

TDS recognizes that importance of family and community involvement in both the activities of a school and its strategic planning. For this reason, TDS integrates outreach and collaborative practices throughout its scope of activities and works intentionally with the school staff and partners to identify and capitalize on opportunities for greater community inclusion.

Inclusion of all stakeholders begins with the initial planning process. TDS works with the school administration and district to reach out to parents and community organizations to involve them in the transformation planning process, inviting them to participate in focus groups and planning sessions so that TDS can understand the needs of the community and the school. TDS works with schools to maintain those relationships and leverage them to increase overall participation during implementation.

Many elements of the TDS model include community engagement as an integral component. The TDS Early Warning Indicator (EWI) system enables schools to quickly identify students who are falling off track and develop individual interventions for each student. This highly personalized approach to student success significantly increases the frequency and quality of home contacts by teachers, both to solve problems collaboratively and to report back good news when the interventions have their impact.

One of the pillars of TDS' work is to help the school develop a Can-Do climate. This means creating an environment of respect and support in which all students see school as relevant, safe, and engaging. This pertains to adults entering the building as well. Recognizing that some families have had difficult experiences with schools themselves, TDS works with the staff to create a welcoming physical and affective environment in the school, one in which goals, appropriate student data, and student work are prominently displayed.

Each quarter, TDS schools implement Report Card Conferences (RCCs) during which students have structured individual conversations with concerned adults about their goals and current progress towards those goals. For these conferences, schools recruit volunteers from local community groups, businesses and churches. Community members develop understanding of the students and their needs, build relationships, and consider becoming more involved at the school and/or offering opportunities (such as mentoring or internships) for students outside of school.

Shortly after the Report Card Conferences, Celebratory Assemblies are held, in which student achievement and growth are celebrated, and student voice is highlighted through essays, poetry, song and other expressions. Parents and community partners are actively encouraged to attend these events and to participate in planning them.