

Higher Ground and TUSD Fact Sheet

Higher Ground's mission is to empower one life at a time to reach, transform and elevate the community through love and building character. For 10 years, Higher Ground has specialized in comprehensive support to critically at-risk students suffering from the effects of childhood trauma and poverty.

CURRENT PROJECTS with TUSD

- **Youth Center Programming**
 - Higher Ground's after-school program in Wakefield Middle School provides social-emotional learning (SEL) and skills building for at-risk youth in TUSD and Tucson community. This youth center has strong partnerships with TUSD schools such as Hollinger K-8 with majority of its students coming from principal and school referrals. In addition to after school programming, staff from Higher Ground goes to regular meetings with school principals, teachers, and other staff members to provide additional support to students ranging from in school mentoring, SEL techniques, family support, and school staff support all at no cost to TUSD.
 - Monday through Friday, students participate in homework help, archery, art, basketball, boxing, coding, dance, digital design, drumline, jiu-jitsu, judo, music, outside sports, and robotics--all at no cost to the family. Based on research by Dr. Adele Diamond and Dr. Angela Duckworth, our student activities are used as a delivery mechanism to teach communication, creative problem solving, emotion management, mindfulness, self-control, and Grit in an environment of social inclusion and belonging.
- **Community Schools**
 - In collaboration with TUSD, SUSD, and Arizona Serve, Higher Ground is the lead agency in creating the community-schools infrastructure in Tucson's high-needs neighborhoods. By providing comprehensive services including health, social services, and family support at individual school sites, we can meet the immediate and long-term needs of children and their families living in poverty so they can succeed, thrive, and eventually give back to the community.
 - Higher Ground is committed to ensuring that poverty is not a limit or boundary to the aspirations of our youth. We are leading a comprehensive solution to the obstacles that threaten achievement in school and life. Through social-emotional learning and Community Schools, the children of Tucson will have every opportunity to succeed.
- **District Alternative Education Program**
 - Higher Ground provides the District Alternative Education Program (DAEP) program for social-emotional learning, utilizing JiuJitsu, Judo, and basketball, along with an evidence based curriculum to address risky behaviors such as violence, drug use, and self-harm to TUSD students suspended from school. Sites include Project MORE High School, Doolen Middle School, Magee Middle School, and Southwest Middle School and High School.
- **Professional Development classes for SEL in the classroom**
 - Higher Ground has provided TUSD DAEP staff with professional development on SEL and character building in the classrooms. We will be expanding this to include 4 more schools at no cost to the district.

PROPOSED PROJECTS

- **Character Lab Research Network**
 - The Character Lab Research Network is a non-profit organization founded by international acclaimed scientist Dr. Angela Duckworth, a MacArthur "genius" Fellowship award winner, whose research on grit has earned her numerous awards for her contributions to K-12 Education. Character Lab is a consortium of innovative middle and high schools around the country that we connect to leading scientists around the world. Together, these scientists and educators develop and test activities that encourage the development of character. 4

- Through this partnership, certain selected TUSD schools can become part of Character Lab's research network to develop best practices with scientists in helping teach character to TUSD students.