



**COMMUNITY HUBS:**  
**A model of Integrated  
Pedagogy in the context  
of fluctuating enrolment  
in the Toronto District  
School Board**

**November 2014**  
**unit a architecture**



unit a architecture  
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# 0.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unit a architecture inc. was retained in the fall of 2014 by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) to develop background material on the notion of schools as community hubs. The purpose of this study is to provide research and develop a discussion around the model of schools as community hubs, in the context of declining enrolment in the TDSB. Information was gathered through a literature review and internet search for information on community hubs, schools as community hubs and service learning in Toronto, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Australia.

Student enrolment in Toronto District School Board schools and Ontario schools has been on the decline for over a decade and has resulted in underutilized schools, and therefore excess school space, across the city. Under-enrolled schools across Ontario have been closed, consolidated and sold off to make up for lost revenue and a number of schools in Toronto face similar fates. Sell-offs, however, are seen as a short-sighted solution that can have considerable implications on students, families and communities in the long run.

Another critical issue the city has been facing is the dramatic increase in poverty in Toronto neighbourhoods, specifically in child poverty, which has become an epidemic in recent years. In response to this, community hubs, which provide co-ordinated community services in one location, “one window access”, have been initiated in priority neighbourhoods. Due to the variations between communities’ qualities and needs, as well as communities’ dynamic qualities, the community hub model must remain flexible and open in order to adapt. It has been found that there continues to be a great need for finding adequate space for the provision of additional community hubs.

In light of these circumstances, and the interconnected nature of schools and community development, an opportunity presents itself: To combine the community hub concept with underutilized schools in a way that goes beyond *passive responses* and simply combining schools and community hubs in one space. Instead, this sharing of space presents an opportunity to pursue an *active, leadership approach* involving innovative and preventative methods would benefit both students and their communities in a more meaningful and sustainable way.

One way to achieve this is through the integrated school-as-community-hub model which engages service learning as a method of learning based in community service and real world experience, which mutually advances students’ education and community-building. This study profiles four best practice school-hub models and “innovative initiatives” which offer insight into existing ways of practice. Findings and recommendations are discussed including the need for mandatory collaboration between the city and school board, as well, the need to develop a steering committee and involve communities throughout the process, towards developing and meeting higher standards for both education and community development.



# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

For over a decade, the Toronto District School Board has been faced with the challenge of declining enrolment, largely due to the decline in birth rate, across the 601 public schools they serve in the Greater Toronto Area. Figures submitted by the TDSB to the Ontario Ministry of Education in 2013, show that one in five schools and programs are operating below 60% enrolment – 140 schools and programs would need to close out of a total of 601, in order to reach a 100% utilization rate, based on the 2012 funding formula<sup>1</sup>. Two-thirds of a school board's revenue is based on enrolment and providing education to a smaller number of students becomes more expensive; the board's revenue declines as enrolment declines<sup>2</sup>.

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1 People for Education: Declining Enrolment/School Closings (2012). <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/declining-enrolment-early-release-2012.pdf>

2 Ontario Ministry of Education (2012). School Board Funding Projections for the 2012-2013 School Year. <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1213/funding12.pdf>

Although, recent TDSB figures project a relatively steady period of growth in student enrolment between 2016 and 2038<sup>3</sup>, due to the substantial drop in enrolment since 2001, the school board is still expected to have 63,000 extra spaces in elementary and secondary schools combined, by 2023<sup>4</sup>. Despite the decline in numbers, however, there have been no accommodation reviews (the Ministry's process of school closure reviews) for schools served by the TDSB in an inventory tallied by the School Closure Policy Research Centre at the start of this year<sup>5</sup>. The TDSB is nevertheless under intense pressure to rationalize their service and resources.

Historically, the response by the province and school board has been a number of cost-cutting measures ranging from the reduction in school staff and extracurricular programs, to the contestable act of school closures – a means of recouping revenue through savings in operational costs and resource allocation, and gains in capital profit through school sell-offs. This action has met a fair amount of criticism by stakeholders and third-party advocates and academics, who see it as a temporary and short-sighted solution to a comprehensive and far-reaching issue, one that can have irreversible implications.

It has also resulted in considerable contention amongst the stakeholders themselves, the school board, province, the parents of students, educational and community advocates, and members of the community at large<sup>6</sup>.

Earlier this year, at the 'School in the City, City in the School' conference held at University of Toronto Schools, the interrelationship between schools, city building and community engagement was discussed, in the context of two TDSB schools in jeopardy of being closed. In one presentation, Andre Sorenson, professor and chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus, compared school sell-offs to 'borrowing from

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3 Quan, D., TDSB, 2014. <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/City%20Planning/Home/Files/pdf/D/DONNA.pdf>

4 National Post, 2013. <http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/12/06/despise-many-toronto-schools-having-less-than-60-enrolment-tdsb-not-looking-to-sell-any-buildings>

5 School Closure Policy Research, University of Waterloo. <http://env-blogs.uwaterloo.ca/schoolclosures/>



future generations<sup>7</sup>. At the heart of this discussion is the question, what is the nature of this challenge: Is it solely an exercise in fiscal management or are other critical and qualitative factors such as quality of education and quality of neighbourhoods, at stake? Is the sell-offs solution going to best serve the interests of the students, their families and of maintaining resilient communities in the long run?

## **INTERCONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES**

There is a multi-directional relationship between the quality of schools, the well-being of families and the quality of communities that we all have experienced in one form or another. Good schools have the ability to attract families to neighbourhoods and increase property values, while schools that underperform can drive away populations and exacerbate the cycle of disinvestment<sup>8</sup>. From the perspective of student achievement and development, there are fundamental ways in which families and neighbourhoods play an integrated role:

“Families, schools, and neighborhoods also influence each other. Families can reinforce or detract from school activities, and schools can influence family behavior by encouraging certain educational practices within the home. Neighborhoods can influence families by providing access to jobs, a sense of physical safety, and social networks ... The influence of families, schools, and neighborhoods are interconnected, making it exceptionally difficult to quantify the independent effect of each on children’s academic performance. Nevertheless, all three forces clearly play a role in shaping children’s outcomes<sup>9</sup>.”

This basic interdependency between schools, families and communities, however, lacks representation on a systemic level; we find limited overall coordination occurring between educators and community-based practitioners, with a few important exceptions<sup>10</sup>. It has been suggested that one of the reasons behind this is that community organizations tend to view schools under the school board as off-limits and beyond their realm of control, while educators

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7 <http://env-blogs.uwaterloo.ca/schoolclosures/research-findings/conferences-2/uts-school-in-the-city>

8 Khadduri, J. et. al., 2007. Reconnecting Schools and Neighborhoods: An introduction to school-centred community revitalization.

9 Khadduri, J. et. al., 2007. Reconnecting Schools and Neighborhoods: An introduction to school-centred community revitalization.

10 E.g. the Model Schools for Inner Cities initiative, TDSB

tend to be skeptical of involving community organizations and members of the neighbourhood in the processes and operations of schools<sup>11</sup>. These perceptions must be discarded if we are to acknowledge that the interdependent nature of education and community development requires an integrated model of education.

## **THE SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY HUB: PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

In light of the under-enrolment and underutilized school space in Toronto public schools, and the lack of coordination between schools and community organizations, the rational next step would be to bridge the gap by recognizing this moment as an opportunity to re-evaluate and expand on existing approaches to education in the TDSB; and developing forward-thinking models of integrated pedagogy, such as the reconceptualization of the School as Community Hubs. This will involve (both programmatic and funding) partnerships between schools, community organizations/initiatives, governmental bodies, as well most importantly, the communities themselves.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the following:

1. To develop a discussion around the school-as-community-hub concept in the context of fluctuating enrolment in TDSB schools.
2. To define a community hub and discuss the need for community hubs in Toronto.
3. To define the concept of schools as community hubs as it relates to service learning; to develop a case for the two-way school-as-community-hub model to be implemented in TDSB schools.
4. To review best practices of local and international schools using variations of this model, including programs, partnerships, funding structures and outcomes.

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11 Khadduri, J. et. al., 2007. Reconnecting Schools and Neighborhoods: An introduction to school-centred community revitalization.



## 2.0 DEFINING THE COMMUNITY HUB

### WHAT IS A COMMUNITY HUB?

The definition of the community hub that will be adopted for the purposes of this study must first be drawn from our understanding of “community” within the context of Toronto. The city of Toronto is best known as “the city of neighbourhoods”. In the present day, there are 140 neighbourhoods officially recognized by the City of Toronto, and more than 250, including unofficial neighbourhoods. A study initiated by the City of Toronto and United Way of Greater Toronto in 2005, the Strong Neighbourhoods report<sup>1</sup>, was pivotal in identifying Toronto’s Priority Neighbourhoods, and describes the role and nature of neighbourhoods in the city:

One of the strength’s of Toronto’s neighbourhoods has been the interaction between residents of different socio-economic and ethno-racial backgrounds. The interaction

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<sup>1</sup> United Way of Greater Toronto & City of Toronto, 2005. Strong Neighbourhoods: A Call to Action.

that takes place in mixed neighbourhoods helps build the linkages among groups and individuals that promote co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. It provides an opportunity to build collective values, trust, support networks and a sense of belonging. Ultimately, interaction within neighbourhoods contributes to the development of social cohesion. Inclusive, grassroots approaches to neighbourhood development increase people's confidence and capacity to participate in the community.<sup>2</sup>

While this describes the general nature and significance of neighbourhoods in the quality of life of its inhabitants, and in turn, to the cohesive functioning of the city, It is important to take into account the distinct qualities of each community, in terms of socio-economic needs, spatial conditions, and local ways of operating.

It should be noted in this report, the terms "neighbourhood" and "community" will often be used interchangeably, while in general, it is recognized that the former usually contains socio-spatial connotations while the latter may or may not involve the geographical component by definition.

Variations in the community hub concept have existed since the late nineteenth century movement of settlement houses. The aim was to reduce poverty through combining low- and high-income families and the provision of social services together on one site. A number of them are still active today, including Toronto's Central Neighbourhood House, and have evolved to meet the needs of today's communities. The overall purpose remains the same, and can extend to the definition of the community hub today which is to bring coordinated programs and services, to the communities they are intended for, in a central location within the community.

The community hub model offers 3 essential advantages over the typical system of

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<sup>2</sup> United Way of Greater Toronto & City of Toronto, 2005. Strong Neighbourhoods: A Call to Action.



geographically dispersed service provision (Community Hubs: A Scan of Toronto, 2011) <sup>3</sup>:

- 1 Service providers benefit in economies of scale, with reduced expenses through shared “back-office” duties and resources. Funders also benefit from this.
- 2 The community benefits from having a “one-window access” to a broader range of services available to them in one location. Services can more easily coordinate to provide more comprehensive strategies for residents and the community.
- 3 The community benefits from having a public space in which civic engagement and community-building can occur; residents of the community can gather to provide support, exchange ideas, organize community events and initiate programs of their own.

To further understand this approach, the main purposes of community hubs are:

**Service & Program Delivery** - Local needs of communities should be addressed through the provision of relevant programs and services (health, employment, social services, arts, cultural, youth-centred, environmental and recreational programs). Co-location encourages service and program practitioners to work together to develop integrated, comprehensive initiatives that would better serve their communities.

**Place Making** - Hubs can become the central public space of the community and facilitate a range of community-oriented activities. Its urban and spatial design can facilitate interaction between different programs and between the users themselves; a well-designed place for the community has the power to reach out to the community, to draw people in, in an inviting, comfortable and neutral atmosphere for all members of the community.

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<sup>3</sup> WoodGreen Community Services, 2011. Community Hubs: A Scan of Toronto. [http://icecommittee.org/reports/Community\\_Hubs\\_in\\_Toronto.pdf](http://icecommittee.org/reports/Community_Hubs_in_Toronto.pdf)

**Civic Engagement** - Community members have the opportunity to use the common space and its resources as a platform to engage in the development of their own communities; connections can be made, knowledge can be shared, and they can participate in the development/operations of programs and initiatives.

**Local Economic Development** - Communities with proper infrastructure and support can be encouraged to initiate local small businesses and social enterprises that benefit their neighbourhoods through the creation of local jobs and self-reliance.

**Community-Building** - The above mentioned concepts serve the overall purpose of creating more inclusive, cohesive and sustainable communities across Toronto.

## A NEED FOR COMMUNITY HUBS

While the idea of the community hub is not new to Toronto, it was not until the release of the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods (TSN) strategy in 2005<sup>4</sup>, did the number of community hub initiatives begin to grow throughout the city – primarily within the Priority Neighbourhoods, now known as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, as identified by the task force. The impetus behind the study was in response to the Poverty by Postal Code report<sup>5</sup> which found dramatic increases in poverty in the inner suburbs, as well as the Cracks in Foundation study<sup>6</sup> which discovered the critical inability of community organizations to meet the growing needs of their communities. Since then, a number of community hubs offering programs and services focusing on local neighbourhood needs, have been implemented. In 2010, the ICE<sup>7</sup> identified community hubs as an *area of interest* to all three orders of government.

Today, the issue of urban poverty has expanded city-wide with a focus on child poverty. A

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4 United Way of Greater Toronto & City of Toronto, 2005. Strong Neighbourhoods: A Call to Action.

5 United Way of Greater Toronto, and the Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004. Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty, 1981 – 2001.

6 City of Toronto, 2003. Cracks in the Foundation: Community Agency Survey 2003: A study of Toronto's community-based human service sector. <http://www.toronto.ca/publications/cracks.htm>

7 Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development in Toronto



Toronto Star article released this past summer, reported that the city is currently experiencing high child poverty rates in 55 out of the city's 140 official neighbourhoods; which represents 40% of neighbourhoods in Toronto. This is the highest rate of child poverty in any Canadian city (along with Saint John, N.B.) and is still currently on the rise<sup>8</sup>. A coalition of social agencies has urged the City to develop a poverty-reduction strategy by early 2015; any effective strategy would require a multi-disciplinary approach involving multiple stakeholders working together in response to an expansive problem.

The Community Hubs: A Scan of Toronto (2011)<sup>9</sup> report profiled twenty-four community hubs across the city and summarized the key successes and challenges encountered so far. They found that overall, there was positive feedback from service-providers, users and local communities alike. One of the greatest challenges encountered, however, was the identification of space for the development of community hubs. It was found that repurposing civic buildings offered more suitable space than private stock, yet the process of securing a location would be time-consuming and difficult due to “conflicting regulations” and “bureaucratic priorities”.

One of the recommendations was to amend municipal zoning requirements and building codes and to adapt provincial legislation in order for public buildings like schools that have been closed, to be easily acquired by the City. This, however, presupposes the closure of schools as an opportunity for the City, due to declining enrolment but fails to address the consequences of school closures on the communities themselves.

**This report argues for another alternative: One that views the current situation as an opportunity for the City and the School Board (as well as intergovernmental funders of community hubs) to build an effective partnership without closing schools, to best address both students' needs as well as the city's need for local community hubs, through a place-based, integrated and comprehensive framework.**

<sup>8</sup> The Toronto Star, August 27, 2014. City faces 'epidemic' of child poverty.

<sup>9</sup> WoodGreen Community Services, 2011. Community Hubs: A Scan of Toronto. [http://icecommittee.org/reports/Community\\_Hubs\\_in\\_Toronto.pdf](http://icecommittee.org/reports/Community_Hubs_in_Toronto.pdf)

## COMMUNITY USE OF TDSB SCHOOLS

The current relationship between TDSB schools and communities exist as:

**Community Services** - Services offered to students' families (employment and career planning, skills development, language instruction) generally not on school sites

**Community Use of Schools** - Permit-based system for community groups and organizations to use school space outside of operating school hours

**Model Schools for Inner Cities initiative** - Poverty-reduction initiative for schools in inner cities through partnerships with community and governmental agencies to provide integrated services for students and their families (see Best Practice: Toronto)

It can be observed that the idea of developing partnerships with community programs and services for students and their families is not new to the TDSB. In fact, their exploration of “full-service schools” in 2009<sup>10</sup> is indication of the school board’s growing interest in this area. This initiative expanded on the idea of ‘Model Schools for Inner Cities’, as a model which would build its programs/services around the needs of students and their families within schools not only focused on inner cities, through community partnerships. Sixteen schools were slated to take part in this pilot program, but the program did not fully materialize. There is now an opportunity for the TDSB to further develop their relationship with their schools’ communities.

## FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY HUBS: A FIVE-POINT CONTINUUM

A prominent advocate for TDSB schools as community hubs, is retired University of Toronto Professor, David Clandfield, who in 2010 published a study through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives<sup>11</sup>. In the report, he produces a useful framework to help in reaching a definition of the school as community hub, in which “hubs” are situated along a five-point continuum (some of which currently in use by the TDSB):

<sup>10</sup> The Toronto District School Board, 2009. Full Service Schools: The Future of the TDSB.

<sup>11</sup> Clandfield, D., 2010. The School as Community Hub: A Public Alternative To The Neo-Liberal Threat To Ontario Schools



- 1 **Community use of schools** - On a permit-based system, an eligible community group can obtain a permit, book a specific space for a specific period of time (generally after school hours) on a specific day.
- 2 **Parallel use and shared use of schools** - Similar to a time-share lease, an independent organization, on a first-come first-serve basis, can use school space for programs parallel to the school functioning; however, they operate autonomously from the school and generally do not interact with the school.
- 3 **Co-location of community services** - A single plot of land where public departments (the school board and the municipality) house resources and services like a daycare centre, a public library, a swimming pool, a community centre, in addition to the school. In ideal form, these public agencies co-ordinate their resource and service in a planned, mixed use site, without necessarily limiting facilities to those that serve only the needs of children and their families.
- 4 **Full-service schools** - Sometimes called “community schools”. Similar to co-location of community services, however, the array of services are built around the needs of children and their families. Family services supplement the daycare centre; children’s screening programs and the public immunization of children may be conducted on school premises and so forth. Agencies involved are publicly funded or through grants by different levels of government or corporate business. There may be partnerships with co-operatives and non-profit NGOs. This model lends itself to public-private partnerships with corporate sponsorships and political agendas that may potentially conflict with educational priorities.
- 5 - **The school as community hub** - Clandfield’s definition of a “true hub”. The above-mentioned four models do not necessarily integrate school life with the community use of schools; in full-service schools, you may have substantial overlaps such as the breakfast program relating to nutrition classes, or health screening accompanied by classroom lessons on health and anatomy. Though the services may be planned and co-ordinated, since they are not required by public policy, the sharing usually remains parallel. Also, what occurs in schools often have no connection with community life outside of school.

## **THE TWO-WAY HUB & SERVICE LEARNING A MODEL FOR TORONTO**

Clandfield suggests a model in which community programs/services and school life and curriculum, are integrated in such a way that serves both the students and the community on a higher level and in a more meaningful way.

“A school might be thought of as a two-way hub when children’s learning activities within the school contribute to community development and when community activities contribute to and enrich children’s learning within the school”<sup>12</sup>

In light of the current TDSB situation of underutilized schools coupled with Toronto’s considerable need for community hubs, there is now an opportunity to reconceptualize the current public frameworks for the provision of education and community services as a fully integrated, two-way School-as-Community-Hub model. Building on a combination of goals established by the TDSB and purposes outlined by community hub programs in Toronto, and through research on practicing School-Hub models, this model would aim for the following goal

**To venture beyond a passive position of responding to long-standing, critical needs of communities, students and their families, through the basic provision of targeted social services and programs; to instead take an active and leadership role in developing innovative, community-building, preventative programs that are co-ordinated between schools, planners, governmental and community organizations, and the communities themselves in a way that raises the standards for education and creates more sustainable communities in the long run.**

How might this be achieved? First, a reconceptualization of pedagogical methods would be required. Clandfield’s concept of the two-way hub bears similarities to the educational approach called “service learning”, “community engagement pedagogy” or “community

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12 Clandfield, D., 2010. The School as Community Hub: A Public Alternative To The Neo-Liberal Threat To Ontario Schools



service learning” in Canada (the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning<sup>13</sup>). Initiated in the US, it was first introduced in Canada just over a decade ago. This experiential method of teaching is defined by Vanderbilt University’s Center for Teaching:

Community engagement pedagogies, often called “service learning,” are ones that combine learning goals and community service in ways that can enhance both student growth and the common good. In the words of the National Service Learning Clearinghouse, it is ‘a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.’”<sup>14</sup>

## **BENEFITS OF THE SERVICE LEARNING MODEL**

The Center for Teaching outlines a broad range of benefits that education researchers and practitioners have associated with this model of learning, including, but not limited to:

- + **Positive Learning Outcomes:** Positive impact on academic learning, and demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem-solving, critical thinking and cognitive development
- + **Positive Personal Outcomes:** Greater sense of self efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth and moral development
- + **Positive Social Outcomes:** Reduced stereotypes and greater inter-cultural understanding, improved social responsibility, greater involvement in community service after graduation
- + **Faculty & School Benefits:** Satisfaction with quality of student learning, improved institutional commitment to curriculum, improved student retention, enhanced community relations, new avenues of research and publication via new faculty-community relationships
- + **Community Benefits:** Valuable human resources needed to achieve community goals, new energy, enthusiasm and perspectives applied to community work, enhanced school-community relations

<sup>13</sup> Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning. [http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/welcome\\_definitions.htm](http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/welcome_definitions.htm)

<sup>14</sup> Vanderbilt University. <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-through-community-engagement/#what>

## 3.0 BEST PRACTICE: SCHOOL-HUB MODELS

A number of case studies on specific schools and educational models practicing some form of school-community partnerships, have been selected as best practice models. Ultimately, these models are still works-in-progress; yet each offers important information and lessons learned as a critical component to the process of refining approaches and progressing towards increasingly effective models of practice.

## BEST PRACTICE: TORONTO

### MODEL SCHOOLS FOR INNER CITIES (MSIC)<sup>1</sup>: FIRGROVE PS<sup>2</sup> Toronto

INITIATOR	Toronto District School Board, piloted between 2007-2009
CONCEPT	MSIC is an initiative for schools within the 7 identified inner city neighbourhoods in Toronto, where a high concentration of students live in poverty. There are 7 main model schools and 157 satellite model schools grouped into 8 clusters. Each cluster has a lead teacher, 2 teaching and learning coaches and 3 community support workers, who work collaboratively to improve student achievement and provide support for their social, emotional and physical well-being. Partnerships with community and governmental agencies are made to provide programs in support of their goals.
GOALS	To provide inner city students with a more equitable chance at success and to close the achievement gap for diverse groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Equity</b>: achieving fairness and equity to ensure the lives and realities of our students are reflected.</li> <li>- <b>Community</b>: identifying the school as the heart of the community with education and school resources acting as pillars of the neighbourhood</li> <li>- <b>Inclusiveness</b>: providing an inclusive culture that respects all aspects of the school, its community and staff</li> <li>- <b>High expectations</b>: encouraging every student to reach their potential regardless of economic or cultural background</li> </ul>
COMMUNITY POPULATION & NEEDS	Students living in poverty in Toronto's inner cities. Schools chosen to participate are those ranked the highest in the TDSB Learning Opportunity Index (LOI). This is a measure of external challenges affecting student achievement, including median income, percentage of families receiving social assistance, percentage of families whose income is below the low income measure, adults with low education, adults with university degrees, and lone-parent families.

1 TDSB. Model Schools for Inner Cities. <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/community/modelschoolsforinnercities.aspx>

2 TDSB. Firgrove Public School. [http://www2.tdsb.on.ca/MOSS/asp\\_apps/school\\_landing\\_page/pdfs/web/3168\\_4pageLayout.pdf](http://www2.tdsb.on.ca/MOSS/asp_apps/school_landing_page/pdfs/web/3168_4pageLayout.pdf)

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## PROGRAMS

The initiatives can be grouped into 3 main categories: Academic, health and extracurricular, and are generally geared towards support students. Programs at Firgrove Public School (the first model school) include hearing and vision screening, a healthy nutrition and dining program, an international language program, Regent Park Music program, assistive technology initiative, Toronto Parks & Recreation program, reading recovery program and daycare centre. Additionally, a Parenting Centre offers workshops and early years programs to help parents understand the education system and engage in their children's education.

Successful programs in other MSIC schools includes the Beyond 3:30 after-school program which provide a safe place for students to learn and play in the evenings.

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## PARTNERSHIPS & OPERATIONS

Partnerships are made with a number of community, health and governmental organizations such as Sick Kids Hospital, Toronto Children's Breakfast Club, Toronto Foundation for Student Success, Regent Park Music, Surrey Place, Canadian Living Foundation, the Jamaican Canadian Association, the Jane Finch Community Ministry, Delta Childcare, Toronto Parks & Recreation, Metro Toronto Housing Authority.

Collaborations with the academic community are with Ryerson Child and Youth Worker program, York University Faculty of Education, Humber College Early Childhood Education, Crescent School and Westview Family of Schools.

The MSIC initiative is headed by a Central Coordinating Principal. Each cluster of schools receives one lead teacher, two teaching/learning coaches and 3 community support workers.

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## FUNDING STRUCTURE

Primarily funded through the TDSB budget with smaller funding sources from partnerships with the community and governmental agencies involved, as well as through fundraising efforts depending on the program. In 2010, 8.5 million of TDSB budget was allocated to the Model Schools for Inner Cities initiative. This amount was shared among the 109 cluster schools.

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## OUTCOMES

A 2013 TDSB evaluation on the initiative has found that<sup>3</sup>:

- Basic needs of students are met
- Students do feel better physically, socially and emotionally
- Parents are more involved in the school
- More community partnerships are developed to support students
- Kindergarten students are more prepared for Grade 1
- Students enjoy school better
- Staff have received more training and leadership experience
- Students' reading, writing and math skills have improved

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1 TDSB, 2013. Achievement Gap Cannot be Closed Without First Reducing the Opportunity Gap: A Case Study of Model Schools for Inner Cities. [http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Community/ModelSchools/AERA\\_presentation\\_April2013\\_main\\_v2\\_fewer%20slides.pdf](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/Community/ModelSchools/AERA_presentation_April2013_main_v2_fewer%20slides.pdf)



## EASTDALE COLLEGIATE Toronto

INITIATOR	Toronto District School Board and FoodShare, piloted between 2007-2009
CONCEPT	To convert an unused tennis court roof into a school food garden that acts as a food literacy education centre, large market garden and rentable event space. It has become Toronto's largest food-producing roof.
GOALS	To lead a movement of change in the way children and youth eat, grow and learn. To comply with the TDSB goal to be more green and sustainable. To provide real world education by making connections with community organizations.
PROGRAMS	Programs consists of FoodShare's Field to Table program, under which the School Grown program operates. This program is a schoolyard farming project that employs students in running urban market gardens, Specifically, this program collaborates with school staff and students to maintain growing spaces, harvest and sell at restaurants and the East Lynn Farmers' market. The 16,000 square foot rooftop includes 450 garden planters, 100 mushroom logs, a dwarf fruit orchard, seating for over 200 people, and an indoor classroom.
PARTNERSHIPS	FoodShare is the school's primary program partners while funding partners include Live Green Toronto foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Counselling Foundation and Slow Food Toronto. The City's Focus on Youth program, which hires students to manage gardens over the summer.
FUNDING & GOVERNANCE	Toronto's Live Green Foundation, Ontario's Trillium Foundation, the Counselling Foundation and Slow Food Toronto provided capital funding, while the profits made from selling their produce goes back into running the program.  FoodShare acts as the school's gardening partner and manages the site and program year-round with the help of Eastdale's staff, and undertakes the responsibility of finding funding for the program.

## BEST PRACTICE: CANADA

### SCHOOL<sup>PLUS</sup> 1 Saskatchewan

INITIATOR	Government of Saskatchewan, initiated in 2001 and implemented in 2006.
CONCEPT	<p>School<sup>PLUS</sup> builds and expands on the successful practices of the Community Schools initiative in Vancouver, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and the US, from the early 1980's. In Community Schools, the school acted as the centre of the community and hub of services, School<sup>PLUS</sup> further creates a direct link between integrated services and the associated agencies to the education system.</p> <p>“SchoolPLUS invites schools to maximize the learning potential of all children and youth by expanding their engagement of the community in a reciprocal relationship of sharing and support. It is an exciting opportunity to view the education profession and resources in the community as strengths to be combined in the life of the school ... Schools and communities together can create multiple opportunities to benefit from an exchange of strengths, resources, services, and supports as they partner to meet common goals through collaborative and effective practices.”</p>
GOALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All Saskatchewan children and youth should have access to the supports they need for school and life success</li> <li>- The well-being and education of children and youth is a shared responsibility</li> <li>- A harmonious and shared future with Aboriginal peoples is envisioned</li> <li>- High-quality services and supports will be linked to schools at the community level; and there will be strengthened capacity for high-quality and integrated learning and support programs.</li> </ul>
COMMUNITY POPULATION & NEEDS	A broad diversity of needs that children and youth have in a wide variety of circumstances and conditions throughout the province, including demographic change, special needs, poverty, mobility, rural depopulation, violence, cross-cultural concerns.

1 University of Regina, 2011. Exploring Schools As Community Hubs: Investigating application of the community hub model in context of the closure of Athabasca School, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada and other small schools. <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/bitstream/handle/10294/3397/Community%20Hub%20Final%20Report.pdf?sequence=3>

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, 2007. SchoolPLUS and the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division. <http://www.srsd119.ca/continuousimprovementfiles/SchoolPLUSOverview.pdf>



## PARTNERSHIPS, PROGRAMS & OPERATIONS

Collaboration among community and government organizations; since the beginning of School<sup>PLUS</sup>, many initiatives have been integrated with social service, justice, and health services and that has been increased involvement of community-based and business partnerships with schools.

Nutana Collegiate in Saskatoon, for example, has an Integrated School-Linked Services Team which builds services and service partnerships to meet the needs of those youth coming to school with complex social, emotional, health and developmental challenges; among its resources, the school supports a community developer, Students and Kids Center, prenatal support program, primary care nurse practitioner, family support center, career employment counselor and an Integrated School Linked Services worker.

The wide range of service, education and business partnerships include the John Howard Society, Family Service Saskatoon, Saskatoon Police Services, Affinity Credit Union, the Mendal Art Gallery and Wanuskewin Heritage Park.

## FUNDING STRUCTURE

Funding can be procured through a number of ways. The Prince Albert area in Saskatchewan has a long history of successful partnerships amongst agencies and generally fit under 4 types:

Type A: Partnerships organized around a particular provincial priority and is funded by a government department to a local agency

Type B: Partnerships involve one local agency providing service in another agency's facility; the former usually funds the program through their operating budget

Type C: Partnerships revolve around an incorporated Community Based Organization that receives funding from multiple government and corporate sources

Type D: Partnerships typically form to make an application for a government or corporate grant; typically short-lived as funding to sustain program not available

## BEST PRACTICE: AUSTRALIA

### ELIZABETH PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL<sup>1</sup> Northern Adelaide

INITIATOR	Family Learning Network (FLN)
CONCEPT	The “hub” aims to address entrenched problems through community capacity building to promote positive community life, while at the same time providing immediate and coordinated support for families in crisis. A collaborative service model was applied, aimed at delivering a whole-of-family support and learning program with primary focus on educational achievement.
GOALS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To maximise opportunities for children to achieve their potential in education, personal and social development</li> <li>2. To assist families to identify and ameliorate barrier issues to their educational pathways</li> <li>3. To provide families with increased access to family capacity building options including crisis case, counselling, training and education</li> <li>4. To foster family and broader community support and information dissemination networks</li> <li>5. To develop an integrated and inter-agency/inter-sectoral approach to service delivery</li> </ol>
COMMUNITY POPULATION & NEEDS	Northern Adelaide region in Australia has been faced with economic and social challenges, with some severely disadvantaged communities. Also, parents of children faced a challenge of accessing multiple services located at different sites due to lack of transport and also feelings of powerlessness.
PROGRAMS	Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden, a playgroup at the on-site preschool, speech pathologist services

<sup>1</sup> Government of South Australia, 2013. School as Community Hubs: Elizabeth Park Primary School. [http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/links/Elizabeth\\_park\\_case\\_study.pdf](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/links/Elizabeth_park_case_study.pdf)

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**PARTNERSHIPS  
& OPERATIONS**

Partnerships include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, who act as community mentors for the Kitchen Garden, the United Way Read 2 Learn, DECD Support Services for Speech Pathology, Northern Area Community & Youth Services, the Family Learning Network with 2 other schools.

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**OUTCOMES**

Benefits of the hub include:

1. Higher class attendance rates of students leading to improved numeracy and literacy scores
2. Notable improvement of communication skills of preschool children
3. A greater degree of parental engagement in school activities.
4. More convenience in accessing multiple services previously located at different sites.

Challenges so far:

1. Limited funding
2. Responsibility and governance
3. Measuring well-being for evaluation purposes
4. Limited physical space

## LAKE WINDEMERE BIRTH-7 SCHOOL<sup>1</sup> Northern Adelaide

INITIATOR	Principal of Lake Windemere School began building relationships with key community stakeholders.
CONCEPT	The school hub is based on the idea of Positive Psychology, which is based on five overarching principles: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. This approach seeks to achieve a scientific understanding of and effective solutions that build thriving individuals, families and communities.
GOALS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To improve outcomes for children and enable them to flourish in their areas of strength.</li> <li>2. To use the school as a catalyst for community change through challenging the status quo and building positive perceptions.</li> <li>3. To enable families to access the support services they need.</li> <li>4. To support teachers in focusing on their core business and for them to feel connected to a greater community purpose.</li> </ol>
COMMUNITY POPULATION & NEEDS	Northern Adelaide region in Australia has been faced with economic and social challenges, with some severely disadvantaged communities. Also, parents of children faced a challenge of accessing multiple services located at different sites due to lack of transport and also feelings of powerlessness.
PROGRAMS	Provided space in school gym for occasional community market days organized and run by parents with the goal of discovering, nurturing and sharing community strengths such as crafts, which also serves as a source of income for community members involved. Free breakfast days for the community that has supported other initiatives such as Walk to School Day. Child and Family Health Services such as Circle of Surety, yoga, health checks. Community mentoring program for community members to work with children at risk as well as allow community a way to engage with the school. Partnered with Calvary Hospital, Royal Australian Air Force. Established early bird reading program.

<sup>1</sup> Government of South Australia, 2013. School as Community Hubs: Lake Windemere Birth-7 School. [http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/links/Lake\\_Windemere\\_case\\_study.pdf](http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/links/Lake_Windemere_case_study.pdf)



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**PARTNERSHIPS  
& OPERATIONS**

Partnerships are vast, including abovementioned organizations.

The school has a Community Development Officer, who is funded by the school's Children's Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting.

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**OUTCOMES**

Benefits of the hub include:

1. Improved reading achievement in many preschool students entering the primary school.
2. Improved perceptions of the school as expressed by new parents and community members to the school.
3. Fewer complaints to the regional office, which had previously been overwhelming in number
4. More community members and parents participating in school activities signifying a positive cultural change.

Challenges so far:

1. Inter-agency sense of competition.
2. Keeping projects sustainable
3. Decision making authority
3. Limited funding
4. Limited Physical Space

## BEST PRACTICE: INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES<sup>1</sup>

### INTER- GENERATIONAL

Intergenerational learning can be profoundly beneficial to the social and physical well-being of students and elderly people, through sharing value, knowledge and skills with each other. The renowned Mott Program in Flint, Michigan's Seniors' Centers in the Community Schools, maintains a list of elderly people living alone in the school's catchment area and provides meals for the elderly, both on school premises and in their homes; each class also adopts a "grandmother" which provides valuable contact between the young and the elderly<sup>1</sup>. In Toronto, the Toronto Intergenerational Partnerships<sup>2</sup> is an NGO that has been partnering with schools to foster a mutual relationship between students and the elderly. Seniors act as mentors in schools, telling stories and helping with reading, while students provide social support in return. The Municipality and the TDSB are among the funders in this initiative, and with their investment in it and the growing elderly population in the city, there is an impetus for this initiative to further grow.

### IMMIGRANTS & NEWCOMERS

In newcomer communities, there is a high need for partnerships between schools and settlement agencies or of locating settlement workers in schools. It is pivotal in directing new immigrants towards housing, employment, health, legal and educational resources. Schools are one of the first points of contact for newcomers with children and for those who are not aware of the resources available to them, they are able to be aware of supports available to them and to utilize them. This is currently practiced in certain Model Schools for Inner Cities.

### COMMUNITY GARDENS & KITCHENS

In a time when issues of food production, nutritional eating, local and ethically produced food, and food security are in the general collective consciousness, involving students in community garden and community kitchen initiatives would be of great interest. Health and community well-being is connected with

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Clandfield, D., 2010. The School as Community Hub: A Public Alternative To The Neo-Liberal Threat To Ontario Schools

<sup>2</sup> Toronto Intergenerational Partnerships (TIGP). <http://www.tigp.org>



food, its production, its preparation and consumption. Community kitchens, alone, can be an opportunity to offer healthy and nutritious meals to students and people in underserved communities, or for students to learn how to cook healthy meals and to serve their food to the communities themselves. Not only do the students gain an essential life skill, they can also become service-providers themselves. The use of community gardens and kitchens can be shared between the schools and the community and can become a socially productive space where students and the community collaborates. Some examples of this can be found in TDSB's Eastdale Collegiate Institute, Bendale Business and Technical Institute, Model Schools for Inner Cities, as well as in the Elizabeth Park Primary School in Northern Adelaide.

### ARTS, MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY & CULTURE

Youth culture today centres around media and technology, in which the youth are predominantly the consumers. Most youth are highly technologically savvy as well as have considerable interest in engaging in technology in various ways. Engaging media and technology in the fields of art and culture (e.g. music, films, design, performance art) as a means of partnering schools with communities has found success in particular programs. In Australia, a school working under the Knowledge Producing Schools framework<sup>3</sup> had students produce touch screen tourist information kiosks for a small (former mining) town to promote tourism. In the end, the town chose the students' work over a professionally produced version to promote their community. In Toronto, there are community hubs (Protech Media Centres, Regent Park Arts & Culture Hub) whose focus is on youth capacity building through arts, media and technology programs (graphic design, video production, web design, etc.); it would be beneficial to build partnerships between schools and such existing community youth programs.

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Schools have the potential to interact with the community in a way that enhances local economic development and create a system encouraging community self-reliance. The community gardens and kitchens concept could be adapted as an entrepreneurial initiative in which students, parents and the community grow crops and vegetables that can be harvested and sold in school or community markets. This could, in turn, help fund and sustain the operations of the program. In Toronto, examples of this can be found at Eastdale Collegiate's urban food program as well as in the OASIS Skateboard Factory school. This alternative school program, part of the OASIS Alternative School<sup>4</sup>, offers students a chance to earn credits by operating a socially responsible entrepreneurial business where they learn to design and build skateboards, and market their products, in collaboration with local experts and artists. Their products are made locally and sold in local stores therefore contributing the local economy. Students then become advocates and have a chance to teach what they have learned through outreach workshops with other schools.

<sup>3</sup> Bigum, C. & Rowan, L., 2010. At the hub of it all: knowledge producing schools as sites for educational and social innovation.

<sup>4</sup> TDSB. OASIS Alternative Secondary School. [http://www2.tdsb.on.ca/MOSS/asp\\_apps/school\\_landing\\_page/pdfs/web/5584\\_4pageLayout.pdf](http://www2.tdsb.on.ca/MOSS/asp_apps/school_landing_page/pdfs/web/5584_4pageLayout.pdf)

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The schools and models profiled in this report offer a selection that bears closer resemblance to the full-service school model, than to the school-as-community-hub model, which incorporates service learning in its approach. Through best practice research, it was found that a fully developed model of a school-as-community-hub has yet to be found in practice. However, certain initiatives within schools that could be classified as a form of service learning practice have been identified. Thus, current models remain within the reponse-approach with an opportunity to take it a step further; to work towards taking an active, leading role using innovative methods and initiatives that would raise the current standards of education.

It is not difficult to imagine how the schools and innovative initiatives profiled in the previous section might work together towards an integrated two-way hub framework. In the simplest form, it could be matter of inserting and integrating innovative initiatives specific to the a school and their community, as any other program, into existing modes of community school



practices (e.g. MSIC). The main difference would occur at the stages of needs assessment and in the decision-making process of determining which programs and programmatic frameworks would be suitable for which schools. However, a fundamental shift in thinking would first be required at the higher level of educational policy-making if this model is to be implemented at a broader scale – a demonstrated commitment to investing in these methods by a collaboration between the province, municipality and school board. The Ministry should be required to consult the school board in the planning of the development, redevelopment or closure of school properties, and it should also be mandatory for the city and school board to collaborate in the planning of public services provision. The latter would allow for greater ease in the development of integrated programs on the same school property, in terms of city policies, such as zoning regulations. Amendments to existing by-laws for schools, or a new by-law for schools as “community hubs”, would allow for existing schools to more readily transition into community hubs, and for this to become a sustained initiative.

## PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

At the school board level, the process might involve the following actions to prepare for the implementation of the schools-as-community-hubs model<sup>1</sup>:

- + Creation of a joint *steering committee* - The committee would consist of members of the school board (including Toronto Lands Corporation (TLC) representatives), municipal representatives, provincial representatives and ideally, invested members of the public (e.g. parents).
- + Increase *public awareness* of underused space in schools and the community hub as a proposed direction - This could be achieved through informing parents and the community in schools, through media sources, through the school board’s website. The purpose would be to inform the schools’ communities and community agencies who are interested in becoming partners with the schools so that they may come forward and discuss the programs and services they may need space for and how it might integrate with the schools’ programs.
- + The TDSB (trustees, principals, TLC), the city, steering committee to identify underused schools and neighbourhoods that are in need of community hubs and specific programs.
- + Hold preliminary public consultation in identified communities to assess and determine general needs of the school and the community.
- + Steering committee, in collaboration with the local school’s principal and staff, to develop an

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<sup>1</sup> University of Regina, 2011. Exploring Schools As Community Hubs: Investigating application of the community hub model in context of the closure of Athabasca School, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada and other small schools. <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/bitstream/handle/10294/3397/Community%20Hub%20Final%20Report.pdf?sequence=3>

initial plan for each selected school, based on local needs assessment research, community agency consultations, and results of public consultation - Identify all stakeholders, partners, programs and modes of operation on the property.

- + Communicate initial plan to community in public consultation.
- + Development of comprehensive plan and submit to the city for zoning approval if required.
- + TLC to oversee leasing and approval processes, as well as property finances.
- + Programs that require an external funding source for capital and operational costs, steering committee to provide support to agencies in obtaining funding.
- + Once programs have been implemented, regular system of qualitative and quantitative evaluation internally and externally, required to allow for future improvements.

Ultimately, any long-term plan in terms of the current situation must be about the programs as much as it is about the buildings; the extra space in schools must be viewed as a means of facilitating programs that benefit education and the community, while generating a sustainable stream of revenue for the school board.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is an opportune time, in the context of the school board's enrolment issue and the city's need for community hubs, to reimagine a model of schools as community hubs. One in which is forward-thinking in its approach and elevates the standards of practice in both education and community service provision. One in which understands the inherent connections between education and community development and that a holistic and integrated approach is necessary to build stronger and more inclusive futures for our youth and communities. Through this model, Investing in higher standards or education is investing in building more resilient communities, which in turn, is an investment in building a stronger city.



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