UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

A Publication of the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania
Perspectives from the Midwest: University-Assisted Community Schools Engagement

Jim Grim, Monica A. Medina, and Nicole Y. Oglesby
Indianapolis University Purdue University Indianapolis

Jim Grim, Director of University/Community School Partnerships with Family, School, and Neighborhood Engagement in the Office of Community Engagement at IUPUI, is a former high school teacher, public relations professional, and university adjunct faculty. He became engaged in the Bridges to Success community schools initiative in 1993. He facilitates the Indiana Community Schools Network, co-chairs the State Coalitions Network of the Coalition for Community Schools, and participates in the Community Schools Leadership Network, University-Assisted Community Schools Network, and Steering Team of the Coalition.

Monica A. Medina is a Clinical Associate Professor at the Indiana University School of Education in Indianapolis and has been engaged in the community schools field of study for the past two decades. She is a participatory action researcher, civic-engaged scholar, author of several professional journal articles — and speaker — about Latino issues about diversity, equity, and family and community engagement in our public schools. Dr. Medina has taught diversity and learning to preservice teachers at urban high schools and works with teachers to advance the notions of multicultural education within the curriculum.

Nicole Y. Oglesby is Director of P-20 Educational Alliances with Family, School, and Neighborhood Engagement (FSNE) in the Office of Community Engagement at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). This is a shared position with the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. She directed the $2.5 million, five-year federally funded Martindale-Brightwood Alliance for Educational Success, a university-assisted community schools initiative. She leads a middle school mentoring program for girls of color in Indianapolis Public Schools and directs a service scholarship program for undergraduate and graduate students within FSNE. Nicole has more than two decades of experience working in higher education including TRIO programs, student affairs, multicultural affairs, and community engagement. She also is pursuing a PhD in the Urban Education Studies Program at the IUPUI School of Education.
Introduction

Connecting the dots and engaging in community partnerships is nothing new to Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). For decades, IUPUI has played an integral role in supporting urban schools and revitalizing urban communities through authentic collaboration that notably represents university-community engagement on multiple fronts and levels of commitment. A promise to equity education in public schools is evident in authentic approaches to collaboration with community partners that embrace shared leadership supported by community-based action research and inquiry-supported practices to strengthen school communities. Through forging powerful community partnerships, IUPUI supports programs and services in community schools, advancing an advocacy and policy agenda that sustains the spirit of community schools throughout the state (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

IUPUI has provided school communities professional development and technical assistance focused on the development of community schools through partnerships facilitation and community council development. The university has a history of preparing students to work among K-12 school/university partnerships to address issues in school climate and socialization as impacted by differences in culture and leadership through interdisciplinary understanding (Murtadha-Watts, Belcher, Iverson, & Medina, 1999). This vibrant example of scholars working alongside practitioners in assessing program standards, questioning vexing contradictions, and addressing the pestilence of bias in low-income school communities is what makes this work unique and a model for other urban districts (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

A university-assisted community school, by definition, features an anchor university partner that provides a significant and intentional role in implementing the strategy in collaboration with school community stakeholders. Founded on John Dewey’s theory that the neighborhood school functions as the core neighborhood institution, this approach provides comprehensive services, engaging community institutions and groups to solve the immense and complex challenges schools and community confront in a rapidly changing world (Harkavy, Hartley, Hodges & Weeks, 2013). Two decades ago, renowned scholar Joy Dryfoos, citing the work of Penn and the Netter Center, concluded that the work of university faculty and students, along with principals and teachers, can transform the public school into a community center and neighborhood hub. For example, in university-assisted community schools, college student-led youth art projects become attractive murals that decorate hallways, and students and staff perform theatrical events that trace the local history of the community (Dryfoos, 2000).

IUPUI’s response to the urgent call for academic achievement gains has centered on community-engaged initiatives and a steadfast commitment to equity education in public schools. Through the university-assisted community school model, the aim has been to foster new and authentic approaches to collaboration with community partners, embracing shared leadership sustained by community-based action research and inquiry-supported practices that strengthen school communities. This article describes the history of university-assisted programs, brief descriptions of example programs and services, and a research strategy that highlights IUPUI’s commitments.

History and Commitment

Hallmark of an Engaged Anchor Institution, Urban Campus

The university-assisted community schools engagement at IUPUI began 30 years ago with the development of a community schools initiative in the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) with lead-partner United Way of Central Indiana called Bridges to Success (Medina, Grim, Brodnax, & Cosby, 2020). Named one of three promising community school initiatives by Joy Dryfoos (Dryfoos, 2000), Bridges to Success coordinated hundreds of service providers and engaged multitudes of neighborhood leaders throughout Indianapolis who provided thousands of
public school children and their families necessary conditions for learning. Professors and administrators from disciplines across campus served on the steering team, and site councils helped develop processes and procedures, and guided university services to school communities throughout Indianapolis (Grim, Medina, & Officer, 2011).

In the late 1990s, the IUPUI community school engagement coalesced on the City’s Near-Westside across the White River from campus with a HUD Community Outreach Partnership Center grant award and a cadre of neighborhood representatives demanding their recently closed high school re-open as a community school. As a result, George Washington Community School (GWCS) opened in 2000 for area middle school students and gradually added high school grades one year at a time. In 2006, the school graduated its first cohort of seniors; the same year the Coalition for Community Schools recognized the comprehensive collective work with the inaugural National Community School Award for secondary education (Grim, Medina, & Officer, 2011). Neighborhood leaders insisted this likely would not have transpired without the IUPUI engagement, cited as critical to school stakeholder emphasis to become a “college-going community.” In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) awarded the GWCS initiative with $2.4 million in the Department’s first Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) five-year grants, one of five federally funded grants that year totaling $5 million. Two years later, the USDOE awarded IUPUI a $2.5 million, five-year FSCS grant for university-assisted community schools work in the Martindale-Brightwood Neighborhood of the Indianapolis Near-Eastside. The work there with three school communities and a plurality of collaborating partnerships secured IUPUI as an anchor institution committed to community schools engagement.

Community engagement has long been a hallmark of IUPUI, garnering national and international recognition. The recognition includes a six-time President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll designation, an inaugural Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, and the Presidential Award by the Corporation for National and Community Service. University-assisted community schools engagement has become a distinctive trademark of campus outreach initiatives, notably acknowledged by the Netter Center for Community Partnerships at Penn in 2011 as a regional training center, the second of five named sites that include the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa, University of Connecticut, UCLA, and Binghamton University.¹

**Family, School, and Neighborhood Engagement, Office of Community Engagement**

A testament to the university-assisted community schools commitment is the development of the Office of Community Engagement at IUPUI six years ago and particularly its division of Family, School, and Neighborhood Engagement (FSNE). As a regional training center of the Netter Center, IUPUI’s FSNE team provides an array of services to support schools, neighborhoods, institutions of higher education and other key stakeholders in implementing university-assisted community school strategies.² Since 2011, IUPUI has provided school communities professional development and technical assistance focused on the development of community schools, such as partnerships facilitation, community council development, and university engagement. Services include customized workshops and training, one-on-one consultation, project evaluation, connections to health, human services, workforce readiness opportunities, and asset/needs assessment. The work draws upon the decades of community school engagement on the Indianapolis Near-Westside and Near-Eastside, including three USDOE-funded FSCS projects. IUPUI also collaborated with nearby Marian University Educators College, 2012-18, to develop community councils at schools where Marian administrator students and graduates worked. IUPUI’s FSNE also facilitates an Indiana Community Schools Network of stakeholders statewide in sharing best practices, advocating for community schools, and promoting related policy interests. Participation in the national Community Schools Leadership Network provides IUPUI ongoing exposure to best practices in university-assisted community schools and recognition for the community engagement

¹ https://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/what-we-do/national-and-global-outreach
² https://www.engage.iupui.edu/community-schools
hallmark of the campus. A few years ago, such engagement with colleagues of the Center for Service and Learning garnered a group led by Dr. Bob Bringle, then director of the Center for Service and Learning, to present their work at an international university community engagement scholarship conference in Barcelona, Spain.

**IU Student Success Corps Illustrates Engagement**

University students huddle at cubicles with headphones and computer screens, talking with middle- and high-school students across the state in evening homework help and mentoring activities. The room in Hine Hall on the IUPUI campus looks like a call center, and that is what it is for more than 2,000 tutored secondary students in Indiana (Nunnally, 2020). Called IU Student Success Corps, IUPUI manages the no-cost online service in collaboration with Indiana University campuses throughout the state. Funded primarily by a multi-year community service grant from Serve Indiana, an affiliate of the Corporation for National and Community Service, IU Student Success Corps illustrates a university-assisted community school activity among many at the comprehensive urban campus of more than 30,000 college students in the heart of the Hoosier state capital.

Since the spring of 2015, the Office of Community Engagement at IUPUI has promoted opportunities and resources that enrich the lives of Hoosier families. IU Student Success Corps provides tutoring and mentoring and college and careers readiness workshops for students in grades 6-12 across the state. IUPUI students provide the resources to the secondary students, designed to support the state and university goal of a better-educated citizenry, and allows the college students to engage in community.

The tutoring and mentoring services occur before, during, and after school hours through one-to-one or group sessions either virtually or on-site (before COVID-19) at a supervised school or campus location. The tutoring sessions focus on grade-level subjects in language arts, social studies, and science, yet consistent with national trends, assistance with math is the top request. During mentoring sessions, the matched pairs discuss life, academic, college, and career goals as well as positive decision-making strategies. Mentors focus on relationship building with their mentees as well as supporting character development. IU Student Success Corps also offers workshops to support family engagement and educational goals, including goal setting, preparing for college, filling out a FAFSA, test preparation, and career pathways. Additionally, secondary students and caregivers receive information and resources about upcoming IUPUI campus and community events.

While IUPUI serves as the anchor campus of this program, in the spirit of collaborative leadership and partnership with IU Northwest, IU South Bend, IU Kokomo, IU East, IU Bloomington, and IU Southeast, each campus adapts the tutoring, mentoring, and workshop model to fit the needs of regional internal and external constituencies. A designated program director at each campus manages the tutor/mentor hiring, onboarding, and supervision as well as regional outreach and partnership development, which usually is in addition to other job duties. The IUPUI team provides on-going technical assistance and collectively convenes the statewide group each semester.

During its third academic year (2018-19), the program enrolled 1,869 students, of which 190 received the online services. Online services include informational calls to orient students and parents to the program as well as mentoring and tutoring sessions. Online tutoring and mentoring require the use of an IU Zoom platform. Upon program enrollment, each student is sent a secure link where the student can use a tablet, laptop, or cell phone to connect virtually with a tutor or mentor. Due to the technology divide in some rural communities and low-income households where the internet is not accessible, students can call in for services. In the third year, the program offered more than 600 hours of online services. Mentoring sessions averaged 60 minutes long. However, the length of the tutoring sessions varied from 10 minutes to three hours, though most tutoring sessions were 60 minutes long; 74 percent of the tutoring sessions were dedicated to math, and 21 percent of the sessions focused on language arts.
The program continues to increase in enrollment of secondary students and the number of college student participants, with 2,667 student enrollments now and 97 college students employed. Like so many campus programs across the country that have had to transition due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, IU Student Success Corps is solely offering online tutoring, mentoring, and workshops at this time.

University Schools and Department Initiatives

School of Health and Human Sciences Students “Educate, Empower, and Move” Area Residents

Students in the School of Health and Human Sciences at IUPUI provide area individuals fitness opportunities and personal training for low-cost on two Indianapolis Public Schools campuses. Called PARCS (Physically Active Residential Communities and Schools), memberships are open to Indianapolis residents who commit to healthier lives. Residents participate in personal training, group exercise and healthy lifestyle education, individual workouts, and health and fitness assessments—all services led by IUPUI students of exercise science, fitness management, and personal training, under the supervision of university faculty. The initiative originated as a service-learning project in an exercise science course held at GWCS in 2005 with Dr. NiCole Keith, Associate Professor in the School of Health and Human Sciences and the School of Medicine. The project initially served 20 high school students and provided the IUPUI students with authentic, immersive one-on-one field experience in fitness management and personal training. It also addressed a Near-Westside neighborhood quality-of-life health goal to deliver residents fitness assessment, training, and healthy lifestyle education. Today, PARCS serves more than 2,000 individuals with the 2012 addition of the Boner Fitness and Learning Center at the Chase Legacy Center on the campus of Arsenal Technical High School in the City’s Near Eastside.3

In partnership with the John H. Boner Neighborhood Centers, the Boner Fitness and Learning Center at the Chase Legacy facility emerged from a community partnership that created a menu of services for youth, families, seniors, and other area residents as a central hub for comprehensive, holistic programming.4 Originated from a Near-Eastside quality of life plan to revitalize the neighborhood, the Center emerged as part of Indianapolis’ bid for the 2012 Super Bowl. The National Football League donated a $1 million capital gift, and the community raised an additional $10 million to create the Chase Legacy facility. The Center opened February 7, 2012, following Super Bowl XLVI at Lucas Oil Stadium near IUPUI downtown. The facility features the full-service fitness center, state-of-the-art media studio, mobile computer lab, educational greenhouse and garden, and instructional kitchen and art studio. In partnership with IUPUI, stakeholders said they wanted to provide comprehensive programming to the Near-Eastside community to improve the quality of life for residents of all ages, backgrounds, and circumstances. It included offering out-of-school time educational programs for students to achieve academic success and enable Arsenal Technical High School to become a comprehensive community school. At both high schools, the PARCS program is accessible to community members at convenient hours weekly.

Urban Preservice Teacher Education

For more than 20 years, the Indiana University School of Education at IUPUI has prepared teachers to teach in urban community schools. IPS has been the residential professional development site—including George Washington and Arsenal Technical high schools—for elementary and secondary preservice teachers where they learn how to establish knowledge in the act of teaching (Medina, Morrone, Anderson, 2005), expertise through experience

---

3 https://engage.iupui.edu/John_Boner_Neighborhood_Centers/index.html
4 https://jhbcc.org/bonerfitnessandlearningcenter/legacy-fitness-zone/
(Darling Hammond, 2006), and growth through questioning and action research (Furtado & Anderson, 2012). The curriculum foci are social justice education and the intersectionality of socioeconomics, gender, language, race, ability, and ethnicity as factors that influence student identity, motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. While teachers often bear the primary responsibility for developing core competencies that address basic student needs, a strong emphasis is placed on developing essential competencies for a holistic understanding of urban education (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

Many teacher education programs assert they prepare teachers to teach in urban schools (Carter Andrews, 2009; Freedman & Appleman, 2009); however, the literature states the term urban is rarely expressly defined (Chou & Tozer, 2008; Weiner, 2002). Therefore, a critical aspect of the IUPUI secondary education program is learning how to identify the basic needs of an urban high school community while debunking deficit perceptions of urban schools that often result in notions of urban communities as disadvantaged, needy, and underprovided, perpetuating a deficit interpretation of the reality of the school community. Preservice teachers focus on strengths and asset-based understanding of community to critically examine the barriers that can change the perceptions of preservice teachers who have a deficit frame of reference of the school community (Kretzmann, 2010; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Students discover how the term urban is used as code for “the conditions of cultural conflict grounded in racism and economic oppression” (Chou & Tozer, 2008, p. 1); unpacking the historical underpinnings of a community and neighborhood demographics is essential in identifying the school community’s assets.

Different from traditional teacher education programs, the IUPUI School of Education centers on teaching at urban public schools and places anti-racist education as the focus of the curriculum, giving full attention to the institutionalization of whiteness and how systemic factors underscore its continued dominance and positionality in the reproduction of racialized culture (Leonardo, 2002) in urban schools. The major strengths of the program are the partnerships and innovative approaches to examining pedagogical methods and learning about the benefits of working in a school community committed, dedicated, and determined to enhance the quality of education for all students. Fundamental to the teacher education program is the emphasis on social justice and the critical examination of commonly held assumptions about who can learn, how students do learn, and who benefits from unjust schools.

The theoretical framework offered in the teacher education program is anchored in the research of multicultural education and community schools. It includes a broad array of principles that comprise context and competencies for new teachers. The authentic experiences to learn about these aspects of community schools help dissuade preservice teachers from forming simplistic generalizations about the complexities of urban communities and enable them to move beyond cultural stereotypes that will inform their teaching. This focus, coupled with the importance of high-quality instructional education, prepares future teachers and administrators to rise to the equity challenges of teaching and champion fundamental principles that create inclusive community schools through shared leadership and trust. Without trust, teaching and learning can be futile, and a lack of family engagement widens the opportunity gap to student academic achievement (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

**Teaching Community Health**

An impactful university/community engagement service occurs on Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., on the city’s Near-Eastside. The Indiana University Student Outreach Clinic is a free, student-run clinic that provides primary care medical, dental, social, and legal services for the uninsured and underserved in the community. Led by IU School of Medicine, the clinic strives to close the health care gap by coordinating a medical presence to address a variety of conditions including infections, musculoskeletal complaints, high blood pressure, and depression.
The multidisciplinary program includes student volunteers from the IU Schools of Social Work, Nursing, Public Health, Law, and Dentistry, and has served thousands of patients since the service project began 12 years ago. The Clinic is housed in Neighborhood Fellowship Church on East 10th Street and operates on a first-come, first-serve basis. Oral health services are provided monthly by the IU School of Dentistry students and faculty. Student responsibilities range from counseling patients to assisting with legal questions, to medical triage and observations, to patient charting, and conducting physical exams alongside volunteer faculty. Students gain valuable real-world experience and serve in leadership and managerial roles within the clinic.5

Early College

Since 2005, more than 1,900 area high school students have enrolled in IUPUI coursework through University College’s SPAN Division and collectively completed more than 12,000 credit hours on campus in classes like English composition, calculus, and physics. Among the total, 400 IPS students since 2008 have completed more than 3,500 credit hours at IUPUI, tuition-free up to 18 credit hours each at an individual value today of $5,000 through SPAN Scholarships. The IUPUI SPAN Division was established in 1984 to provide opportunities for academically motivated students to take college classes. The Early College experience offers high school students the opportunity to earn high school and college credits simultaneously (dual credit) on campus, get an early start on a college degree, and explore the more than 350 majors offered.

Ten years ago, IUPUI established an Early College partnership with IPS Crispus Attucks High School located a few blocks northeast of campus that focuses on health-related careers and teacher education pathways. This past fall semester, 57 Attucks students enrolled in 171 credit hours. Since 2010, 317 Early College participants of Attucks have graduated from high school, and 138 are enrolled in 43 different disciplines at an institution of higher education, including 42 students at IUPUI, 16 at IU Bloomington, 24 at Purdue University West Lafayette, and 14 at Ivy Tech Community College; 75 of the graduates already have earned college degrees, including 19 of them at IUPUI, 11 at IU Bloomington, 15 at Purdue West Lafayette, and one at Harvard University.

FSNE and SPAN representatives facilitated discussions that implemented an Early College program with George Washington High School this fall for juniors and seniors. Student applicant criteria include good academic standing, an initial and ongoing accumulative grade point average of at least 3.3/4.0, and participation in a Summer Learning Seminar at IUPUI. The program also proposes to provide GWHS with IUPUI Faculty Fellows, a Gateway Faculty Lecture Series, and a Transitions to College Support Series.

The Gateway Faculty Lecture Series is designed to introduce IUPUI courses to the faculty of GWHS and the formal agreement IUPUI enters into with IPS. University faculty will share expertise and insights related to their specific field of study, with a particular emphasis on engaging GWHS students and teaching staff. The Lecture Series proposes to feature faculty from departments at IUPUI related to GWHS careers pathways in Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics, Information Technology, and Business and Finance.

A Transitions to College Support Series proposes to increase GWHS student college readiness and preparedness while deepening a “college culture” at the high school. The Series is being designed to inform students about IUPUI educational opportunities while helping students to define goals and plan their academic strategies. The Series is designed to feature exposure to multiple campus services including Admissions, Financial Aid, Scholarships, Student Affairs, Multicultural Center, Academic and Career Development, Center for Service and Learning, Math

---

1 https://medicine.iu.edu/indianapolis/service-learning/outreach-clinic/volunteer
Assistance Center, Health and Wellness, Student Organizations, Student Resource Center, Technology Support, and University Writing Center.

Once fully implemented with GWHS, the university plans to explore an Early College program with Arsenal Technical High School. Collectively, the Early College programs represent a substantial financial commitment in university engagement with area secondary education institutions in college and career immersive learning for the high school students and their families. The investment yields significant dividends for higher education, the school communities, their students and families, and beyond.

**Culture of Health Interdisciplinary Partnership**

In a time of austere rigorousness and scrutiny in public services, IUPUI continues to rise to the challenge of helping communities and connecting within communities – creating relationships that link people to other people and institutions to organizations – and responding to novel issues in communities fraught with challenges. The challenges in our school communities include mental health issues like trauma, addiction (opioid crisis), deadly violence, suicide, food insecurity, environmental sustainability, and high rates of teen depression, anxiety, and suicide. Embracing community means taking on new approaches to services delivery, such as working directly with community members in creating partnerships between university faculty, educators, family health service organizations, and other providers (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

An example is a Culture of Health Leadership Team convened by FSNE in March 2017 that featured university representatives from the Schools of Medicine, Public Health, Dentistry, Nursing, Education, Social Work, and Optometry, in collaboration with Interprofessional Education, community schools, the public health department, and ten key community groups. Sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Coalition for Community Schools, the Culture of Health team at IUPUI focused on the five Near-Westside community schools engaged in a second USDOE FSCS project there. Needs assessment early on transpired to concentrate on creating trauma-responsive school communities. Professors from the Schools of Nursing and Social Work formed a clinical team and received $420,000 in Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funding for a three-year project to help school communities create trauma-responsive environments the school communities seek. Their project engages doctoral and nursing students in this work, demonstrating the community-engaged, university-assisted approach to helping neighborhoods solve problems they identify (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

The Culture of Health Leadership Team in 2020 merged with a citywide education committee organized by the Marion County Commission on Youth also focused on social/emotional learning, mental health, and creating trauma-responsive school communities. Representatives of multiple school districts throughout the city, mental health providers, Communities In Schools Indiana, IUPUI, and other vested partnering organizations take a broader perspective beyond the Near-Westside and explore a more expansive approach to collectively address the social/emotional needs of students and families. The more expansive approach began with FSNE staff-facilitated discussion groups of educators in three school districts throughout the city from among ones that had participated in a survey of teachers, administrators, and support staff about the needs of students, their families, and staff. As did the Culture of Health Leadership Team findings, survey respondents from throughout the city identified social/emotional learning, mental health, and trauma as top concerns in their school communities. A researcher in FSNE analyzed the survey data and helped to identify responses for the more in-depth discussions. The next steps focus on identifying collective and individual school community action strategies to effectively and efficiently address the documented needs.
Communities Partnerships

Martindale-Brightwood Education Zone

IUPUI has committed to working with communities on the City’s Near-Eastside and had spearheaded the Martindale-Brightwood Educational Alliance as lead-partner of the USDOE-funded FSCS project with the three IPS schools there in 2010-15. Since then, one of the schools became an “Innovation Network” charter-managed school and severed most community engagement ties. One of the three schools remains a stable community school, despite multiple changes in principal leadership and teaching staff, and the other school has reduced its community engagement partnerships due to a reduction in coordination funding and shifting of focus to strengthen its Montessori curriculum (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

While the FSCS project directly supported three elementary schools, the university strategically built and nurtured a strong relationship with neighborhood community centers in Martindale-Brightwood, namely the Edna Martin Christian Center (EMCC). As a long-standing place-based social service provider for individuals and families in Martindale-Brightwood, EMCC adopted a collective impact approach to address the social and environmental challenges of the community. The community identified education as a vital area of concern, and, as a direct outgrowth of the FSCS project, the Martindale-Brightwood Education Zone (MBEZ) was launched.

The MBEZ seeks to improve the educational development and academic outcomes of children and provide critical supports for parents/caregivers raising children in the Martindale-Brightwood community. MBEZ operates with a full range of partners in various capacities to support a shared vision. The partners collaborate to leverage a full array of assets within the community, including the introduction of new initiatives or to scale-up existing programs and services targeting children, youth, and families. MBEZ documents measurable progress and advancements of each program participant and provides diverse resources and supports for families of the area. Over the next five years, MBEZ focuses on eight distinct goals in health, quality education, and careers. The project recently learned it had earned a new five-year FSCS award from the USDOE to support this work.

FSNE at IUPUI continues as a key component of the leadership team. In October 2019, the FSNE Director of P-20 Educational Alliances and the Assistant Director for Assessment and Evaluation attended a Collective Impact National Forum as participants of the MBEZ team. Moreover, IUPUI and FSNE support a myriad of strategies, including focusing on college and career readiness education for students and families and support campus visits by middle and high school students of Martindale-Brightwood. Programming data demonstrates how leveraging institutional resources and ongoing communication with campus staff constituents increased college student presence in the neighborhood. The support also includes working with the community on formative and summative evaluation to guide programming decisions.

Networks and Coalitions of Community Schools Partnerships

Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools called for the formation of statewide networks six years ago, and Indiana followed suit through the facilitation of IUPUI and its Office of Community Engagement. As a result, the Indiana Community Schools Network represents educators, service providers, youth and families, universities, and other school community partners from across the state who collaborate in support of learning and youth development. Driven by the notion that every child deserves every chance to succeed, a theme adapted from the Coalition for Community Schools, goals include increasing school/community/family partnerships to improve academic engagement. The Network promotes communication, networking, evidence-based practices, advocacy, and meaningful professional development opportunities (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).
University-assisted advocacy takes place in the statewide network as well as an Indianapolis-based partnership group in collaboration with FSNE. The Indianapolis Coalition for Community School Partnerships (ICCSP), a group of individuals representing organizations that promote community schools throughout the city, has identified 17 schools within the IPS district that remain steadfast community schools, including the five in the second USDOE-funded Near-Westside FSCS project and the ones in Martindale-Brightwood. ICCSP partner Communities In Schools Indiana has established a solid foothold in the City’s Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township on the city’s Far-South Westside as well as a community school district in the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township on the city’s Far-Eastside. The formation of the ICCSP demonstrates a renewed interest in the collaborative approach to school/community engagement and learning. The group spearheaded community schools as the model recommendation for public schools in the city as part of the Indianapolis bicentennial celebration road map, “Indy Plan 2020” (Indy Plan 2020, 2016).

Communities In Schools Indiana recently established formal partnerships with schools of two other cities, Bloomington and Lafayette, adding to well-established CIS programs in three other areas of the state. Ball State University also partners with a nearby Muncie school community, and the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation prominently has been the state’s first community schools district for nearly two decades. All are represented in the statewide Indiana Community Schools Network of stakeholders engaged in community schools work and facilitated by FSNE. As a satellite technical assistance site for university-assisted community schools, FSNE continues to work with area public schools, multiple service providers, the Mayor’s Office for Education Innovation schools, other institutions of higher education, Communities In Schools, neighborhood organizations, and the ICCSP to advocate for the implementation of community school strategies (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

In addition, Marian University has initiated City Connects with two Innovation Network charter schools affiliated with IPS and an elementary school in nearby Wayne Township Schools. The Marian Educator’s College also developed a technical assistance and training center for City Connects and secured funding from the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration to support their community schools model.

A total of 139 community schools throughout the state of Indiana primarily exist in Bloomington, Clark County, Elkhart County, Evansville, Indianapolis, Kokomo, Lafayette, Lake County, Lawrence, Muncie, South Bend, Winchester, and Wayne County. They collectively serve 82,867 Hoosier students and families. The most significant evidence of community school growth has been with CIS Indiana that has increased from 42 schools throughout Indiana in 2015 to 69 total in 2020, serving 37,140 of the total students and their families. The Network relationship with CIS Indiana is essential for the statewide community schools movement.

The statewide Network provides a space for like-minded organizations such as CIS and other community schools endeavors to collaborate and share the best practices and advocacy. As a result, CIS Indiana keeps the Network up to date with the organization’s efforts in the Indiana Statehouse to promote and secure further support for community schools. Indiana Network advocacy efforts focus on a Twitter feed and a monthly newsletter that features best practices and community engagement information with individuals across the state engaged in family and community engagement work. Facilitated by FSNE, the ICCSP has sponsored professional development discussions for the past two years. Topics included Roles and Responsibilities for Community School Coordinators and Parent Liaisons, How to Address Trauma, the Use for Data and Evaluation Information, Best Practices in Parent and Family Engagement, the Importance of Self Care, Better Communication with Parents and Families, Marketing and Selling Your School, Connect 211 for Help, Connecting Business and Industry to School Partnerships, and Unique Challenges that Face Families of Color. While most participants have come from Central Indiana, the discussions are open to anyone interested, and highlights are featured in the monthly Indiana Network newsletter.
virtual public town hall with the Indianapolis Recorder newspaper September 22, “Don’t Go It Alone: Leveraging Community School Partnerships for Equity,” featured a district superintendent, CIS coordinator, community center director, and IUPUI School of Education faculty member and attracted a reported 7,000 viewers on Facebook.

In 2016, through extensive deliberations and considerations that ill-conceived policies can contribute to the demise of public schools, the Indiana Community Schools Network recommendation for an additional school accountability metric of the Every Student Succeeds Act Indiana Plan was School Culture, Climate, and Safety, which became an official metric in the state’s approved plan. The Network advocated that evidence-based surveys of school community stakeholders should measure the metric, specifically students, parents, educators, and community. Recommendations for consideration included three distinct areas: (1) Engagement including cultural competence, relationships, school participation, (2) Safety to advance emotional and physical security, bullying/cyberbullying and substance abuse prevention, emergency readiness/management, and (3) Environment with a focus on physical, instructional, basic health, mental health, and discipline. The Network vigorously advocated that this metric should be flexible enough to reflect characteristics unique to various school communities across the state (rural and urban, for example) and reflect ESSA language supporting local decision-making and control (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

Disseminating Research and Best Practices

Community Engaged Research and ENGAGE!

A Community Engaged Research Group (CERG) was formed in 2017. Faculty, staff, and students from multiple schools across campus saw the need for disseminating community engaged research that would contribute to urban community wellbeing by critically approaching community engaged research, community-based participatory research, and creative activity with community residents and agency stakeholders. The multidisciplinary group revokes research that forms a colonizing stance towards partners and, instead, discusses its values of democratic voice, equity through ethical reciprocity and social justice, community self-determination, and the need for shared spaces for dialogue and effective mentoring. Researchers working with urban communities must continue to resolve the conflict between the values of the academic setting and of the community; therefore, it is essential to consider the ways of knowing that exist in urban communities when developing research methods (Murray, 2003). The long-term goal of CERG is to develop further statewide IU community engaged research and to increase the capacity of IU campuses’ community engaged scholars while catalyzing the next generation of engaged researchers through organizing with underserved communities public conversations about community engaged research in concert with IU’s centers for service and community engagement, diverse faith organizations, the Neal Marshall Alumni Association, the Latinx Community-University Research Association, and other neighborhood-serving groups (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).

As of 2019, co-created knowledge is disseminated from ENGAGE!, an IUPUI journal that publishes community engaged scholarship through a magazine format, committed to advancing the field of community engaged research and community-based participatory research across the state, nationally, and beyond. The publication features discussion and development of empirical, conceptual, and theoretical articles that make substantial contributions to the field in all areas of community engaged research, evaluation, and assessment. The journal also provides a forum for community scholars and university scholarly exchange of research findings and ideas that advance knowledge to make a societal impact. The IUPUI Office of Community Engagement, in partnership with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research, initiated the publishing of ENGAGE! and the Center for Digital Scholarship in the IUPUI Library assists in the publishing process so that articles are immediately available open-access online (Medina, Murtadha, & Grim, 2020).
Conclusion

Connecting the dots and engaging in community partnerships indeed is not new to IUPUI. The campus has a legacy of committing to university-assisted community school engagement and the development of a community schools initiative in Indianapolis along with key community partners (Medina, Grim, Brodnax, & Cosby, 2020). IUPUI encourages “interdisciplinary understanding” through interdisciplinary education as the capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking drawn from multiple disciplines to produce a cognitive advancement in ways that would have been unlikely through single disciplinary means (Boix Mansilla, 2005, p. 16). The goal is to recognize how an interdisciplinary perspective can reveal a more comprehensive, holistic understanding of the complex issues in community schools to break down the barriers that practitioners encounter as they redefine their roles in professional domains to foster an attitude of collaboration that benefits youth and schools (Murtadha-Watts, Belcher, Iverson, & Medina, 1999).

The work supports college student learning through mentoring, tutoring, and leading group activities both inside and outside the classroom at school and drawing upon the greater neighborhood and community assets. School communities also benefit from services as university students involved in the program receive hands-on learning experiences in the community that they may ultimately serve. (Bruner, Szepe, & Blueford, 2018). Equally, schools are assisted by the university to help address academic and non-academic challenges and create learning opportunities for students (Lester, Kronick, & Benson, 2012). IUPUI has played an integral role in supporting urban schools and revitalizing urban communities. The campus footprint reveals an extensive record of engagement and services, with a solid expectation that the initiatives will grow as a part of the IUPUI culture, mission, and history.
References


Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets. Evanston, IL: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.


