



HISTORY OF BABY'S SPACE

In 1998, nine Minneapolis organizations—under the direction of Dr. Terrie Rose—pooled resources and know-how to help low-income families catch up with the requirements of the nation's sweeping 1996 welfare-to-work policies. Proscribing training and paid jobs for parents on public assistance, this new legislation created a huge gap between the supply and demand for childcare nationwide. It offered no standards about quality and consistency of care. In Minneapolis' Phillips neighborhood local families faced the enormous new challenge of juggling parenting, childcare, and work demands, usually within the stressful contexts of community and domestic violence, and substance abuse.

Forty years of research and experience has proven what every baby already knows: loving, consistent relationships; basic food and shelter; a place to turn in crisis; and safety from toxic substances and violence make it possible for them to develop relationships, manage their emotions and learn. The key, the group decided, is to provide extraordinary, research-based, culture-specific services to children *and* their families.

The collaborative came up with a common-sense solution to the childcare shortage as well as to persistent, generational poverty on the local Little Earth Indian reservation: design and practice early childhood education from the baby's point of view. Based on the group's recommendations, Dr. Rose founded Baby's Space in 2000 at the Little Earth Neighborhood Early Learning Center (NELC), the heart of the Minneapolis American Indian community. The University of Minnesota, Dr. Rose's employer, served as the fiscal agent.

Baby's Space responds to the cultures, values, and needs of local families by linking quality childcare and education to family services and parent education. Beginning as a top-quality childcare site, Baby's Space now offers year-around child and family services from pregnancy to third grade, including year-around, full-day childcare and year-around public K-3 education through Tatanka Academy, a contract school within the Minneapolis Public School District. Baby's Space also serves as a community-service site for students from area schools, youth groups, and colleges.

Baby's Space expanded in 2003 into a partnership of four childcare centers that have implemented the Baby's Space infant/toddler/family service model and an on-going research study conducted by the University of Minnesota.

For her pioneering work in creating a high-impact early intervention to provide at-risk babies and toddlers a strong start, Dr. Rose was one of twenty-one American social entrepreneurs to be selected in 2008 as an Ashoka Fellow. ***Ashoka: Innovators for the Public*** recognizes social entrepreneurs for their system-changing solutions to the world's most urgent social problems. Minnesota's Social Venture Partners—a group of social entrepreneurs investing together in best practice solutions to systemic social problems—made Baby's Space a 2009 and 2010 investee to support replication of the Baby's Space model to other Minnesota neighborhoods and villages.

The spirit of social entrepreneurship heavily influences the operations of Baby's space. With ten years of experience operating the Little Earth model and a successful replication partnership with three local childcare centers, Baby's Space knows what it takes to move a University-incubated program successfully into community-based centers.

Baby's Space is the first public, year-around pre-K-3rd grade school in Minnesota devoted to reaching children in poverty. In 2009 and 2010, all of Tatanka Academy's kindergarten students—100 percent of whom have attended Baby's Space since birth—passed the Minneapolis post-kindergarten assessment.