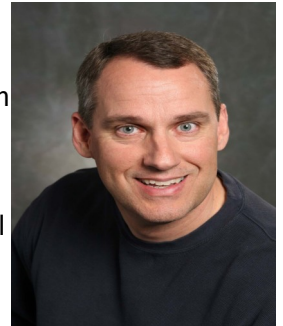




# The WORD on the STREET

## *My Little Car, My Little Hill*



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So the Parsons live in a very nice little neighborhood, at the bottom of what I'd describe as a 'small' hill. We've lived there for 10+ years and traversed our little hill with expected and reasonable success in that time period. We've owned minivans, station wagons, and "late model" Buicks in the last decade. When the hill is really slick, getting up that bugger is tough – but eventually -- it's always been manageable.

So I have this little car. Well, let me back up (pun?). I lean towards being a little car guy. Although we've had larger cars at times, I've always preferred the smaller, front-wheel drive autos. In 13 years of living in Denver, and driving Sentras and Corollas and Neons, I was stuck in the snow exactly ... NEVER. Well, last year I decided it was time to return to a small, gas-saver that will get me anywhere I need to go. (Am I alone in that thought process?) By now you may have concluded exactly where this story is headed –downhill!

It was a few days after our first 'big' snowfall (4 inches) of the year. I pulled out my little car to go up my little hill and head off to the store (we were visiting friends in Minnesota during the storm, so we missed the initial blast). After about the 5<sup>th</sup> effort at getting my little car up my little hill, I am ready to blow a gasket – and not under the little car's hood. The smell of burning rubber seared my schnozz, and I quickly grew frustrated. OK, I was livid. How is this happening? Why is this happening to me??? What was particularly frustrating was the fact that I was 90% up my little hill on 2 occasions, with the end in sight, but I just couldn't get over the hump. "What's wrong with me?", I screamed in a fit of rage. My neighbors were unable to answer that query, except for noting that "he" appeared to be a raving lunatic.

Interesting, isn't it, that I immediately put my circumstance into the first person? I equated my situation as a personal reflection on my ability to drive, and not on the asset's limitations. This wasn't about the car, but it was now about me, and my shortcomings. And I was so darned close to the top! Seriously, I could not understand how I could be so close, and yet not be able to finish what I'd started. That night, I was defeated. Totally. No matter what I tried, I could NOT get my little car up my little hill. That was it, my efforts failed. I was a failure.

After struggling to get my little car up my little driveway, and back into the garage, I attempted to regain my wits. It took a while. As I let go of my failure, lucid thoughts cluttered my brain. John Parsons, an educated man, could solve the problem. The next day I would check my tires, and if needed, I would buy new ones. Or, I would drive the school van until the street cleared. I had the resources to solve my situation. But...what about those that may not have the resources to "fix" their situations? What about the young man, unemployed, who's working toward his GED, but when he left school at 18 he was reading at a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level? He has applied for jobs all over the city, and wants to work, but no one will hire him. In our middle-class world, "just try harder" is the mantra. But, in some situations, effort alone is NOT enough. I now understand that, thanks to my little car and my little hill.

And the bigger question really is, "what does that mean for the young man or woman in those shoes?" Is he a failure? Does she have no worth, or value, to our community? We MUST find a way to validate, and encourage, people who get stuck on the hill. Some will be so close to ... something, but will not be able to overcome their hurdles. The sooner we recognize that, and then STOP putting personal value on their struggles, the better, and safer, Omaha will be. If not for my little car, and my little hill, I may have missed that one myself. Now, if I can just convince my neighbors to talk to me again!

**SUCCESS is what happens when PREPARATION meets POTENTIAL.**

As I read Tommy Tenny's book, *Finding Favor with the King*, my heart is overflowing with love & respect for the OSS Instructors and staff, and their commitment to change, to **preparation**, and to accepting the **potential** that each student brings into our school family. One of the most successful changes this year is our learning communities. Although students continue meeting academic requirements, they spend valuable time with their homeroom Instructors & peers. It is in these teachable life-skill moments, **our kids** are discovering--they **have purpose**—they are a community—they **have potential**.

Secondary teachers are trained within their specialty areas: math, science, English... this year, at OSS, our Instructors *go beyond*, and are intentional about teaching life, manners, and INTEGRITY. I recently heard a student chatting with a volunteer, "Yeah, and the Instructors here are really big on the 'I' word—*integrity*."

Our educational model changes are moving OSS in positive directions. We are excited to report that 93% of our students are returning for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester (this is a record) and attendance 1st Semester was 88%. The longer kids stay at OSS, the greater the opportunity to pour into them academically, personally, and spiritually.

**Future Focus News:**

We continue to have our doors open Tuesday & Thursday evenings for clients pursuing their GED. Our regular attendees are finding confidence in their abilities as they experience progress. We all know someone, who knows someone...who needs help with **preparation** so they can meet their **potential**. Please share with friends & neighbors that Future Focus is available for clients 17 and older! No age limit on education!!!

Prayers – Donations – Financial Support for Special Projects – Guest Speakers – Custodial Needs, etc...  
**Thank YOU for supporting our preparations to help our students & clients discover their potential.**



**CHRISTMAS AT OSS**

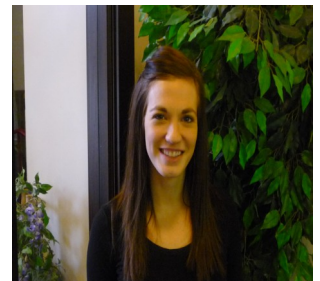


We celebrated another BLESSED Christmas at OSS on Dec. 16. Lighthouse Baptist Church took a list of our kids' dreams and we had a wonderful day in front of the tree, each student opening their treasures. THANK you , Lighthouse Baptist families for your generosity!  
At left is senior, Brittany, with her BLESSINGS!

**WE HAVE A NEW STAFF MEMBER**

**Introducing: Jen Mahr**

**Jen Mahr joined us this semester as an Instructor. She grew up in Iowa, attended Northwestern College and is currently working on her masters in clinical counseling. She has worked previously with at-risk students in Chicago and is very excited to begin ministry at OSS. She said, "I have already felt so blessed by the staff and students and I am looking forward to serving and investing in each of the students."**



**WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE YOU, JEN!**

*get ready for the*

# **MADNESS**



An opportunity to  
**DOUBLE** your giving **POWER**

Once again, a generous donor has offered to match all donations for the March Madness campaign—up to \$30K  
Stay tuned for details.

Don't miss your opportunity to "Get in the game!"

## **3rd Annual OSS 3 x 3 Men's Basketball Tournament Saturday, March 31, 2012**

### Details:

Location: Grace University, Jim Classen Gym, 1311 S. 9th Street, 68108

Time: Registration at 8:00 a.m., Play starts at 9:00 a.m.

Divisions: High School, NCAA, and NBA (Trophies awarded to 1st place teams)

Entry Fee: \$40 per team

Contact to register or for info: Charles Wilson

Cell: 402-216-1323, Work: 402-451-5234 x152

- We are in!**  
(name & contact info) \_\_\_\_\_
- Can't afford an injury, but would love to help with tournament costs!**

Return registration & make checks payable to:  
Omaha Street School, 3223 N. 45th St., Omaha, NE 68104



# NEEDS!

This is a shorter version of our **WISH LIST**, which can be viewed on our website! We have listed some of the more critical items. Contact Tami or Shelley if you can help with the following items:

- \* **AA batteries**
- \* **Liquid hand soap (6 oz. bottles)**
- \* **Paper towels**
- \* **Styrofoam bowls**
- \* **5 Heavy duty staplers**
- \* **White or color copy paper**
- \* **Someone able to buff a 40'x 60' tile floor**

### Current Book Wish List:

- \* **"The Glass Castle" Jeannette Walls**
- \* **"Sorta Like a Rock Star" Matthew Quick**
- \* **"FreeFall" Mindi Scott**
- \* **"Burned" Ellen Hopkins**
- \* **Thesaurus (Class set of eight)**

**CANON REBEL CAMERA (w/warranty)**

Don't **FORGET** you can make donations by **texting!** To make a donation, simply text 'OSS' to 313131. A reply text will be sent to you requesting your donation information and amount. Once the entries are complete, select **DONATE NOW** and within seconds, your contribution is transferred to the school and an email receipt is sent to you!

**GIVE IT A TRY!**



### Management Contact Information:

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**Tami Saunders:** [tasaunders@omahastreetsschool.org](mailto:tasaunders@omahastreetsschool.org)



Don't forget you can make donations through our website!

Member: **Street School Network**  
[www.StreetSchoolNetwork.org](http://www.StreetSchoolNetwork.org)



**February is LOVE!**

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