

Heights High School Transformation Framework

Cleveland Heights High School



Submission to the
KnowledgeWorks Foundation

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Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District
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I. Introduction

“Every Student, Every Day; Some Success, Some Way.”

The Cleveland Heights-University Heights (CH-UH) City School District has embarked on a multi-year process to transform the high school. The goal is to improve academic and social success for every student. We are focused on the concept of “smaller learning communities”—schools based on academic *rigor*, career and social *relevance*, and strong interpersonal *relationships*. Essential characteristics of the schools will include: collaborative *relationships* between students and teachers; teams of teachers working together employing in-depth interdisciplinary teaching styles and content; and leadership drawing on staff, students, parents and community members. The hallmarks of Heights High—diversity, academic offerings such as AP courses, music, arts and athletics—will continue. The current school year is focused on detailed planning. Three small schools are due to open in Fall 2004, with two more starting in Fall 2005.

This report provides an update on the progress of the transformation since August 2003. It is written for several audiences: staff, students, parents and community members, as well as the KnowledgeWorks Foundation (our major philanthropic partner), The Cleveland Foundation, and the Ohio Center for Essential School Reform.

Prepared by the three principals and three teacher-leaders at the helm of the Heights’ first three small schools, this report is organized into five sections:

- I. **Introduction** – a review of the structure and process for our work
- II. **Situation Analysis and SWOT** – highlighting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges
- III. **Identity Update** – a review of the emerging identity and organizational characteristics of the three small schools due to open in Fall 2004
- IV. **Communications and Marketing Update** – an outline and timeline for campus-wide and school-specific plans for helping a diverse set of audiences understand and support the transformation, as well as make wise choices among the schools
- V. **Next Steps** – a listing of priority design issues and questions to be addressed over the first quarter of 2004
- VI. **Attachments** – a series of printed materials that help bring to life our work of the past several months

The Heights’ Design Structure and Process

KnowledgeWorks has stated repeatedly, “Your design must meet the unique needs of your students and your community.” In keeping with this guiding principle, we have created a structure and process for the creation of small schools that makes sense for the Heights—both our schools and community. Four characteristics are most essential to the Heights’ approach to transformation. First, we are operating with collaborative leadership. Second, we have a Design Team linking the work of distinct design committees for each small school. Third, we have active student, parent and community groups emanating from the Design Team. Fourth, clear and timely communication is central to our mission.

Collaborative Leadership – Administrators and Teacher-Leaders

We decided last year, as explained in the *CH-UH Portfolio* (March 2003), that each of our small schools will be led jointly by a principal and teacher-leader. This partnership represents vital collaboration between the administration and teachers' union. The principals are selected by the district and high school administration, while the teacher-leaders are chosen by the teachers' union. The leadership pairings for the three schools opening in Fall 2004 are Marc Aden and Mark Sack, James Reed and Steve Young, and Janet Tribble and Crystal Maclin. For this year, our deep planning year, this group of six is known as the Transformation Team Leaders (TTLs).

We are about to finalize the leadership pairs for the two small schools opening in Fall 2005. The principals will be Marc Engoglia and Terrance Meneffee. The teachers' union will announce the two teacher-leaders by December 19, just prior to winter break.

As outlined in the *CH-UH Portfolio* (March 2003), shared governance will be another attribute of our small schools, with each school governed by a team of staff, students, parents and community members. The panel will work closely with the administrator and teacher pair leading each small school. The details on shared governance will be finalized in May 2004.

The Design Team, Neighborhood Development Committees and Work Groups

The Transformation Team Leaders (TTLs) are at the heart of our Design Team, which is a campus-wide body guiding the school design process this year. Besides the six TTLs, the Design Team includes six parents, six students, six community members (representing Heights Community Congress, our Center of Strength), middle school staff, two school board members, several building and district administrators, teachers' union representatives and the project director. The Design Team holds monthly public meetings to review progress of the Neighborhood Development Committees (NDCs) and work groups. (The Attachments section has a chart depicting the Design Team and a description of the roles for each set of members.)

The Neighborhood Development Committees are the most important aspect of the structure and process for the design of our small schools. These entities take their name from the intention to refer to our small schools as *neighborhoods*. Three NDCs, one for each of the neighborhoods due to open in Fall 2004, have been in operation since October. Each NDC is led by the respective pair of principal and teacher-leader. NDC participants are drawn from the Design Team, as well as other interested staff, students, parents, and community members. The NDCs meet weekly. (The third section of this report, providing the update on identity, has details on each NDC.)

We are also establishing several work groups on major design issues. A work group on scheduling was started in November, soon after two staff returned from KnowledgeWorks' Fall Scheduling Workshop. This work group consists of staff from the high school and central administration, with representatives from each NDC. It will be responsible for developing a schedule for the 2004-05 school year that blends the priorities and needs of each neighborhood (small school) into a coordinated, coherent plan. This work group will also coordinate and manage the scheduling for students continuing in traditional classes.

Two other work groups, about to be launched, will address district support for the transformation, one including central administration technical assistance, budget management,

facility planning and professional development. A related work group will focus on communications, both for the entire initiative and each neighborhood.

Student, Parent, and Community Groups

The student, parent and community members of the Design Team focus their energies on the work of the NDCs. In addition, the representatives on the Design Team have the responsibility for ensuring that a wide and diverse group of stakeholders understand and are supportive of the transformation (see role descriptions in the Attachments section of this report). Separate student, parent, and community groups have been formed in order to broaden the base of support and involvement of stakeholders well beyond the Design Team.

The student members of the Design Team, working closely with staff advisors, are recruiting a diverse set of students. A work plan is not yet set, but will focus on sharing information with students and gathering their input on design elements.

The six parent members of the Design Team have created a “Parent Advisory Team,” which will work with the Transformation Team Leaders on six functions, ranging from sharing information to gathering feedback to serving as liaisons for middle school parents. The Parent Advisory Team already has over thirty volunteers interested in providing assistance. (A draft of parent involvement plans is included in the Attachments section.)

The community members of the Design Team, representing Heights Community Congress (HCC), are focusing on ways to enhance communication between the transformation and the Cleveland Heights and University Heights communities. HCC has conducted one roundtable on a particular design issue (i.e., the “sorting out choices” conversation for structuring student choice of neighborhoods) and hosted an evening update and discussion session. They will host similar forms of outreach over the next several months.

General Communication Priorities

Communications—the exchange of information and knowledge in multiple, efficient formats and forums—is essential to successful organizations and change processes. We believe that a complex transformation, which affects many different people, must be well understood by an array of stakeholders. As a result, we will continue to place a priority on communications for staff, students, parents and community groups.

Section IV of this report spells out future directions for communications and marketing, delineating campus-wide and neighborhood specific plans. Until now, communications have promoted the entire initiative (not particular neighborhoods) through five vehicles:

- Meetings and Gatherings – sponsored over forty events since January 2003
- Publications and Memos – regular distribution of Fact Sheets and Newsletters (samples of each are in the Attachments section.)
- Electronic Mechanisms – frequent use of Email listservs and a dedicated Website (www.chuh.org/CHHS/smallschools)
- Print Media Cultivation – nearly thirty articles in student, local, and regional newspapers since January 2003
- Individual Outreach – one-on-one or small group conversations with key opinion leaders among staff, students, parents, and community members

More specifically, the Transformation Team Leaders have been working on a series of communications priorities since September 2003:

- Consultation with the Teacher-Administrator Partnership (TAP) at Heights High and Taylor Academy (these labor-management committees are responsible for setting school policy)
- Expansion of student, parent, and community groups
- Hosting information lunches for staff and students
- Conducting classroom visitations
- Reaching out to faculty through department events and meetings (a specific list of staff involvement priorities is in the Attachments section)
- Publishing regular newsletter (see Attachments for samples)
- Cultivating relations with the student newspaper (*Black & Gold*) and other publications
- Sending staff and students to observe and research other small schools
- Reaching out to middle schools – staff, students and parents

Design Timeline and Work Calendar

Early this year, we established a simple timeline for our expectations regarding meetings and deadlines over the academic year (September 2003 – June 2004).

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| • September – June | Design Team Meetings (monthly) |
| • October – June | Critical Friend Group Planning (monthly) |
| • November – June | NDC Meetings (weekly) |
| • November – June | Student, Parent, Community Meetings (several per month) |
| • November – June | Scheduling Work Group Meetings (weekly) |
| • December – June | District Technical Assistance and Communication Work Group Meetings (semi-monthly) |
| • December 17 | Preliminary School Identity Plan Due |
| • December 17 | Preliminary Communications and Marketing Plan Due |
| • February | Schedule, Curricula and Courses Determined Renovation Design and Schedule Determined |
| • May | Governance and Assessment Methods Determined |
| • May 17 | Final Small Schools Plan Due |
| • Summer 2004 | Finalize Details Specific to Opening |

Looking back over the past four months, our actual work calendar is far more complicated. A chronological listing of priority meetings and activities since August 2003 is included in the Attachments. It depicts the extensive work of the Transformation Team Leaders and the attention that has been paid to the needs of staff, students, parents and community members in the transformation process. Not included, but of significance, are the innumerable meetings of the TTLs, and the training, input, meetings and involvement of the KnowledgeWorks coach.

Please turn to the succeeding sections of this report—the Situation Analysis and SWOT, the Identity Update, the Communications and Marketing Update, the list of Priority Next Steps, and the Attachments. Readers will find that we are well on our way to transforming Heights High and Taylor Academy into a series of smaller learning communities that are based on

academic ***rigor***, career and social ***relevance***, and strong interpersonal ***relationships***. Our driving philosophy remains: “Every Student, Every Day; Some Success, Some Way.”

II. Situation Analysis and SWOT

Data-based decision-making increasingly informs strategic planning in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. Indeed, the move two years ago to embark on the transformation of Heights High into a series of small schools was based on clear evidence that the district, high school and community could markedly enhance success for all students. Various external studies and intensive self-analysis culminated in the submission of the *CH-UH Portfolio* (March 2003) to KnowledgeWorks Foundation, providing a data-based rationale for the transformation of Heights High.

The Transformation Team Leaders (TTLs), having assumed the lead at the building level this year on the change process, use the *Portfolio* as a touchstone. Most important is the wide-ranging evidence it contains—both in terms of hard performance data and the views of staff, students, parents and community—about the quality of education at Heights High. Because the *Portfolio* is thorough and current, the TTLs and their design teams have been able to largely focus this fall on the challenge of creating high quality small schools. Therefore, less time has gone to assessing the situation, since that key task was completed last spring in the preparation of the *Portfolio*.

Nevertheless, the TTLs and their design teams have distilled what problems and conditions matter most in Heights' current situation. In essence, they have pulled from the *Portfolio* and other analysis of education in the Heights an executive summary to help guide their design work. This section presents that summary. It underscores the four priority areas for change—student achievement, leadership, quality planning and professional development—and the Non-Negotiable Attributes most pertinent to guiding meaningful change in each area. Harking back to the rubric ratings in the *Portfolio*, the summary lists quantitative growth goals in the four areas: in each case, the goal is to move from the current rating of a “2” (on the five-point Bernhardt scale) to a rating of “3” by the close of the 2004-05 school year. Our small schools will continuously strive to reach the goal of “5” in Approach, Implementation and Outcome for each of the seven rubrics. Lastly, modeling what KnowledgeWorks in recent workshops has described as a SWOT Analysis, the section closes with two charts on “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats:” one for the high school today; the second for the high school tomorrow.

Student achievement, at the heart of this transformation initiative, is about teaching and learning. Our schools are about the job of educating young people so they are able to achieve their individual personal best. How well our students perform on varied types of assessments will be our ultimate indicator of success.

Last year the Cleveland Heights High School community rated itself a “2” (out of a possible 5) in *Student Achievement*. This rating reflected Heights High's traditional structure, including factors such as isolated classes, routine and standardized assessments, and limited use of accumulated data on student performance. It is our goal to reach a rating of “5” and we will persist in striving toward that goal. However, we realistically expect to reach a rating of “3” on the Bernhardt rubric scale by the end of the 2004-05 school years. Key KWF non-negotiables that will be reflected upon as we move toward our goal include:

Non-negotiables

5. Professional development that clearly links changes in teaching practice to improve student achievement.
7. A curriculum clearly aligned with state standards and focused on helping students use their minds well.
10. Clearly stated benchmarks for improved student achievement.
14. Individual teacher advisors for each student.

The **leadership** of a school crafts the environment in which **rigor** and **relevance** can flourish and **relationships** can be cultivated. It also sets the tone and acts as cheerleader for good teaching. Currently, leadership at Cleveland Heights High School can best be described as administrative management, which functions in traditional ways. Decisions are made “top-down,” often reactively based on situations that occur. The continuous improvement plan does not drive decisions. As with student achievement, we seek to move to a “3” in this area by the end of next year, addressing the following non-negotiables:

Non-negotiables

1. Autonomous governance, budgets, structures, and staffing; flexible use of resources.
2. Distributed leadership.
6. A clearly-defined system of central office support of small school design and implementation.

Planning is essential to optimal growth. Rating a “2” in **quality planning**, the school has not placed a high priority on strategic, long-term planning to enhance student achievement. The result has been a lack of focus, no effective plan to systematically realize change, and no coordination with the current building plan. The relevant non-negotiable for our work as we move toward a “3” for 2004-05 is:

Non-negotiable

10. Clearly stated benchmarks for improved student achievement.

During this deep planning year, we have taken steps to move toward our ultimate goal of “5” ratings on the Bernhardt rubrics. Currently, approximately one-third of the high school staff has been trained as Critical Friends Group (CFG) coaches. Many of the protocols for examining student work and teaching practices to enhance student achievement are being used. By releasing three teachers in addition to three administrators for our deep planning year, we have begun our efforts to recognize, facilitate, and encourage new leadership.

Central office continues its resolute support and investment in this transformation. The active involvement of many central office administrators (including the Superintendent) and the level of planning, development and material (resource) support provided, telegraphs district leadership’s commitment to this transformation. During December and January, district leaders will be examining ways to support the transformation at the high school through current systems and through the development of new systems as necessary.

With our efforts moving forward at full throttle, discussions have primarily centered on instructional models and strategies. Essential questions around this topic include, but are not limited to:

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- How does this model/strategy manifest itself in the classroom?
 - What type of student does well with this model?
 - What types of professional development are necessary to prepare teachers for possible changes in the way they teach?

As we discussed the essential questions, we developed the following SWOT analysis.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

S= things we have and want

W=things we have but don't want

O=things we don't have but want

T=things we don't have right now and don't want in the future

Heights High School TODAY:

| | WANT | DON'T WANT |
|-------------------|---|--|
| HAVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP Courses • Music Program • Athletics • Wide range of course offerings • Career Development <p style="text-align: right;">S</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement gap among white and minority students • High suspensions & Saturday school assignments • Low GPA's among classes • Approx. 2000 students • Large building • Low morale • High numbers of failure due to absence (FA's) • Tracking <p style="text-align: right;">W</p> |
| DON'T HAVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students participating in AP courses • Higher GPA's • Advisor/Advisee • Coalition of Essential Schools principles embedded throughout the campus • Support system for under-achieving students • Literacy throughout all content areas • Data-driven decision making • Focused professional development • Many involved families <p style="text-align: right;">O</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger classes • Competition between neighborhoods <p style="text-align: right;">T</p> |

S= things we have and want
 W=things we have but don't want

O=things we don't have but want
 T=things we don't have right now and
 don't want in the future

Heights High School **TOMORROW:**

| | WANT | DON'T WANT |
|-------------------|--|---|
| HAVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear vision, mission, and goals for each school • 5 autonomous neighborhoods • Job-embedded professional development • All teachers believe that all students can learn • All teachers participate in CFG's • Student achievement is evident school wide • Student-focused continuous improvement plan • High level of student, staff, family/community involvement <p style="text-align: right;">S</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critics pushing to return to comprehensive model • Physical space conflicts <p style="text-align: right;">W</p> |
| DON'T HAVE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% passage rate on OGT • No achievement gap • 100% daily attendance rate for students and teachers • No suspensions • No expulsions <p style="text-align: right;">O</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rates of truancy • High rates of failure • Flight from district • Students graduating w/o being known by at least one adult • Levy failures <p style="text-align: right;">T</p> |

III. Identity Update

We will be opening five small schools over the next two academic years: three in Fall 2004 and two in Fall 2005. The current Transformation Team Leaders (TTLs) and their Neighborhood Development Committees (NDCs) are designing the three schools for Fall 2004. Next school year (2004-2005), the second wave of Transformation Team Leaders and design teams will develop the remaining small schools.

Divided into three parts, this section reviews the emerging identity and organizational characteristics of the three neighborhoods (i.e., small schools) due to open in Fall 2004. For each neighborhood, information is shared on the central instructional model; the range of instructional approaches and practices that will shape teaching and learning; the hopes and aspirations for students, staff, parents and community that may be part of each neighborhood; ties to the ten principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools; leadership and management structures, including the role of the teachers' union and TAP; ideas about school names, tag lines and message statements; and goals for student learning and academic and social success.

Focused on each small school, the three descriptions do not note the design elements that will cut across the small schools of Heights. A series of "truths about our schools" have been shared with staff, students, parents, and community over the past month. These known design elements include:

- Collaborative development of each school – staff, students, parents, community
- Five small schools (three opening in 2004; two in 2005)
- Ninth and tenth graders in small schools as of Fall 2004, with all grades in small schools as of Fall 2005
- 400 students per small school, grades 9-12
- Low student-teacher ratio
- Advisor for each student
- Autonomous governance and management for each school
- Principal and teacher-leader leading each school
- Parent, community and student involvement with school governance
- Some form of choice for staff and students
- State and district required core and elective courses
- AP classes
- Multiple assessments of student progress
- Offerings in music, drama, art, journalism, career prep, business education, physical education and athletics
- Parent outreach programs
- Community partnerships
- Service-learning opportunities
- Evaluation of the Small Schools Initiative

The specifics are not yet known as to how these cross-cutting truths will be part of each small school or operate in a campus-wide manner. However, they provide important context to the individual descriptions presented here for each emerging small school.

The three small school descriptions, in order of appearance:

1. **The School of Relevant Experiential Active Learning (R.E.A.L.)**

Principal – Marc Aden

Teacher-Leader – Mark Sack

2. **The Renaissance School**

Principal – James Reed

Teacher-Leader – Steve Young

3. **Small School Three**

Principal – Janet Tribble

Teacher-Leader – Crystal Maclin

The School of **R**elavant **E**xperiential **A**ctive **L**earning

Experience + Exploration = Education

***In The R.E.A.L. School:
“Education Meets the Real World”***

The *CH-UH Portfolio* (March 2003) strongly reflects the sentiments and data that many students, families, educators and community members believe that student achievement can be enhanced by varying teaching/learning strategies to include more “real-world” and “hands-on” activities. Also resonating from the focus groups of students, staff and families was the problematic issue of disengagement of many students from their own education and from their communities.

R.E.A.L. School students will be active learners engaged in maximum educational achievement in standardized testing challenges and “real world” settings. Components of **Experiential Learning** include interactive classrooms, relevant community-based exploration and service activities. Experiential education creates a format where the educator provides the atmosphere, exercises, and out-of-classroom experiences for the student to discover internalize, and apply the knowledge and skills of the disciplines.



The Experiential Learning Model

engages students in a rigorous *Four Stage Cycle of Learning*:

- Experience
- Reflect
- Conceptualize
- Apply

This continuing Learning Cycle will take place in classes that will include teacher-guided and student-directed interactive exercises, inter-disciplinary units, laboratory and “hands-on” activities, direct instruction, individual and group projects, service learning opportunities, and internships.

The R.E.A.L. Neighborhood Seeks:

- ✓ Students and teachers who are interested in relevant connections to real-world learning
- ✓ Students and teachers who enjoy “hands-on” learning activities that make links across content areas
- ✓ Students and teachers that value creative scheduling and a variety of assessments
- ✓ Students and teachers that are interested in meaningful cooperation between staff, students and families to develop and achieve high academic and social goals
- ✓ Students and teachers who believe that adolescents can contribute to society through service learning

Experiential/Service Learning Examples

Ex. 1: Students study the election process by analyzing data relating to relevant political, social, and economic topics. Students plan and present workshops to the public with the data gathered from the project. This project stimulates participation in the democratic process and brings adults and students together in a meaningful forum.

Ex. 2: Working with local professionals, students investigate and examine the levels of toxicity in the paint and wood preservatives used in playground equipment. After gathering and analyzing data, the findings of their research are reported to concerned stakeholder groups. This project provides important health and safety information to the community.

Organizational Structure:

The **R.E.A.L.** principal will work collaboratively with a teacher-leader and a leadership team comprised of parents, community members, staff and students. This team, with participation from the Teacher-Administrator Partnership (TAP) will be responsible for the shared management of the school, from budget decisions to staffing to the assessment of the school.

Five important facts about R.E.A.L.

- 1) All stakeholders will have high academic and social expectations for **every student**.
- 2) Teachers and stakeholders will promote active learning around meaningful **relationships**. This approach will enhance authentic learning and build a sense of family and community.
- 3) All stakeholders believe that Service-Learning opportunities blend academic and service goals in student-centered activities that will enhance self-esteem, academic achievement and positive civic involvement.
- 4) A variety of assessment tools will be utilized to allow students to demonstrate mastery.
- 5) Technology, Research Skills and Career Exploration will be integrated throughout the curriculum.

“Working with other students on projects – that’s how I learn best.”

V.A., junior, December 2003

“It’s about students making connections and seeing them grow as people.”

S.O., teacher, December 2003

Students will choose to come to the R.E.A.L. Neighborhood because of...

- * opportunities for exciting, innovative in-class learning experiences
- * opportunities for important real-world experiences; e.g., service-learning and internships
- * caring, motivating, resourceful staff and community resources

Families will choose to send their child to the R.E.A.L. Neighborhood because of...

- * professional staff that provides a safe, stable, engaging learning environment
- * curriculum and teaching strategies that meet the academic needs of all students
- * the partnership of family, school staff, and community in educating young adults

Educators will choose to teach in the R.E.A.L. Neighborhood because of...

- * opportunities to interact with students in meaningful ways and expanded contexts
- * opportunities to plan and teach with colleagues from other subject areas (interdisciplinary)
- * opportunities for shared decision making as a community of learners develops

The Community is proud of the R.E.A.L. Neighborhood because it...

- * promotes student achievement and community involvement of our youth
- * promotes multi-culturalism and diversity in the school and the communities
- * promotes the positive image of CH-UH schools in the communities and beyond

The Renaissance School

*where great
minds meet*

The Renaissance School of Heights High emphasizes collaborative learning and independent exploration. Students learn from both their teachers and their peers. This is the premise of our primary instructional model, which relies on a variety of discussion groups: whole class, small group, triads and dyads. Methods include debates, Socratic seminars, labs, brainstorming and interviews. Students are often engaged in case studies and problem-based learning. Questions call for reflective thought rather than just concrete answers. As a result, classroom outcomes are often unpredictable – but in a positive way.

VALUES & PRINCIPLES

- Democratic Governance, including TAP
- Personal Relationships
- Advisories
- Teamwork and Staff Collaboration
- Content Mastery
- Integrated Technology
- Life-long Learners
- Knowledge Valued for Its Own Sake
- Challenging All Students
- Authentic Recognition
- Community Service
- Early Graduation Possible
- Interdisciplinary Courses
- Authentic Assessment
- Family Involvement
- Community Involvement
- Every teacher is a learner;
Every learner is a teacher

The intent of The Renaissance School is to foster learning in every classroom every day. To this end, collaborative learning promotes creativity and the development of interpersonal skills. Independent exploration aids student initiative and responsibility. Allowing students to learn at their own speed benefits all learners. Those who desire can accelerate. Others can have more time to master skills. In either case, the goal is to create a “synergy,” allowing students to find the patterns and the relevance in their educations and allowing teachers to work together to that same end.

The Renaissance School will prepare students to become life-long learners. To this end, we must instill in them a curiosity, even a healthy skepticism, to ask, “Who said so?” -- “How come?”-- and “What proof is there?” They must learn to observe carefully, to imagine and to wonder, to know the difference between analysis and opinion, to communicate effectively using a variety of media, and to appreciate the value of work.

I hear. I forget.

I see. I remember.

I do. I understand.

What are the characteristics of The Renaissance School students?

They want to be...

- ✓ Responsible
- ✓ Organized
- ✓ Independent
- ✓ Open-minded
- ✓ Actively engaged in their education
- ✓ Interested in a variety of subjects



Why The Renaissance School?

“...something new is much needed at Heights...[because I feel] uninvolved and disassociated.”

R.W., senior, July 27, 2003

“...I would improve [school by] decreasing the number of lecture-type classes and increasing the amount of learning through activities....students learn a lot more by actively participating in their own learning than by passively listening to a lecture.”

B.P., junior, January 14, 2003

“I would improve public education by involving parents more in their children’s scholastic lives.”

M.J., junior, January 14, 2003

“....After more than six hours of what amounts to little more than hell, [the student] heads home to the abyss of trying to complete pointless, seemingly endless busywork called homework. Unfortunately, that’s the type of education the vast majority of America’s school children endure....America’s secondary school system needs to become less draconian and adopt a personalized approach to education....it’s a cookie-cutter approach to education... [in which the students] engage in activities that they probably won’t even find interesting and definitely do not teach them to think....

“The solution to this ‘instant oatmeal’ approach to education is an advisor program where every student is paired with a faculty member, which allows him or her to plan and pursue his or her own schedule. A system where orderly seminars are offered, and it is the student’s responsibility to get to class. [We need to spend money on] an accelerated education that builds great Americans. Horace Mann once said, ‘Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men -- the balance wheel of the social machinery.’ It should not be developed into what H.L. Mencken described as ‘the unhappiest [days] in the whole span of human existence.’”

G.E., junior, January 14, 2003

Small School Three

Our purpose at **Small School Three** is to nurture and cultivate the whole child. We will strive to develop a student who is knowledgeable, skillful, sensitive, and has a variety of options beyond high school.

Students at **Small School Three** will play with their ideas, apply knowledge in meaningful ways and make sense of their world through a variety of teaching strategies. We believe in the personal model of instruction which is rooted in Coalition of Essential Schools' (CES) Common Principles.

Students will have the opportunity to achieve their personal best through:

team teaching, integrated curriculum, internships, service learning and individual learning plans. By integrating the curriculum for *relevance, rigor*, and practicality students will be engaged and want to come to school.

Students will experience their coursework on a deeper level with non-traditional, flexible scheduling. Our Advisor/Advisee program will facilitate relationships which we know are important to learning and growth.

A Small School Three Graduate will know:

- ✓ How to make decisions
- ✓ Cultures and history
- ✓ Problem-solving skills
- ✓ How to access information
- ✓ How to meet state standards

will feel:

- ✓ Loved and cared about
- ✓ Self-confident
- ✓ Proud
- ✓ Compassion for others
- ✓ Successful

will be able to:

- ✓ Make ethical decisions
- ✓ Use technology
- ✓ Work independently and in teams
- ✓ Communicate (written & verbal)

will be able to go:

- ✓ **ANYWHERE!**

A CES Foundation supports:

- ✓ Personalization
- ✓ High expectations for all
- ✓ Family involvement
- ✓ Teacher as coach
- ✓ Depth not brevity
- ✓ Democracy
- ✓ Development of the intellect
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Commitment to entire school

The staff of **Small School Three** will take a proactive approach to educating its students through a variety of ways. For example, assessments and data gathered will be used to guide decisions about curriculum and teaching practices. We will constantly look at ways to meet our students where they are and take them to the next level, knowing that the sky is the limit. Being proactive also involves examining the professional development needs of teachers. Our professional development center will work with school leadership to bring relevant, job-embedded resources to teachers on an ongoing basis.



Organizational Structure:

Small School Three will be governed by a leadership team, which will consist of representatives from all stakeholder groups. The leadership of the school will be shared by the principal and teacher-leader. As the educational leader, the principal will promote the vision, facilitate the leadership team, and act as the liaison to the central office. The teacher-leader will serve as a representative for teachers on the leadership team. The teacher-leader will work to organize and plan customized professional development for the school, collaborating with staff to provide support and feedback. There will be a Teacher-Administrator Partnership (TAP) committee. This TAP committee will be comprised of elected members and union stewards and focus on school, staff and faculty issues.

A student at Small School Three:

“At my school, my teachers know me really good. They know when I’m happy and when I’m having a bad day. My classes are a lot of fun, too. We get to go to places around the city, sometimes, to gather information to help us with projects that we do. I thought my classes were going to be easy, but the work is really hard. I don’t mind, though, because we all work together and everyone makes sure that no one is left behind.”

A parent at Small School Three:

“When I walk into the school, the people there make me feel welcomed. My child is doing really tough work and is still excited about going to school. I can tell from my child’s conversation that the teachers there really care and want to see my child succeed. I only wish school had been this much fun for me.”



IV. Communications and Marketing Update

The Communication and Marketing Update sets forth an outline of the communication and marketing strategy and execution, in chronological order, with narrative descriptions of each step to be taken by various departments within the school district.

The Communication and Marketing Timeline breaks down each element of the plan into individual tasks to be performed by the various departments over a month-by-month schedule spanning December 2003 to June 2005.

The Update is meant to serve as a map to guide us in our overall strategy, objectives, and execution. The Timeline is meant to continuously generate “to do” tasks that, if performed according to the schedule set forth, will insure that the overall plan is rolled out in a logical, timely, and seamless fashion.

The Communication component of our plan is meant to foster two-way communication, not just “sell” the program. The District’s Communication and Marketing Department will conduct focus groups, and the TTL’s, Design Team members, and upper level District staff will attend numerous meetings in addition to opening channels of communication such as email addresses where parents, students, staff and the general community can express their views and raise concerns.

The Marketing component of our plan will concentrate most heavily on providing up-to-date information to each audience group affected by the Small Schools Transformation. Through the TTL’s, the Communication and Marketing Department will gather information on a regular basis, organize it into targeted informational pieces such as newsletters and fact sheets, and disseminate this information to each group. The Department also will keep the media informed about our transformation through press releases and, where appropriate, story ideas that they will pitch to the press. Second to these activities will be the implementation of more traditional marketing strategies such as product development, branding, and promotions.

One of the difficulties with which we must deal is the uncertainty that surrounds the entire transformation process. Committees are meeting regularly. Teams are leading each separate school transformation. Multiple staff members are overseeing the process. This committee/community process creates the potential for inconsistent information to flow from many sources. For this reason, it is a primary goal of the Communication and Marketing plan to centralize the flow of information. Without altering the widespread discussion and decision-making process, we will centralize control over the process of sharing information.

Newsletters, fact sheets and other informational pieces will be drafted by various committees and staff members as appropriate, but will be submitted to the Communication and Marketing Department for production and dissemination. The Department will first fact-check the information with a designated point-person from the TTL group and another point-person from the central office staff. Second, the Department will format the information into existing templates, to ensure that it is presented in as consistent and clear a manner as possible. Finally, the Department will disseminate this information to each target group, using the lists and distribution plans developed earlier, to ensure that all members of the audience are included. Information will be tailored to meet the needs of each group; students, parents, staff, and

community, and will be disseminated as efficiently and quickly as possible to alleviate confusion and anxiety as the process continues to unfold. As individual small schools open, the District's Communication and Marketing Department will adjust its role to one of support, acting as a resource for each individual small school, while continuing to implement the communication and marketing plan for the district as a whole.

Finally, the Communication and Marketing plan incorporates an assessment and reevaluation process after approximately one year. The Communication and Marketing Department will conduct follow-up focus groups to determine each target group's level of knowledge and awareness, and each group's attitude toward both the Small Schools Initiative overall, as well as each small school individually. The Department will also work with the TTL's and upper level administration to evaluate the information available on the effects that the Small Schools have had on the teaching and learning process, with an eye toward the communication and marketing plans for the future.

Campus-Wide Communications and Marketing Plan

1) Refine our audiences - Communication Department

- a) Staff
- b) Parents of 8th – 10th graders
- c) Parents of all other students in the system
- d) Students, currently enrolled in 8th – 10th grade
- e) Students, currently enrolled in 6th, 7th, 11th and 12th grades
- f) General community

Based on the TTL's guidance as to whom should be included in each group, the Communication Department will compile lists for each group for email and paper mailing, and develop distribution routes for each group for disseminating printed materials such as newsletters and fact sheets.

2) Define our messages for each audience – Communication Department

- a) What it is: Background of Small Schools Initiative
- b) Why it would improve CHHS
- c) When changes are going to happen
- d) Where will this take place; how physically will it be done?
- e) How will the transformation be done
- f) How it will affect the audience members

The TTL's will draft a set of answers to the above questions, each set geared to the particular audience with whom it will be shared. For example, in item b) above, the message to the staff might emphasize the benefits of working with a smaller community of students, allowing development of relationships, less onerous paperwork, etc., while the message to the parents might emphasize individualized attention for their children.

3) Objectives – **Communication Department**

- a) Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to have input into the decision-making process
- b) Provide decision-makers with the most up-to-date information on the wants and needs of the populations that will be affected
- c) Keep the audiences informed about decisions as they are made
- d) Inform the audiences of actions they need to take or procedures they need to follow

The TTL's will set forth the manner in which they want to gather input from stakeholders, and the way in which the input will be analyzed and used in the decision making process. They will also set benchmarks or timelines for informing the various audiences of decisions made, and the procedures or actions that the audience members need to make as the transformation takes place.

4) Assess how we are perceived at present - **Communication Department**

- a) Focus Group evaluations (outside agency)
 - i) Teaching staff
 - ii) Parents of 6th – 10th graders
 - iii) Students in 8th – 10th grades
 - iv) General community
- b) Media Coverage tracking

The Communication Department will meet with the focus group company to schedule focus groups for each of the population subgroups named above -- to determine their level of knowledge of the small schools transformation initiative, and their attitudes about it. The Communication Department will review local media coverage to date concerning small schools, and will track the local media coverage of same on an ongoing basis.

5) Form a campus-wide plan to connect with and market to each audience for the small schools transformation as a whole

- a) Publications & Media Outlets - **Communication Department & Transformation Team Leaders (TTLs)**
 - i) Regular newsletter
 - ii) Monthly Fact Sheet (created by parents)
 - iii) Broadcast e-mails
 - iv) Website posting
 - v) Press releases
 - vi) Story pitches

The TTL's will put together the regular newsletter content and parents will put together the fact sheets. Content will be relayed to the Communication Department, who will fact check content with the Deputy Director of Educational Services and TTL representative, respectively, and then format the newsletters and fact sheets and have them reproduced and distributed. Same will also be broadcast e-mailed and posted to district website by the Communication Department. When new events or decisions warrant it, the Communication Department will issue press releases to the media or pitch stories to the media and follow up with media.

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- b) Engagement with community general population - **Communication Department, TTL's, Design Teams & Neighborhood Development Committees (NDCs)**
 - i) Channel 22 (local cable access channel) programming and promotion
 - ii) Representation at citizen group meetings
 - iii) Representation at block parties
 - iv) Visit-Your-Schools day
 - v) Coffees/Socials at the high school and middle schools to introduce major phases
 - vi) District Website

The Communication Department will work with the TTL's to identify citizen groups, block parties, etc. where TTL's or other representatives of the small schools transformation team can present information and gain feedback. The Communication Department and/or TTL's will contact such groups to arrange participation. The Communication Department & TTL's will also set a calendar of district-sponsored events for information sharing such as coffees, socials and visiting days. The Communication Department will promote such events through usual means. The Communication Department will work with the MIS dept to change use of website.

- c) Relationships with community leaders - **Superintendent & Communication Department**
 - i) Meetings
 - (1) Cleveland Hts. and University Hts. City Councils
 - (2) Key communicator meetings
 - (3) Blue ribbon advisory committee
 - ii) Invitations to community leaders to visit school or events
 - iii) Celebrations and awards ceremonies

The Communication Department will work with the Superintendent to devise a schedule of representation either by the Superintendent or her designee at outside leadership organizations such as city councils, chamber of commerce, and other business groups. The Communication Department also will work with Superintendent to plan and execute Key Communicator meetings at BOE and possibly set up a blue ribbon advisory committee. School visits, celebrations, and awards ceremonies will be planned as Small Schools are launched.

- d) "Corporate" Identity Pieces: create and present to 2nd- round focus groups using info gathered in 1st-round focus groups, then modify and finalize - **Communication Department**
 - i) Names of Individual Schools
 - ii) Titles of administrators and teaching staff
 - iii) Logo(s)
 - iv) Slogan(s)
 - v) Tag Line(s)
 - vi) Signage
 - vii) Student attire such as jackets and sweatshirts

Using findings gathered from 1st round focus groups, the Communication Department will provide input to TTL's on names of schools and titles of administrators and teaching staff. Working with student designers and professional graphic designer(s), the Communication Department will develop logos, slogans, tag lines, signage, and imprinted student attire for each school – for presentation to focus groups for feedback, and then presentation and revision/approval by TTL's and Superintendent.

- e) **Marketing - Communication Department & TTL's**
- i) Meetings, instructions, forms to facilitate student choices for small schools they will attend
 - ii) Promotional community signage
 - iii) Channel 22 (local cable access channel)
 - iv) Promotional brochures
 - v) Video on CD for informational kits
 - vi) Signage in community (banners)
 - vii) Posters in community
 - vii) Posters on school properties

The TTL's will hold meetings to explain how students choose schools. The Communication Department will create materials listed in the previous list for TTL and Superintendent approval, and will arrange for production and distribution once approved.

- f) **Upgrade the product for public relations - Superintendent & Communication Department**
- i) Training for receptionists
 - ii) Audit how we handle inquiries and complaints
 - iii) Audit our automated phone system
 - iv) Training for or showcasing students
 - v) Training/assistance for staff (dressing, grooming, attitude, titles)
 - vi) Preparation of buildings for public visits or media visits

Beginning in the summer of 2004, the Communication Department will work with the Superintendent to audit our "front door" appearance and operation; i.e.:

- How do we greet callers?
- How do we answer questions or address complaints?
- How do we look when visitors come in the door; meaning appearance of the lobby, behavior or the staff, and signage and directions for visitors?
- How do we prepare our students when they are going to represent our schools?

6) Set up internal schedule for updating communications - **Communication Department**

The Communication Department will schedule regular contacts with TTL's to gather updates on procedures, data, story ideas, events, etc. The Communication Department will also set up avenues and procedures for TTL's and others at the small schools to use/follow to update the Communication Department on a regular basis.

7) Assess how campus-wide small schools program is perceived at the one-year mark -

Communication Department

- a) Focus Group evaluations (outside agency)
 - i) Teaching staff
 - ii) Parents of 6th – 10th graders
 - iii) Students in 8th – 10th grades
 - iv) General community
- b) Media Coverage tracking

The Communication Department will meet with focus group company to schedule focus groups for each of the population subgroups named above, to determine their level of knowledge of the small schools transformation initiative, and their attitudes about it, after one year has passed. The Communication Department will review local media coverage over past year concerning small schools.

8) Assess the product at the one-year-or-later mark vs. data from 1 year ago, and create communication plan for sharing this information with the various audience groups -

Communication Department & TTL's

The TTL's or outside group will gather comparative data, including student test scores, GPA's, graduation rates, incident reports, and student involvement in school activities. This information will be shared with the Communication Department in order to analyze the data and formulate a plan for marketing and communication with the various audiences regarding the success of the small schools in improving the educational experiences and success for its students.

Individual Small Schools Communications & Marketing

Item 9 below will be repeated for each individual Small School as it is developed by the Neighborhood Development Committee (NDC) and Transformation Team Leaders (TTL's).

9) Form a plan for each small school to connect with and market to each audience -

Communication Department & TTL's

- a) Publications and Media Outlets
 - i) Regular newsletter
 - ii) Broadcast e-mails
 - iii) Website posting
 - iv) Press releases
 - v) Story pitches

The TTL's will put together the regular newsletter content and relay them to the Communication Department, who will fact check content with the Deputy Director of Educational Services and TTL representative(s), respectively, and then format the newsletters and have them reproduced and distributed. Same will also be broadcast e-mailed and posted to district website by the Communication Department. When new events or decisions warrant it, the Communication Department will issue press releases to the media or pitch stories to the media and follow up with media.

- b) Marketing - **Communication Department**
 - i) Promotional community/building signage
 - ii) Promotional brochures
 - iii) Video on CD for informational kits

The Communication Department will create signage and brochures for each small school as it is developed, and either will create a video on CD for each small school, or a single video on CD in which each of the small schools is featured. All of these projects will be subject to approval by the TTL's and the Superintendent.

V. Next Steps

A particular strength of the Heights transformation has been balancing attention to immediate concerns with awareness of future challenges and opportunities. To paraphrase David Lehman, one of our advisors provided by KnowledgeWorks, we strive to have a clear set of “design plans” (long-term, maybe several months) balanced by “emergent plans” (immediate crises). This balancing act is not easy, and has faltered at times. However, the evidence is strong that we have been able to pay attention to both current needs and strategic concerns during the first phases of the transformation.

In keeping with our concern for looking forward, this report closes with a listing of “Next Steps”—priority design issues and questions to be addressed over the first quarter of 2004. These fit what Lehman and others call “design plans,” and should help us manage the complex tasks we face over the next several months. Ten categories are presented, each with a series of action steps.

Student/Family Neighborhood selection process

- a. Meet with Parent and Community Design team members to discuss and establish student/family Neighborhood selection process
- b. Communicate deadlines for district CHHS student selection process to CHUH families and community
- c. Identify process for students that request transfer to another neighborhood
- d. Address “retention” issue
- e. Process to address students that transfer into CHHS from outside school districts
- f. Monitor and assess for *relationships* continuously

Staff selection process for each Neighborhood

- a. Collaborate with CH-UH Teachers Union to establish a meaningful teacher selection process for all FIVE schools
- b. Collaborate with Classified Union staff to establish classified staff selection process for all FIVE schools
- c. Procedures for staff transfers to different neighborhoods
- d. Define role of Teacher-Leader and Principal in small schools
- e. Define roles of certified and classified staff members in small schools

Building and Facilities

- a. Division of space among the three, then five, small schools
- b. Science labs, special equipment
- c. Asbestos removal
- d. Office spaces -- main office, Guidance offices in each small school
- e. Art dept. Kilns, Darkrooms,
- f. Color schemes
- g. Storage facilities for each small school
- h. Books and materials for each small school
- i. Classroom assignments for teachers
- j. Dividing space for a “split” school in the ‘04-’05 school year to accommodate the classes of ‘05-’06 at CHHS with small schools

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- k. Shared facilities issues; Cafeteria, duplicating procedures, Media Center, Phys. Ed., Auditorium, PA, message boards, cleaning staff, TV's, TV monitors, VCR's, Computers, Message boards
 - l. Designate Unit office space
 - m. Define Visitor entry procedures into the main campus
 - n. Class of '06 in the '05-'06 school year
 - o. Room 108 future

Professional Development

- a. Site visits
- b. Instructional model professional development for teachers and staff
- c. Advisor/Advisee training (for deep understanding and implementing of the "advisor" role and responsibilities)
- d. Shared governance staff development and training
- e. Professional development center at CHHS
- f. CSS/CFG groups
- g. NDC (Neighborhood Development Committee) professional development (seek to meaningfully change and enhance teaching and learning in all disciplines)
- g. Development of new staff evaluation procedures

Student Involvement

- a. Increase student participation in the high school student focus group
- b. Increase student involvement in all phases of the NDC process
- c. Student group "Appreciative Inquiry" administered by and for students throughout the high school population
- d. Middle School student orientation

Governance

- a. Define role of TAP in each Neighborhood and campus-wide
- b. Define shared governance in each small school and in relation to central office
- c. Define parental and community role on governing boards in each small school
- d. Develop budgetary guidelines for small schools

Community

- a. Develop potential community contacts to support each individual school's goals, curriculum choices and instructional model
- b. Center of Strength workshops to support the small schools effort
- c. Increase parental involvement in the community, including aggressive outreach to disengaged families and students
- d. Meet with Civic and City representatives to continue to update, inform, exchange and communicate OHSTI information
- e. Support district "Center of Strength" in their community efforts
- f. Support Design team Parent Group in their community efforts supporting small schools

Marketing/Communications

- a. Continue to refine neighborhood identities
- b. Administer Pre-Post Perception survey to stakeholders
- c. Seek new ways to reach disengaged stakeholders

Board of Education

- a. Continuous presentation of Small Schools information
- b. Discussion of “at what point will there be the need for an additional” small school at CHHS? (i.e., six small schools?)
- c. Public acknowledgement in support of SSI (Small Schools Initiative) by the Board of Education

Curriculum

- a. Modify, enhance or develop
- b. Review scheduling issues (conflicts and coordination)
- c. Develop academic policies among and between small schools
- c. Review current curriculum for *rigor* and *relevance*
- d. Monitor for alignment with state standards.

VI. Attachments

Attached are a series of printed materials that help bring to life our work of the past several months. Several have been referred to in the report, but a larger set is included to provide insights on our work.

List of Attachments

1. Proposed Timeline for Communication and Marketing Plan, Dec. 2003-June 2004, (seventeen pages)
2. Proposed Timeline for Communication and Marketing Plan, July 2004-June 2005 (seventeen pages)
3. Calendar of Major Work (six pages)
4. High School Design Team graphic (one page)
5. Role Descriptions for Design Team Participants (two pages)
6. High School Design Team Meeting Agendas (four pages)
7. Neighborhood Development Committee Agendas (three pages)
8. Neighborhood Development Committee Meeting Schedule
9. Small Schools Initiative newsletters (three newsletters; six pages)
10. Small Schools Fact Sheets (two fact sheets; four pages)
11. Staff Involvement Priorities (one page)
12. Student Involvement Priorities (one page)
13. Parent Involvement Opportunities (two pages)
14. Community Participation as a Design Team Leader Criteria (one page)