George Washington Community School is a proud learning community whose mission is to remove barriers to student academic success by engaging community partners.

It’s hard to imaging that George Washington Community School was once an academically failing school that was closed by the school district. Today, the school in alive with activity and its students are thriving.

The transition didn’t happen overnight—and it wouldn’t have happened at all if it weren’t for the powerful commitment and intensity of support from the community. The work to reopen the closed high school grew out of a grassroots desire by the community to provide an environment in which young people, and their families, could succeed. Neighborhood residents envisioned a center of community collectively focused on improving graduation rates and preparing young people for post-secondary education.

The entire school community is committed to making the school a place where all are welcome and diverse groups of people feel comfortable and accepted. Working closely with community groups, a community school coordinator, in partnership with the Mary Riggs Neighborhood Center, coordinates the activity of forty-nine local organizations to ensure that student/community needs are met on site. Services offered at the school include mental and physical health services, preschool, after-school, tutoring/mentoring, personal fitness, college prep, and adult education programs among multiple others.

This strong tie to the community has inspired innovative teaching strategies at the school. Teachers use the state’s learning standards and have added civic and community involvement components to them. On any given day at George Washington you might see students engaged in letter writing campaigns, reading to kindergarteners, teaching their teachers Spanish or working out with college students in personal fitness training, while parents might participate in a financial literacy class, English as a Second Language or work on their GED.

Nearly six years after reopening as a community school, standardized test scores have risen by an annual average of 10 to 15 percentage points and sophomores, tested for the first time in 2003, outscored all of the district’s traditional high schools. According to District Board Commissioner Clark Campbell, “student success at Washington is nothing short of a miracle, directly reflecting its intensive community-driven spirit.” Campbell would like to see all Indianapolis Public Schools become like Washington.