

January 2015



## **IMPACT: Educate, Engage, Empower** **- for Equity**

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*" Let us put our minds together and see what life we  
can make for our children"*

~ Chief Sitting Bull

## Educate

Urban communities are often portrayed as barren landscapes devoid of rich assets and resources. This deficit-oriented portrayal is detrimental to urban communities and their members. In reality, urban communities boast a unique combination of assets, including rich human resources. Although urban communities and their members hold valuable capacities and skills, many such communities experience struggles in ensuring and maintaining access to social services. With the commitment of community partners, urban communities are supported in equitable access to social resources, such as health care, adult education, grocery stores, and community development. With the help of community partners, urban schools can become sites for harnessing the assets of a community while ensuring access to resources that have not been traditionally or readily available: the rationale for a "community school" approach.




## Meet the Authors

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## Equity Spotlight

This month, Great Lakes Equity Center invited a colleague, Dr. Monica Medina, to guest author our January 2015 edition of the Equity Dispatch. Dr. Medina is a clinical associate professor in the Indiana University-Indianapolis School of Education. She has worked extensively in the development of school and community relationships and the operations of full service community schools. By teaching her courses in schools in the community, she provides preservice teachers an opportunity to create genuine encounters among students, teachers, community leaders, and families. She is also a partner of the Midwest Center for University-Assisted Community Schools at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

## What is a Community School?

The Coalition for Community Schools describes the community school model as a school that embraces the notion of place and partnerships between schools and other community resources. The programs offered within this model focus on academics/career readiness, youth development, family support, health and social services and community development. As schools become centers of the community, community schools invite a diversity of partners to provide a range of services, supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities.

While school reform movements commonly focus on the achievement gap, most do not consider the community factors that influence student academic achievement. Community schools incorporate assets that integrate community factors into the process of schooling. Full-service community schools represent a promising educational approach that improves academic achievement by addressing students' overall social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs. Community school approaches join teachers, parents, and community leaders as a collective body of people focused on eliminating academic barriers, both inside and outside the school. These cohesive partnerships promote the overall well-being of children and their families, by addressing disparities in schools including barriers to physical, social, and emotional well-being (Blank & Berg, 2006). By creating engaging and safe learning environments for students, community school transform the educational experience and student academic achievement is increased.

While most school reform efforts have utilized a top down approach, with little or no exploration of how these approaches will affect students (Fullan, 2007), community schools integrate a more collaborative stance. An example of this collaborative approach to school reform is George Washington Community High School (GWCHS). The school



Dr. Monica Medina is a Clinical Associate Professor at the Indiana University School of Education—Indianapolis, where her interest in transforming urban schools, in democratic citizenship, and in social justice informs her research, teaching, and service.

Dr. Medina assisted in the reopening of the George Washington Community High School (GWCS), and the development of GWCS as a full service community school. She teaches university courses at the high school, which allows pre-service teachers opportunities to create genuine encounters among students, teachers, community leaders, and culturally diverse families. In this setting, Dr. Medina encourages university students to discover the complex, changing nature of culture, racial identity, and social justice as they rethink their roles as teachers in an ever-changing pluralistic society.

is the only public high school located in the Near Westside of Indianapolis, and in 1995, the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) district closed the school due to fiscal reasons and low graduation rates, creating an education dearth within community. Driven by a their sense of urgency, the Westside Education Task Force (WETF), a group of community members led by resident Danny Fugate, feared the education plight would increase crime and poverty. Because the school was once the hub of the community, the WETF persuaded IPS Board of School Commissioners and then Superintendent, Pat Pritchett, to reopen the school as a middle school. In partnership with faculty and staff from IUPUI, the WETF received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to travel to select cities to survey urban school reform models. Drawing heavily upon the community school experiences of the Children's Aid Society in New York City, George Washington Community School reopened as a full service community school in September, 2000. The learning support services for students and families from GWCHS include: 1) tutoring and mentoring; 2) extended-day learning activities; 3) teen health clinic; 4) public swimming and citywide competitions; 5) college-prep programs for youth and parents; 6) parent enrichment activities; 7) GED and English language learner classes; 8) mental health services; 9) academic enrichment; 10) community-based service learning; 11) personal fitness for youth and area adults; 12) scholarships for GWCHS graduates; 13) career development programs; 14) family assistance and financial counseling; and 15) positive youth development opportunities.

In early 2008, the U.S. Department of Education launched an inaugural Full-Service Community Schools grants program that generated intense competition for an initial Federal appropriation of only \$5 million. Hoping to build upon the successes of the George Washington Community High School (GWCHS) initiative, the school's lead community partner, Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center, applied for and received the five-year, Full-Service Community Schools grant totaling \$2.48 million from the U.S. Department of Education, making it the only school in the Midwest to receive one of 10 grants awarded nationally. The goal of the project was to expand afterschool and community-based support programs, promote parent engagement, and conduct an evaluation.

In the last fourteen years, the GWCHS has been recognized as an exemplary model by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, MetLife Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation as an exemplary model. In 2006, the GWCHS received the inaugural National Community School Award from the Washington, D.C.-based Coalition for Community Schools.

She is a partner of The Midwest Center for University-Assisted Community Schools at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), which provides technical assistance and training to develop and enhance collaborative engagement among school communities and universities throughout the Midwest. Drawing on IUPUI's 15-year engagement with community schools in the Indianapolis Near-Westside and more recently Martindale/ Brightwood neighborhoods, the Center is a federally-funded regional site for supporting university-assisted community schools.

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## Upcoming Events

### Illinois

February 27-28, 2015  
Illinois Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (Bilingual Education), ITBE ITBE's 41st Annual Convention  
Naperville, IL

### Indiana

February 26, 2015  
Indiana Conference on Learning  
Indianapolis, IN

### Michigan

February 27-28, 2015  
Michigan Science Teachers Association 62nd Annual

Irrefutably, the George Washington Community High School (GWCHS) project has been an experience in understanding and addressing the effects of poverty and the complexity of urban schools. Early on, the WETF recognized that solutions for transforming a low-performing school in a high poverty community must center on academic excellence and directly address the poverty-related barriers to learning, teaching, and school organization.

Today, more than 75 local organizations and community leaders work in partnership with GWCHS to provide a continuum of on-and off-site support services including tutoring, mentoring, afterschool, health, mental health, youth leadership, physical fitness, college preparation, community service, and parent engagement programs. Community, parent, service provider, business, faith and educator partners meet monthly to collaborate in alignment with student achievement and youth development goals for the middle and high school students.

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## Engage



Recognizing the vitality of diverse neighborhoods as essential for the continued development of Central Indiana, Family, School, and Neighborhood Engagement, an initiative of the new IUPUI Office of Community Engagement, uses a multi-sector approach of working with community partners and campus resources within the urban core to support quality of life through capacity development, education, health, and research. This approach includes:

Conference “Engineering  
GRAND Ideas in Science”  
Grand Rapids, MI

### Minnesota

February 20-21, 2015  
Minnesota Science Teachers  
Association Conference on  
Science Education  
Mankato, MN

### Ohio

February 7-10, 2015  
National Reading Recovery  
and K-6 Literacy Conference  
Columbus, OH

### Wisconsin

February 18-20, 2015  
Wisconsin Transition  
Conference 2015  
Wisconsin Dells, WI

- Offering Technical Assistance for Community Partners
- Strengthening Holistic Family Health
- Conducting Workshops for Adults
- Building Neighborhood Specific Linkages with IUPUI Units
- Fostering Communication & Relationship Development in the Community
- Developing Resources
- Conducting Evaluation & Research

In a university-assisted community schools partnership with the Marian University Academy for Teaching and Learning Leadership, Jim Grim, Director of Community School Partnerships for the Initiative, works with a former superintendent of schools, Dr. Rita Brodnax, in developing community councils at interested area schools where Academy principal leadership candidates work. Called Community Assets United for School Excellence (CAUSE) Councils, Jim and Dr. Brodnax help school communities to organize their parent and neighborhood partners for student and family success. Thus, they help teams to set up their Councils, create agendas that support their school community goals, review relevant data, identify student and family needs, and secure access to supports within their neighborhoods to address the needs. The community building process is a key community schools strategy to help guide stakeholders to all be on the same page. This semester, Jim and Dr. Brodnax are working with teams at Harshman Magnet Middle Schools, Tindley Preparatory School, Excel Center Meadows, Carpe Diem Meridian School, and the Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township.

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**Empower**



## Something to Hear!

### *Community Schools and Other Place-Based Strategies Webinar*

The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education, youth development, community planning, health services, and other community resources. Through multiple means of media, the Coalition for Community Schools shares the vision of community schools with the public while providing technical assistance to community schools as they strengthen their partnerships with organizations and resources in the local community. [In this webinar](#), members for the Community Schools Leadership Network share strategies for partnering as well as community schools relationship with place-based initiatives. Presenters in the webinar include Diana Hall, SUN Community Schools; Ellen Pais, Los Angeles Education Partnership; Leilani Dela Cruz, Community Schools Collaboration; Michael McAfee, Promise Neighborhoods Institute; and Rebecca Boxx, Mayor's Children & Youth Cabinet.

## Something to Watch!

### *What is a Community School?*



The Coalition for Community Schools partnered with students from the Oakland Unified School District in the Media Enterprise Alliance journalism and multimedia program to create an animated video that creatively describes and encourages the community school movement. [This video](#) urges communities to consider community schools as a new model that will create thriving students through safe, healthy, and supportive environments, collaboration with private and public organizations, and student development of knowledge and skills for success in college, career, and life.



## Something to Use!

### *The Community Schools Toolkit*

[This toolkit](#) created by the Center for Popular Democracy and the Coalition for Education Justice highlights the

necessary components of community schools by using examples from Cincinnati, OH and Oakland, CA. It shows the variety of supports a community school can offer, including health and dental clinics, parent liaisons, in-school social workers, and restorative discipline practices. In addition, the toolkit provides a step by step plan and additional resources for parents, students, educators, and community members to advocate for community schools at the local level.

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