

ETHEL M. TAYLOR ACADEMY

Cincinnati Public Schools

Cincinnati, Ohio

Dion had always been an average student. He never loved going to school, but was never a huge “problem child” either. After a meeting with his teachers, Dion was identified as a student “on the bubble”, [a student on the verge of progressing from basic proficiency], but with the supportive services that the school offered, he could potentially thrive--without them he might fall through the cracks.

After Dion was identified by his teachers, he and his family took the initiative to make sure that he joined the after-school program, attended tutoring regularly and even became involved in the Junior Community Action Committee, a student group that plans volunteer and leadership activities. Dion did indeed thrive with the help of these opportunities. Taylor Academy was able to support Dion’s academic goals, by providing him with what needed. Now he ranks at the top of his class academically and is viewed as a leader by his classmates.

Dion’s success story is just one of many that Ethel M. Taylor Academy staff tells when asked about why the community school strategy is so important to their students and families. In a school where 100% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch, Taylor’s community learning center (CLC) is designed to act as a hub for community services — providing health, safety and social services for students and families, as well as recreational, educational and cultural opportunities.

The school was named after Ethel M. Taylor who understood the needs of the community and worked to improve its quality of life. In 1957, she led the crusade to keep a public school in the neighborhood,

ensuring that there would always be a school for the community’s children.

Taylor Academy prides itself as a neighborhood school that is close to home, where parents and students have easy access to a special environment. The school focuses on the students’ academic, social, and physical development in a caring and learning environment. This fosters a relationship that allows each child to develop at his or her full potential.” - Barbara Anderson, Media Specialist

This pioneer’s strong influence is why Taylor Academy believes that communities and schools are strongly linked — one seldom succeeds if the other fails.

Ethel M. Taylor Academy organized through the Cincinnati Community Learning Center Initiative, emphasizes results and focuses on four areas vital to learning: academics, parental involvement, community engagement, and health and wellness.

Emphasis on Results

When Taylor staff looks at their academic goals each year, they start with state testing data from the previous year. They identify subject areas that need more attention, and come up with CLC academic goals for the year. The Resource Coordinator then meets with each partner to see how they are going to align their work with those goals. As the school year progresses, the principal and resource coordinator meet with teachers and allocate resources according to the data. The Resource Coordinator also meets monthly with community partners to share data and other school information. All year, data is analyzed to see what impact

partnerships are having on individual students and how that affects the school goals.

At Taylor, increasing parent and community engagement is a primary goal. Staff and partners review programs and interventions from the previous year, look at what was successful, and build on it. Building and maintaining relationships is seen as the successful foundation for engagement.

Also a focus of Taylor’s planning is health and wellness. The goal is to improve student’s physical and mental well-being with an emphasis on student’s interactions with peers and adults. Staff

Taylor At-A-Glance

Grade Level: PreK-8
Number of Students: 430
Demographics: 94.4% African-American, 3.1% Multi-Racial, 2.5% Other
ELL Students: 1.3%
Special Education Students: 24.4%
Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch: 100%
Student Mobility Rate: 25.9%

Who’s Who at Taylor

Mary Ronan, Superintendent, Cincinnati Public Schools
Dr. Sean McCauley, Principal
Annie Bogenschutz, Resource Coordinator
Dr. Walter Smitson and Trena Goodwin, Central Clinic



“My son Kenneth is ready for 9th grade. He has gone on two trips out of town and been exposed to things that I have never been exposed to. He is in many programs including Junior Honor Society and the Cincinnati Scholarship Program. I know that he is ready for life because he attended Taylor.” Latasha Stanley, Parent of an 8th grade student.



reviews the percentages of students fully immunized, medical referrals completed, and dental referrals completed; mental health and behavior data are also analyzed. Taylor correlates this data with academic achievement to see the impact in those categories. In the most recent CLC report card, all of the school health indices and mechanisms have improved.

Results

(From the 2008-2009 school year to the 2009-2010 school year)

- Met AYP: rose from the ranking “Academic Emergency” to “Continuous Improvement” on its Ohio Report Card in 2009-2010 school year
- State performance index rating increased from 61.2 to 69.7
- 42.4% increase in the numbers of students scoring “Proficient” or higher on the Ohio Achievement Assessment
- Attendance increased from 93.8% in 2008-2009 to 97.3% in 2009-2010. Behavioral incidents decreased from 309 in 2008-2009 to 94 in 2009-2010
- 85% of our students had a parent engaged in their education, up from 40%
- Parent volunteers increased over 100%; Parent attendance at parent teacher conferences increased from 40% in 2009 to 85% in 2010; and parent volunteers doubled
- Community volunteers increased over 100% (from 36 to 788)

A Coordinating Mechanism

Ethel Taylor has a Resource Coordinator employed through a partnership with Central Clinic. The Coordinator works closely with the principal to ensure the proper running of the school and has 3 main duties: 1) to maintain relationships with the community, including families and neighbors, to ensure that the needs of the students and the community are met; 2) to facilitate communication between partners and school staff to ensure alignment with the mission and goals of the school; the coordinator does this by attending all school meetings -- Instructional Lead Team, Data, and Local Decision Making Committee, and 3) to allocate partner resources properly so that students receive the opportunities and supports that they need.

At the district level, there is a Community Learning Centers Coordinator who brings together all of the Resource Coordinators, from their various agencies, for bi-weekly meetings. These meetings are information sharing and provide professional development opportunities.

School-Level Decision Making

Taylor Academy has a Local Decision Making Committee (LSDMC). The LSDMC is the site level governing board for the school. This committee is made up of the principal, school staff, community members and parents. The Community Learning Center, represented by the Resource Coordinator, reports to the LSDMC. The Resource Coordinator makes a monthly report to the LSDMC and the committee has the final vote on bringing new partnerships into the building. The lead agency at Taylor Academy is Central Clinic, which is represented on the LSDMC.

Engaging Partners to Meet Students Needs

Taylor Academy engages many partners to provide programs and services to its students. Partners help Taylor staff to stay connected to community needs. They are not only involved in the school, they ARE the school. It is often said at Taylor Academy, that if a stranger would walk in the door, they would not know the difference between a partner and a school employee. This is because the school feels that everyone needs to be “rowing in the same direction” for them to be as successful as a Community Learning Center.

When the CLC was created, Taylor did an assessment to determine what partnerships were needed in the neighborhood to



help students and families be successful, and to make the school the center of the community. At the outset, it was important that Taylor mobilize resources already available to the school that could be delivered through a different, more effective model. Therefore, each partner at the CLC needed to come fully sustainable to their

site. Even the Resource Coordinator for the school is provided through a partnership with Central Clinic. The school partners with the Children’s Home of Cincinnati, the Childhood Food Solutions, Mental Health, as well as local faith-based institutions, Primary/Dental Health partners, After School, Tutoring, Mentoring, Parent Engagement, College Access, and other partnerships all bring their own resources to the CLC. The key to success is making sure that these partnerships are seamlessly integrated into the school.

Partnering to Keep Students Healthy

Taylor’s mental health partner, The Children’s Home of Cincinnati, provides 2 full time therapists, one full time case manager and a part time psychiatrist. They work on behavior issues with students through prevention, intervention, and Medication Management (MEDSOM) visits at the school. The school partners with the City of Cincinnati to provide dental care for students. There is a full time nurse who coordinates all health partnerships including eye and dental screening, sick visits, and the wellness team. Childhood Food Solutions which has a Fresh Fruits and Vegetable Grant, provides nutritional snacks for students and food bags to go home with otherwise hungry children during long weekends and holiday breaks.

Creating More Enrichment Opportunities for Students

Taylor Academy offers enrichment programs outside of traditional school hours. An after-school program runs Monday through Thursday from 2:15-6:00pm, and includes a hot dinner, tutoring and mentoring, enrichment activities, community service, career and college exploration, health and wellness, leadership development and parent and family engagement. The tutoring partners are led by Project Grad Cincinnati, but also in-

“The welcoming atmosphere of the Community Learning Center extends throughout the building and makes the time spent at school a worthwhile effort. Our company looks forward to the time spent at Taylor and to the positive impact we make on each other’s lives!” - Kevin Berlon, Community Member and Business Partner

clude SES, Gear UP, area colleges, local business volunteers and community members. Mentoring is a need at Taylor Academy, and the CLC's has been able to garner partnerships for their students from the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative and Origins Community Church as well as Adopt-A-Class which mentors entire classrooms.

The school works with college access partners such as Project Grad Cincinnati and GEAR UP, and Origins Community Church who organizes the 7th/8th grade class trip to visit colleges.

Another unique partnership is the 5th Quarter, which is a summer program in June to address summer learning loss and the need for continuing support to students. The morning is focused on academics, the afternoon includes enrichment activities, and the program includes lunch and dinner! Taylor also has a Junior Community Action Committee led by Union Savings Bank, the group that plans and organizes volunteer activities in the school.

Ethel Taylor's School Partners

Lead Agency: Central Clinic

Community Engagement Partners: United Way, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Target, Playhouse in the Park, Community Councils, Fairmont Providers, Mallory Center, Union Savings Bank, Urban Ministry, St. James, St. Columban, St. Susanna, Assistance League, Riverfront Kiwanas, Fenwick High School

Mental Health Partners: Children's Home of Cincinnati, Character Council

Primary/Dental Health Partners: Cincinnati Health Department, Wellness Team, Childhood Food Solutions

After-School Partners: Central Clinic, Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, multiple partners in CincyAfterSchool Program

Tutoring and College Access Partners: Project Grad Cincinnati, Gear Up, University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, Miami University, Children's Hospital

Mentoring Partners: Adopt-A-Class, Cincinnati Recreation Commission, Fifth Third Bank, Union Savings Bank, Origins Community Church, Neon Lites, Cincinnati City Council, Cincinnati Youth Collaborative

Parent Engagement Partners: Gear Up, Cincy After School, Ohio State Extension, Beech Acres

Family Involvement

When it comes to family involvement at Taylor, relationship building is primary. School staff and community partner's know that if families and community members feel welcome, they are more willing to be involved. Teachers, school staff, and partners are also trained to engage families and make the school a more inviting place. These efforts have led to increased numbers of parents and community volunteers.

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Events ranging from the typical open house or a back to school fair to National African American Parent Involvement Day bring families together in the school setting. The school also offers classes to parents and community members, on nutrition, parenting, and budgeting. Parents are welcome to volunteer in the school in many different roles and as volunteers, they are vital to the daily operations of the building.

Aligning Core Curriculum to Engaging Service Projects

Community-based learning approaches are used during the school day and after school are aligned with the school day curriculum. Specific examples of this type of alignment with the CLC partners are: 1) the after-school program aligned with math goals - If the 5th graders are working on perimeter and area, they measure the court and do math during their tennis lessons; 2) if there is an academic goal of making students proficient writers, the mental health partner works on journals with their students; 3) when the tutoring partners are trained, they receive folders for the students containing the exact needs of that student; and 4) professional development is aligned with the CLC- at the start of the school year, the Resource Coordinator reviews the CLC model with the teachers, then throughout the year, the resource coordinator works with the principal to identify needs and address them during professional development experiences.

One service learning project was "Pennies for People". The students collected pennies for Heifer International, whose mission is help end world hunger and poverty through self-reliance and sustainability. After students raised \$550, a CLC partner matched it. Heifer International visited the school and gave a presentation about how animals can help different communities, students then had the opportunity to buy different animals for communities in Africa. The project was aligned with curriculum: counting money, weighing objects, animals, and geography.

Another great project student were involved in was Project Linus where students learned about cancer patients and what it's like for kids who must spend time in the hospital. Students measured and cut materials (learning about area and perimeter) to make blankets for children in Children's Hospital; they presented the blankets to the organization. Students working on these kinds of projects, are also writing letters for donations, reading about the topic or issue and then writing thank you letters as well. There is always alignment with the curriculum, learning is more exciting.

A Place for Success

Taylor Academy has worked very hard to create an environment that is welcoming for all staff, students, families and community members. They have successfully been able to bring together the best partnerships to ensure that the needs of their students are being met at all times.

"We understand that the combination of quality teaching along with great partners that directly support our academics has created an environment for improved academic achievement. We still have room for improvement, but know we are headed in the right direction." said Dr. Sean McCauley, principal at Ethel Taylor Academy.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS NATIONAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

To highlight the impact of community schools on student success and their efficient and effective use of school and community resources, the Coalition for Community Schools established a national awards program. This year's program sought individual community schools that have been operating for at least 3 years, are public schools, and have strong results along multiple measures.

The three *2011 Community Schools for Excellence Award* winners, Roy Clark Elementary, Ethel Taylor Academy, and Glencliff High School, are doing just that. The Coalition is proud to recognize these three schools with a \$1,000 prize. These schools are not exceptions; rather they are exemplars in their communities, where a broad school and community partnership is working to create effective community schools across the entire district.

This year's winners show that schools that work together with their communities can create optimal conditions for students...conditions that will not only help them succeed academically but also enable them to become healthy and successful citizens and contributing family members.

What is a Community School?

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services and community development, leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities - before, during and after school, and on weekends.

ABOUT THE COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

About the Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership, is an alliance of 170 national, state and local organizations in education, K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, higher education, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks. It has been advocating for community schools since 1997.

www.communityschools.org

Mission

The Coalition for Community Schools advances opportunities for the success of children, families and communities by promoting the development of more, and more effective community schools. Our mission is to mobilize the resources and capacity of multiple sectors and institutions to create a united movement for community schools.

Vision

The Coalition for Community Schools believes that strong communities require strong schools, and strong schools require strong communities. We envision a future in which schools are centers of thriving communities where everyone belongs, works together and succeeds.

Core Values

- Foster Strong Partnerships
- Share Accountability for Results
- Set High Expectations for All
- Build on the Community's Strength
- Embrace Diversity

