

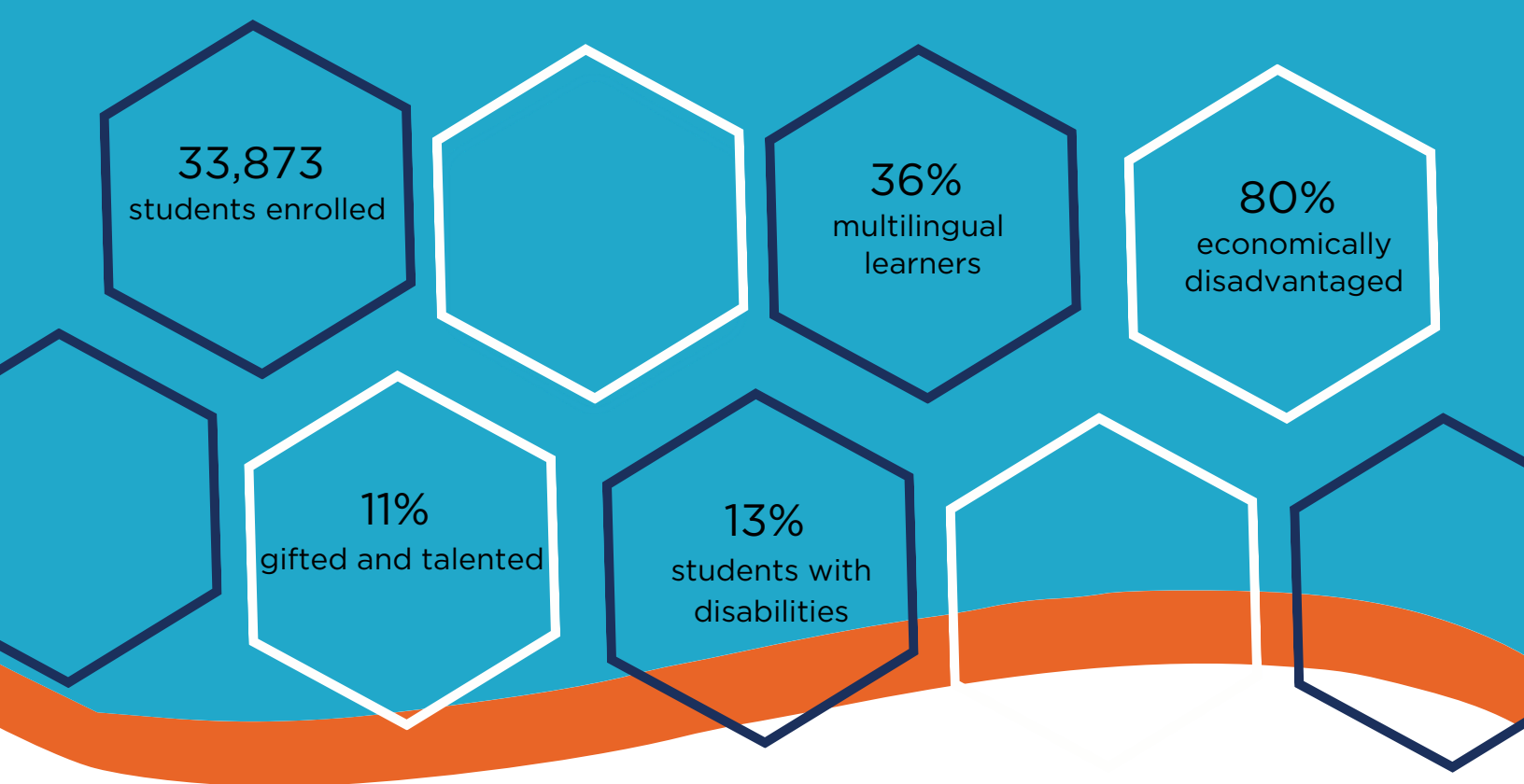
# Tulsa Public Schools



**TULSA PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**



**THE OPPORTUNITY  
PROJECT**  
Connecting Youth to the World of Opportunity



Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) is an urban and diverse district located in northeast Oklahoma. The district is the largest school district in Oklahoma serving 33,873 students, 80% of whom are economically disadvantaged.

Demographics:

- o 23% Black
- o 22% White
- o 37% Hispanic/Latinx
- o 11% Multiracial
- o 5% American Indian or Alaska Native
- o 2% Asian/Pacific Islander

## Mission

"Our students lead through literacy, are empowered through experience and contribute to their community."

## Vision

"Tulsa Public Schools honors the diversity, creativity and passion of our students, elevating every student to be designers of their destiny."

"Quality out-of-school time programming should provide rich, relevant learning opportunities to students that enhance the social, emotional and cognitive development of young people. OST helps students making progress academically and in their lives."- Paula R. Shannon, deputy superintendent

TPS is a model for quality after-school and summer out-of-school time. With pillars of capacity building, quality improvement of programs and creating a year-round engagement, its program structures have fostered familiarity, normalcy and whole-child support.

**TPS's education and out-of-school time values focus on the following:**

- 1) Learning happening anytime, anywhere and beyond the walls of the schools
- 2) Continuing to build a set of systems and structures that help all collaborate together to provide more of its students access to robust experiential, fun learning
- 3) Finding ways to expand and sustain learning beyond the school day



“We’re on a charge to create pathways for opportunity for our students.” Tulsa Public Schools’ strategic plan, Pathways to Opportunity, intentionally leverages community and parental input to ensure students receive education that fills a need. Families play a crucial role as the “first teacher” in a student’s life. Building off this foundation enables the school to meet the child where they are and aid them in reaching their full potential.

In order to serve students effectively, educators must “see them as whole people by understanding how we support their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.” - Paula R. Shannon, deputy superintendent

**OST goal:**

**“Designing a system that holistically meets a student’s learning needs.”**

## Champion of Pathways to Opportunity

TPS upholds the **Expanded Learning Framework** emphasizing growing students' maximum capabilities. Four core components help unite cognitively, socially and emotionally to enrich instruction:

1. Transformative
2. Personalized
3. Empowering
4. Culturally-Affirming

Community conversations and multidisciplinary stakeholders play a role in laying the groundwork for high-quality programming and creating a culture of belonging. TPS measures quality by whether (1) youth voice is at the center, (2) if social and emotional learning practices are built in and (3) if programs are consistent in practice and anchored in key elements of positive youth development. Capacity building of programs is cultivated through partner collaboration and evaluation of past success. Scaling programs involve data transparency among community partners to instill comprehension of needed improvement processes. Leadership must constantly evolve and apply innovation to their own local context.

“Capacity building is about us shifting our mindsets and building our skills” - Paula R. Shannon, deputy superintendent





## Extending/Expanding Out-of-school Time Opportunities

Many opportunities were launched and expanded through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. A partnership was created to establish the Social Emotional Learning Initiative. This initiative provided proper resource allocation to community partners, creating a vision to launch district buy-in for an out-of-school time intermediary, The Opportunity Project (The Opp).

Five years ago, an organization was created to coordinate after-school programs in Tulsa. This was the first of its kind for the region. TPS realized that to capitalize on the abundant assets within Tulsa, it would require a partner who could both access and assess the copious resources. The Opp is solely dedicated to the coordination of data infrastructure, tending to the quality of programming, ongoing professional development of workforce and a vision of response to the need.

“As an out-of-school time intermediary, we do not provide direct programming. We support an incredible network of youth serving organizations and provide structures and systems to ensure all youth have the opportunity to thrive in the out-of-school time space.” - Jackie DuPont, executive director

The Opp identifies partners who emphasize positive youth development and currently creating space for out-of-school time. Acting as a hub, The Opp leverages resources to boost the system as a whole. The Opp provides fiscal and programmatic support for Team Tulsa Educators to facilitate out-of-school time opportunities on their campuses. Through a centralized model, structures can be put in place to create uniformity in program implementation. Cohesion in the location for where activities are carried out allows for relationship building, partner support, a warm embrace culture and excitement common in the after-school environment.

The partnership between TPS and The Opp has played an invaluable role in providing an optimal learning environment and learning recovery during turbulent times.

OST programming engagement data for the 2022-2023 school year:

- 7,513 students enrolled
- 960 average daily attendance
- 7,905 OST clubs
- 2,440 are Team Tulsa Expanded Learning lead

### **Fostering Year-Round Engagement**

TPS has a shorter school year, ranging from 165 to 170 instructional days. Summer provides a unique opportunity to innovate the science of learning and explore new strategies.

“Summer is incredibly important, so we have worked really hard for our summer. Summer allows about nine weeks to provide learning that is fun and it looks a little different than normal school.” - Paula R. Shannon, deputy superintendent

Intentional programming generates continuous engagement and learning across June, July and August. Students are more acquainted with one another and prepared as summer concepts begin to bleed into the school year curriculum.

## *READY. SET. SUMMER!*

Building on the foundation of partnership and family engagement, programs were able to serve more than 3,000 students. Ready. Set. Summer! focused on intervening at the 3rd-grade literacy level. Credit recovery was the focus for high school students and workforce development was the focus for novice teachers. The first iteration of Ready. Set. Summer! was launched in 2021, providing experiential learning across 75 campuses. Students' performance metrics rose in both reading and math proficiencies. Positive feedback included having fun, the ability to form relationships with caring adults and vast enrichment activities. The development of this program was geared to remediate learning loss from COVID, the importance of social interactions, universal summer learning and overcoming barriers to access.

Summer 2021 provided a pilot of sorts to inform areas of quality and efficiency management. Summer 2022 focused on scaling back to avoid resource depletion and to improve resource allocation between campuses.

### **Key Lessons from 2021:**

- 1) How to design more innovative programming that provides fun relationships and also supports students' literacy and numeracy acceleration
- 2) Meet the interests of students

## Example of READY. SET. SUMMER!

Global Gardens provides STEM engagement curriculum that indulges the curiosity and motivation of students. Students explore caring for the natural world that surrounds them.

- 1,264 youth served
- 21 sites
- Provides garden-focused science and peace education for pre-K-5th grade youth.

- The Opportunity Project

## *HIRE UP*

The Hire Up program addresses the lack of internship opportunities in the community. Businesses in Tulsa wanted to aid in contributing to youth workforce development, but did not have the capacity to develop their own programs. Alleviating this stressor, The Opportunity Project and TPS established the internship initiative, Hire Up. TPS students participate in a summer internship earning \$15 an hour and complete a workforce readiness curriculum created by TPS. The organizations that host interns are well versed in social emotional and positive youth development best practices, giving interns a meaningful and holistic work experience.



## Unique STEM Opportunity

In collaboration with The Opp, the Tulsa Regional STEM Alliance (TRSA) launched MOMENTUM - STEM. This program is focused on closing the opportunity gap by providing equitable access to quality STEM education. Utilizing the Collective Impact Model, the program has created an ecosystem to advance the availability of youth-involved STEM learning opportunities.

Focused on equity, innovators of the STEM Alliance membership have helped to form the steering committee to oversee the implementation of Spring 2023 digital badges. Intentional programming ensures badges are tied to projected high-demand career paths unique to the Tulsa community. These pathways include aviation industry, technology center, computer science and many more. The digital badges act as a certification or visual representation of the skill sets acquired during the program. This credit allows students to better communicate their achievements and get their foot in the door of employment opportunities. Although no one-size-fits-all in terms of universal badging, adding value to learning journeys and skill sets of youth invests in their development.



Furthermore, this unique partnership aids in the Million Girls Moonshot initiative to increase provisions of high-quality STEM opportunities for girls of color. TPS has provided funding for STEM kits and other resources.

Overall, the partnership helps decrease the burden on educators who are inexperienced in STEM to close the gap in opportunities.

## Tips for other districts from TPS:

1. Prioritizing partnerships and relationship building
2. Leadership buy-in from the district
  - "It starts at the highest level and it has to be cultivated in principles"
3. Community buy-in (being a champion of the work)
  - Staying plugged in on identified barriers and how to break through them
4. Leveraging the perspectives of community-based educators and youth-serving organizations
  - Connection to the community is pivotal to program development
5. Collective responsibility
6. Including more voices at the table (community practitioners and youth)
7. Investing in the intermediary organization to do scaled work, address ecosystem needs and sustain equity

"The big question that we're facing now is how do we sustain the level of access that we've built." - Paula R. Shannon, deputy superintendent

## Tips from The Opportunity Project:

1. Adult SEL is important for meaningful and sustainable partnerships
2. Context matters! Be in conversation with partners, stakeholders and communities you serve
3. Form authentic and transparent partnerships that create space for youth and community voice
4. Engage in continuous quality improvement and use of data to provide positive feedback
5. Align and create a shared vision with partners, stakeholders and communities you serve
6. Fail forward
  - don't be afraid to make mistakes and learn from them
7. Respond to the needs of your community
  - pivoting is okay!

"When it comes to partnership, one of the most important things is buy-in from the leadership first and foremost. We are able to make a bigger impact by working together than we ever could by working alone." - Jahaziel Hiriart, statewide network director