Union's Roy Clark Elementary Principal Theresa Kiger remembers when the school first got a grant to bring in fresh fruits and vegetables for breakfasts and lunches.

"Many children had not ever tried fresh fruits and vegetables," Kiger said. "They were gnawing on the banana skins because they didn't know how to peel them."

As a community school, nutrition is just one of many areas the school addresses to break down barriers so students can achieve academic success.

Clark was recently named a 2011 National Community School, one of only three in the country to be honored by the national Coalition for Community Schools in Washington, D.C. The two other schools are Ethel Taylor Academy in Cincinnati and Glencliff High School in Nashville, Tenn.

All three schools will be recognized at a national awards ceremony Thursday in the nation's capital.

"They're (Clark) one of our flagship community schools at Union," said Jan Creveling, senior planner for the Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative at the Community Service Council.

Community schools provide a web of support and resources to improve the academic, emotional, physical and social development of its students.

At Clark, the results have been staggering. Absenteeism has dropped to near zero. Reading and math scores have risen dramatically. And the school has increased its parent-teacher conference participation to 100 percent.

"We have seen enormous gains in student achievement because we're looking at each individual child," Kiger said.

For now, Tulsa's community schools are located in low socioeconomic areas to level the playing field for students. But the concept is spreading, Kiger said.
"The reason is, it's just what's best for kids," she said.

Clark, at 3656 S. 103rd East Ave., became a community school in 2005. But even a decade ago, Kiger predicted the school would one day be named a National Community School.

"When you leave Tulsa and see what other (community) schools are doing, and then you come back to Tulsa and you see what we're doing - it is above and beyond what the norm is in the United States," she said.

In addition to public funding, Clark relies on community partners - philanthropic groups, nonprofits and corporations - to help pay for a large portion of services. The school has more than 30 community partners.

So far, only Union and Tulsa school districts have community schools in the Tulsa area. But Broken Arrow and Sand Springs will soon adopt the philosophy for its schools in the poorest areas, Creveling said.

The community school concept draws from 100 years ago when the schoolhouse was the "hub of the community," Kiger said.

Doors are open all hours so kids can use the gymnasium or parents can use the computers for job searches. Teachers make home visits to check on each child's specific needs, she said.

The school has a health clinic, a mental health counselor, after-school clubs and activities, piano and violin lessons, tutoring and much more.

"Mr. Roy Clark himself has helped with guitars and violins and Orff instruments like drums and xylophones," Kiger said.

Staff meetings are held to discuss each individual child and their needs, whether it is academic, mental health or other issues.

Creveling said community schools also reach out to parents to teach them how to be their own best neighborhood advocate.

"For us, it really breaks down the barriers to being a successful student," she said.

---

**Area community schools**

**Tulsa Public Schools:**

Academy Central, Bryant (the new Hamilton), Celia Clinton, Cooper, Eugene Field, Hawthorne, Kendall Whittier, Owen, Mark Twain, Marshall, McClure, McKinley, Remington, Robertson.

- Addams and Cherokee, which have been closed as part of Project Schoolhouse, were also community schools.

**Union Public Schools:**
Boevers, Briarglen, Grove, McAuliffe, Rosa Parks and Roy Clark.

- Will add Sixth-Seventh Grade Center in the fall

*Source: Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative*

---

**Clark Elementary's accomplishments**

- Increased overall school attendance to 95 percent
- Decreased chronic absenteeism to 1 percent from 9 percent
- Increased state test scores for all students in reading and math to 1217 from 799
- Increased state test scores for English Language Learners (ELL) in reading and math to 1190 from 313
- Increased state test scores for students on individualized education plans in reading and math to 1,054 from 263
- Increased adequate yearly progress (AYP) ranking to above the state average
- Increased number of students eating breakfast to 100 percent from 25 percent
- Increased fresh fruit and vegetable school snacks to 100 percent and healthy after-school snacks to 70 percent
- Increased parent-teacher conference participation to 100 percent from 68 percent

*Source: Union Public Schools*

---

**Original Print Headline: Model for achievement**

**Kim Archer 918-581-8315**
kim.archer@tulsaworld.com

**Associated Images:**
Phuong Quang reads in the library during a summer learning camp at Roy Clark Elementary School last week. The Union district school was named one of three model community schools in the country. MATT BARNARD/Tulsa World
Itzel Serrano (left) and Tyawna Lark work on a painting during a summer learning camp at Roy Clark Elementary School. The Union district school will be honored Thursday in a ceremony in the nation's capital. MATT BARNARD/Tulsa World
Kelly Woodfin, a Northeastern State University education student, helps Hassan Sattar (right) with a reading lesson during a summer learning camp at Roy Clark Elementary School. MATT BARNARD/Tulsa World