80% of parents rate the TGNS experience as “Excellent.”
- Successful implementation of family support initiatives such as Preschool, Food Co-Op, Parent Cafes and Parent University
- Robust extracurricular activities for students including sports, clubs, tutoring and after school programs

Learn more about TGNS!

