

The Journal of the Coalition of Essential Schools

horace

Innovation in Education

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

CES ChangeLab

A sneak preview of a new website dedicated to sharing exemplary CES practices from the CES Mentor Schools

From the Schools

Examples of school visitor expectations from Boston's Fenway High School and San Francisco's Leadership High School

Annotated Resources

Schools learning from each other—ten places to go for more about sustained school collaborations and school visit programs

Book Reviews

- *High Schools on a Human Scale: How Small Schools Can Transform American Education*
- *Not So Easy Going: The Policy Environments of Small Urban Schools and Schools-within-Schools*
- *Personalized Learning: Preparing High School Students to Create Their Futures*



Mentoring and Collaboration among Essential Schools

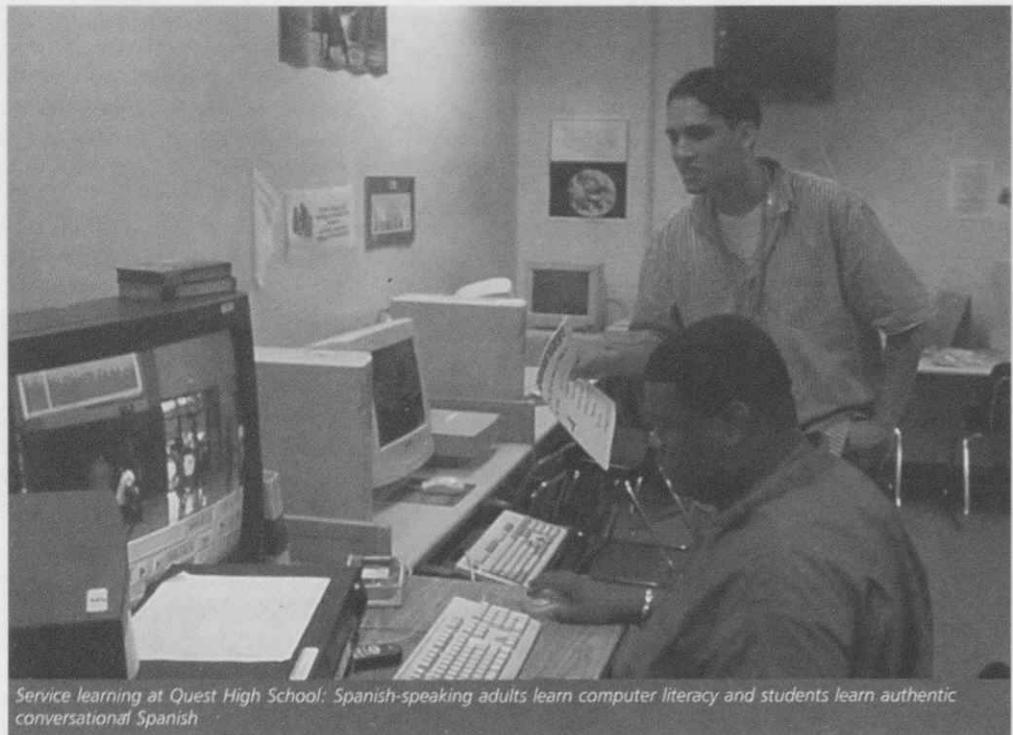
Sustained School Partnerships: Mentoring, Collaboration, and Networks. *Horace* looks at how sustained mentorships and partnerships help new and restructuring schools draw on the experience of long-established Coalition schools to develop practices that best support personalized, challenging teaching and learning.

"Our Schools Have So Much to Offer Each Other": Strategies and Structures for Effective School Visits. A focus on school visits, with practical information about transforming brief encounters into important learning for visitors and host schools.

is working to build regional capacity, offering ongoing support to the Portland area schools, keeping their connections strong through monthly networking seminars, and supporting them while they help schools new to restructuring. Hansen describes the Portland region's schools as "a very resilient group." Referring to the battering economic circumstances in Oregon's schools in 2002-2003, she continues, "Given the political and economic climate down there, they want something that's their own, that can't be taken away. They're developing relationships, being creative, and having ideas that they can implement that are important to that group. Now they can count on those relationships in an unstable climate."

Schools that belong to the New York Performance Standards Consortium also can attest to the value of interdependence in an unstable climate. The Consortium is a network of twenty-eight schools brought by common purpose: to develop and refine systems of performance-based assessment as valid alternatives to New York State's high-stakes Regents exams. Ann Cook, co-director of New York City's Urban Academy and Consortium leader, says, "The key to collaboration is to share an agenda. You have to have some common issues that people

want to solve and that they can only solve by coming together. None of us in the Consortium could possibly solve these issues without each other." Vincent Brevetti, principal of Humanities Preparatory Academy, sees a more long-term benefit to the Consortium network. "It's important for like-minded schools interested in CES principles—schools that are finding ways to democratize education and thinking about social justice issues—to work with other schools. If more similarly-minded schools open and work well, it strengthens all of us."



Service learning at Quest High School: Spanish-speaking adults learn computer literacy and students learn authentic conversational Spanish

Mentor school collaborations are a productive strategy to deal with the tremendous opportunities—such as the national push from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the New York City-based work of New Visions for Public Schools—to create a rising tide of high performing small schools. These new and restructuring schools need school-based wisdom and critical friendship, while schools with more depth and experience don't want to become calcified demonstrations. When established Coalition schools—and regional centers and other support organizations—develop sustained relationships with each other, they move past "CES 101" and go deeply into understanding how people best teach and learn.

Through the years, networks of schools that learn from each other how to live the CES common principles have created webs of assistance and influence, contributing to the creation of regional and national policy conditions that bolster the development of yet more personalized, equitable, and intellectually vibrant schools. ■



RELATED RESOURCE

Horace 13.1, "Networks and Essential Schools: How Trust Advances Learning" examines how building relationships within and across schools can profoundly shift the culture of schooling to one in which teachers create new ways to share and examine their work and to hold themselves to higher standards.

www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/41





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A Preview of CES ChangeLab

By Torrey Strohmeier and Jill Davidson

CES National has embarked on a new online project, CES ChangeLab, that promises to connect educators with the inner workings of the twenty CES Mentor schools over the next five years. Connected to the CES Small Schools Project (described in greater detail on page 3), CES ChangeLab will offer behind-the-scenes access to experiences, tools, resources, and stories from many of the schools that have gone the farthest in embodying CES principles.

CES ChangeLab, scheduled to debut in Summer 2004, will offer multimedia examples of curriculum and professional development materials, how-we-did-it lessons and ideas, question-and-answer opportunities with veteran CES teachers and administrators, and other such resources. Intended for educators, the CES ChangeLab will help users get directly to the inspiration and answers they need, with ways to search for resources by area of interest or by school. For example, users could search for lots of ideas about how to structure off-campus internships, or for sample budgets and schedules from a given mentor school.

Users will interact with CES ChangeLab resources in a number of ways: through evaluating and commenting on the Mentor Schools' resources, through scheduled panels with educators from the featured schools, and through more general online discussions.

CES ChangeLab is being designed with input from users of the current CES website; many site visitors participated in an online survey that assessed needs and online capacity. As a central repository of the philosophies, structures, and practices behind some of the best examples of CES schooling, the site is being designed to leverage lessons learned so that more schools can make their own way toward change without reinventing the proverbial wheel. People working to create new or restructure existing schools will be able to find the keys to whole-school change that will powerfully and positively affect their choices and direction. ■



“Our Schools Have So Much to Offer Each Other”: Strategies and Structures for Effective School Visits

Teachers and students at Humanities Preparatory Academy

To investigate powerful teaching and learning, we could inundate ourselves with stories and research about Coalition and other like-minded schools. Phone conversations, emails, books, magazines, web sites, conferences, videos: all add detail to the diverse and constantly evolving possibilities. But for all of us, time is limited and we need to make the best of the little time that we’ve got for professional development and contemplation. When properly planned, visits to other schools—and especially into classrooms—offer deep, multidimensional, challenging insights and are a powerful impetus to planning and change.

It's hard, of course. You have to secure coverage for your work, find money to travel, coordinate schedules with the host school, create the mental space to make sense of the experience, communicate what you saw to people who weren't there, and collaborate to incorporate insights into your own school. And it can be difficult to be a host school. You're faced with distractions and the fatigue of telling the same stories over and over. You want to help kids and teachers at other schools, but you risk hurting your own school's work in the pursuit of what novelist Richard Price calls "the dangerous thrill of goodness."

These hassles and pitfalls deserve due consideration, but they shouldn't stop anyone from visiting other schools or opening their doors to guests. When visits are engaging, personalized, and focused, educators planning new schools or creating change in existing schools will "have an image to share with colleagues about what is possible," says Peter Ross, Project Manager at Stanford University's School Redesign Network. Seeing innovative, personalized education in action allows you to be a more persuasive advocate for creating the right conditions from the ground up or for making those changes midstream. And if visitors have opportunities to relay feedback, host schools have the chance to see what's happening in their classrooms from multiple fresh perspectives. To help colleagues interested in engaging in school visits, teachers and school leaders at Coalition schools offer ideas, insights, warnings, and encouragement as they suggest standards for highly productive school visits.

Visitors Ask Questions

While it seems simplistic to remind us that new experiences require preparation, many visitors show up at schools without enough forethought, and clarifying basic information about the host school's program fritters away precious time. So do your homework: learn about the school you're visiting. Ann Cook, co-director of New York City's Urban Academy, says, "It's like visiting a foreign country. If you don't know anything, you miss nearly everything, but if you know a little bit about where you are, your visit will be that much richer." Many schools send visitors information in advance, point potential visitors to their web site, or refer uninformed guests to fact sheets that cover the basics.

Visiting school teams should develop specific questions ahead of the visit and communicate those to the host school so the visit can be as focused as possible. Cook notes, "The kinds of visits that work the best are when the visiting team has a clear idea of what they want to know, when it's not just a junket." Dave Lehman, principal of Alternative Community School in Ithaca, New York, agrees, "When people think about what they're coming for and what they want to learn, they take away more." But Lehman reminds people to be open to the unexpected, too. "One of the things people take away is the comfortable, relaxed tone atmosphere among kids and staff at ACS," Lehman says. "It's something that's very evident to people, but isn't something that can be put into a question. It isn't a specific thing to look for." (For questions to consider when visiting a school, see *School Visit Questions*, page 14.)

Away from their own work and students, and often dealing with time zone and other changes, people have an understandable tendency to become "tourists," observing but not really engaging. Visiting to understand something specific—how advisories advance personalization or what structures a school uses to maintain decency and respect—helps school visitors sharpen their attention and make the most of their time and the resources of the host school.

Host Schools Design Good Experiences

Just as visitors need to maximize the minutes they have under another school's roof, many frequently visited host schools have learned that they need to prepare thoughtfully to forestall ennui and burnout on the part of their faculties. A constant stream of visitors can be disrupting, not renewing. Ann Cook, co-director of New York City's frequently visited Urban Academy admits, "At the volume that we're operating, we don't get a lot out of people coming here for a day." Colleen Meaney, CES Coordinator at Souhegan High School in Amherst, New Hampshire agrees, saying, "People who come here to visit are very appreciative and very affirming, but they don't always push us."



A team of visiting students at Leadership High School

Visitors and hosts share responsibility for deepening focus during school visits; just as visitors should clarify and communicate their questions and intentions, hosts should be ready to offer experiences other than the "standard tour"—experiences that allow them to gather impressions about their school's environment and practices from their visitors. Greg Peters, principal of Leadership High School in San Francisco, believes that visitors should not expect their experience at Leadership to feel too polished, and he dissuades visitors from looking for simple answers. "We are not perfect; we have things that are wrong," Peters stresses. "To build trust we say, 'You're going to see things that will cause questions, and we want to know what those questions are.' We need to get something back."

Visitors have the option to complete feedback forms for each Leadership class they attend. This makes the flow of information easier for guests—who, Peters acknowledges are "ultimately and rightly selfish" and there to pursue their own goals—and for Leadership's teachers, who are eager to receive classroom observations and comments in a consistent format. Peters and the staff members start the scheduled visit days with an

Examples of Expectations for School Visitors from Fenway and Leadership

Boston's Fenway High School and San Francisco's Leadership High School provide examples of guidelines that visitors are requested to follow when in the school buildings. Both schools developed these sets of expectations to optimize conditions for guests and hosts, creating possibilities for everyone to learn from each other.

FENWAY HIGH SCHOOL VISITOR PROTOCOL

Understanding

- Fenway faculty and students welcome visitors. We enjoy sharing our practices and experience, especially if that helps other schools to serve their students better.
- Fenway is first and foremost a school. All classes and activities proceed during a Visitor Day just as they would on a day without visitors. This ensures that the education of our students is not compromised by visits, and that visitors get an authentic look at Fenway.
- School life is constantly changing. It is impossible to predict which classes will be available for observation and which staff will be available for roundtable discussion until a few days before the visit. When the day comes, we try to match visitors' interests with staff and student availability, but we can't always do so.

Respect

- We ask visitors to remember that school is going on around them, and to act as they would like visitors to act in their own school or classroom.
- We ask visitors to follow the assigned agenda. Once a visitor has entered the class shown on his/her agenda, s/he should stay there until the end of the period. A visitor should never enter or peer into a classroom that is not on the agenda.
- We ask visitors not to talk to the teacher just before class starts, to refrain from asking the teacher questions during the class, and to wait until students are gone after class before approaching the teacher. Fenway teachers are happy to talk with visitors when they are not focused on student learning – which is what we assume visitors want to see.

Engagement

- Most teachers are pleased to have visitors participate in the activities of the class, particularly when students are working in groups. During individual work time, a teacher may encourage a visitor to talk to a student about what s/he is doing. Many students are also pleased to have the opportunity to talk about their work with interested listeners.
- When (lost) in the school halls, visitors are encouraged to ask passing staff and students for directions. If students volunteer to lead the way, visitors may accept the invitation and engage the students in conversation.
- Visitors can do a great service to staff and students by filling in the Feedback form (both sides) in the Visitor Portfolio. After the visit, all the forms are copied, and the appropriate sections are distributed to the staff and students who hosted visitors.

LEADERSHIP HIGH SCHOOL VISITOR NORMS*

Communication

- Observe. Listen. Take notes. Experience.
- Ask questions when you don't understand.

Critical Thinking

- Challenge assumptions – your own as well as others'
- Cite examples and evidence when raising key questions and issues

Social Responsibility

- Honor the trust teachers show in opening their classrooms by reading door sign carefully before entering a classroom and allowing the teacher to focus on her/his students
- Offer feedback
- Balance feedback between warm (identifying strengths, good ideas and effective practices) cool (surface respectful skepticism, framing questions and underlying assumptions) and hard (to take away and ponder – framed in ways that can be heard, i.e. open, thoughtful questions)

Personal Responsibility

- Seek connections to your own work
- Spend as much time as possible in classrooms
- Learn as much as you can about our school and its context (so you can help us think more effectively about how we can improve – Social Responsibility)

Leadership High School Meeting and Discourse Norms

1. Be accountable
2. Be prepared
3. Be respectful
4. Trust / Take risks
5. Have fun

* These norms are framed as indicators of Leadership High School's Schoolwide Outcomes, the organizing framework of the school's curriculum.



IDEA

Last year, Leadership High School's staff took a professional development day and scattered to the winds. Principal Greg Peters says, "We sent every single staff person off to other Bay Area schools." Leadership's staff members shadowed job-alikes at a variety of schools and brought back ideas and observations that added energy and perspective to their own work.



orientation that covers (among many other concepts) the function of classroom door signs, which control visitors' access to classes. Door signs are red, which indicate that there's a test or something else happening that doesn't allow for visitors, or green. Green signs welcome visitors and provide information about the class, including the kind of feedback that the classroom teacher seeks.

Leadership High School uses a variety of structures during its twice-monthly visitor days. Visits are organized into two types: shorter personal connection visits and more comprehensive daylong reflective visits, which culminate in a faculty meeting which visitors observe. Guests receive school fact sheets, a list of classes, and other guiding information immediately. Visitors are encouraged to note their questions, observations, and thoughts throughout the day on a school visit observation form, and are also given an evidence/indicator grid that prompts guests to note evidence of and/or challenges to each of the CES Ten Common Principles. The daylong visit agenda allows intervals for reflective writing and check-ins with staff and other visitors, providing time to complete these forms and ask questions.

Host Schools Stick to their Strengths and Set Expectations

Rosemary Sedgwick, Director of School Development & Partnerships at Boston's Fenway High School reports, "Faculty members said that it was a waste of their time to say the same generic information over and over, but they really enjoyed focused discussions around their areas of expertise." Through the Fenway Institute for Urban School Renewal, Fenway's visitor coordination program, visitors can focus on a particular practice such as advisories, the integrated Humanities curriculum, or collaboration with community partners for student learning.

Greg Peters at Leadership High School affirms that creating specific areas of focus adds value for guests and hosts. "We can't teach people about a wide range of things; too many people want too many different things. So we looked at our core values. I looked specifically at what was most important to me in my next three years of work, the things I felt I couldn't be pulled away from." Peters decided to use the areas of focus as a way to invite visitors to participate in Leadership's works in progress. "We identified personalization, advisories, and professional development," Peters says. "Because we said publicly that we have something to offer in these areas, we're accountable to that. It functions as another incentive to work on these things. It has to be the way you do it; otherwise

every phone call decides the focus of your day. Even something as simple as a visit has to fit into the vision of a school."

In addition to focusing the content of the visits around specific areas that will aid both visitors and their schools, the faculties at Fenway and Leadership have developed norms for visitors that guide expectations and social interactions. They distribute and review these norms with guests at the start of visitor days. At both schools, staff members asked for and helped develop these guidelines in order to lessen classroom distractions. As well, once guests have a sense of schoolwide etiquette, they can relax and focus on their own learning with less trepidation that they might be violating social rules or cultural norms.

Who Should Go? For How Long?

Who should go on school visits? Principal George Wood reports that Stewart, Ohio's Federal Hocking High School has a rule for visiting teams "We won't allow a visit if parents and students are not included. It's not worth the effort. Parents and students add legitimacy in terms of what's brought home, legitimacy that's not there if we're seen only from the teachers' and principals' point of view. Parents and students have to be able to feel the need for change; they have to be able to say, 'Yeah, I saw that.'" Schools should send planning teams that include all stakeholders, Wood's rule doesn't mention superintendents or school board members, but the logic applies: their presence would add additional layers of legitimacy.

How long should visits last? Realistically, it's hard to get away for more than a day, and multi-day visits demand a lot of host schools. But for real connection and transformation, extended visits can be powerful. The Stanford School Redesign Network, committed to promoting small and restructured schools in California, sponsors Small School Study tours, in which participants from California spend a full week in New York City—two days each at Manhattan's Landmark and International High Schools, and a fifth day at the Julia Richman Educational Complex. The School Redesign Network is also offering weeklong residencies in a single New York City school, allowing team members to dive into a particular area of inquiry.



IDEA

Mike Klonsky, director of the Small Schools Workshop at the University of Illinois, Chicago, suggests, "It's interesting to think about doing site visits to your own school. We always go on site visits to other schools and look with a critical eye. It's a really valuable thing to pretend that you're an outsider in your own school, to look systematically at data, to visit classrooms." Conducting site visits at your own school, using observation tools and protocols and—if nothing else—getting out of your own classroom and routine can offer a fresh perspective (with no jet lag!).



School Visit Questions from the School Redesign Network

Staff members at the School Redesign Network at Stanford University suggest that planning teams visiting schools “consider the big picture, taking care not to get too focused on a lot of detailed questions that may get in the way of your seeing the big ideas that are really important.” The School Redesign Network offers these questions – meant to provoke observation and description, designed to advance understanding about how the host school works.

- How does instruction drive the schedule, the organization of teachers, the class assignments of students, professional development, etc.?
- What evidence is there of teachers knowing students well? How is this achieved?
- What evidence is there of strong teacher-student relationships?
- What evidence is there that all students have access to challenging curriculum?
- What evidence is there that students are supported to achieve at high levels?
- What evidence is there of professional collaboration focused on student learning?
- What do adults do together to sustain the ongoing development of the school?
- What is different about this school?
- How does this school approach and support instruction and what is the evidence?
- What does classroom practice look like?
- Does this school do anything different about instruction from what we do? How do they do it? Why do they do it that way?
- What surprised us about the school? Why?
- What would we like to find out more about now that we have visited the school?
- What was the most powerful thing about the visit?

“School Visit Questions” and related information about visiting schools can be in “Solving the Puzzle: Redesigning Large High Schools Together”, a Field Guide supporting the redesign of large high schools available from the School Redesign Network at Stanford University. See “RESOURCES” page 18, for more on the School Redesign Network.

Urban Academy is one of the schools that Small School Study Tour participants visit, and Ann Cook agrees with the in-depth approach. “I think you have to enter into the life of the school. The absolute best thing, when possible, is to participate in residencies but not with preconceived ideas. You should spend a week getting a feel for the school, seeing what they’re doing and how they articulate their mission into real practice.”

Support and Structures for Hosts

Many schools accustomed to accommodating visitors have come to understand visitor programs don’t run themselves. Schools need additional, well-organized resources—including funding—to make visits meaningful to all involved. Commenting on Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School’s Regional Teachers Center, Parker trustee Ted Sizer stresses, “It has to have its own phone line, its own room. Visit coordination can’t be run from the principal’s office—it needs its own structures to survive.”

At Federal Hocking High School, student interns coordinate visits, handling all arrangements: scheduling, arranging travel, booking hotels, making dinner reservations, sending out material, and coordinating follow-up. This truly student-focused approach provides authentic work experiences for students and creates opportunities for them to engage in the life of their school. It also sends a message to visitors about the workings and priorities of Federal Hocking High School. And it serves a practical purpose, freeing teachers and administrators from the minutia of visit arrangements. This year’s visit coordinator, senior Keri Harris, says, “We know how the school works. We’re familiar with the surroundings and we’re better at showing other people what it’s about. And doing this helps us adapt and deal with adults—it prepares us for what’s to come.”

How do schools pay for their visitor programs? Some raise private funds or get grants. For example, Leadership High School has a two-year dissemination grant from the California State Department of Education that supports its visitor program, allowing the school to pay for a half-time staffer to run the visit program. Because the grant underwrites the visitation days, Leadership doesn’t charge visitors any fees.

Other schools find that charging for visits both provides necessary funding and encourages visitors to commit more fully to the experience. At Souhegan High School, in Nashua, New Hampshire, Sally Groves—who is also principal Ted Hall’s secretary—coordinates visits; visit fees support professional development at Souhegan. Visitors, encouraged to limit the size of their groups to four participants, pay one hundred dollars per person. Hall notes, “When you charge people, they’re way more accountable. Quite often, before charging, visitors wouldn’t show up.”



Collaborative planning at Parker Charter Essential School

Fenway High School also charges visit fees. Rosemary Sedgwick recalls, "Last year, Fenway was inundated with visitors. With Gates Foundation money going out to districts, we got requests from huge numbers of people. We needed to figure out how to shelter our school and still support the start-up of new small schools. We instituted scheduled visitor days and we charge for visits. When people pay for something they value it a lot and we give them a lot." Fenway also relies on a part-time visitor coordinator whose salary is paid for by funds raised outside of the school budget.

But for some schools, the mechanics of charging for visits are themselves too much of a burden. Janice Adams principal of Merlo Station High School, a cluster of alternative programs in Beaverton, Oregon, offers this counterpoint: "Charging for visits adds another level of work that needs to be done. We're selective about the work that we cause ourselves; if it's not tied to our beliefs and values, we don't do it. No small school will be a wealthy school—for us, that's not the point."

Conclusion: Systems for Gathering Ideas

Jacqueline Ancess, co-director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching and New York-based discussion leader for the School Redesign Network's School Study Tours, reminds visiting teams that the aim of visits is to gather ideas and examine strategies in order to shed light on their own practices. "Some schools have relinquished their sense of agency, as if the answer is outside," says Ancess. "It seems like they have given up their sense of confidence, their authority. They don't say, 'We're going to get together in our school and work it out and get expert information when we need it.' But that's how they should be thinking. People planning their school's next steps have to be guided by how well the kids are achieving learning goals; that has to be the driving force. Then it can be useful to bring in an outside perspective, consider it, and maybe reject it."

Still, there is probably nothing that quite compares by way of both inspiration and practical idea-sharing than a visit to another school that shares a commitment to the Common Principles. As Kathy Simon, co-Executive Director of CES National puts it, "Our schools have so much to offer each other. It's crucial that we put the systems in place—and take the time—to keep learning from the fabulous work that is happening in schools all around the country." ■

CES Principals:

Are you planning to attend the National Association of Secondary School Principals Annual Convention and Exposition in Orlando, Florida, February 27–March 1, 2004? If so, and if you would like to participate in a roundtable conversation with Ted and Nancy Sizer about your CES efforts, please contact Maya Lagu via email at maya@parker.org or by phone at 978.772.2687 with an indication of your interest.

For more information on the NASSP convention, see www.nasspconvention.org.

CES National Seeking Teams to Start New High Schools

Over the next four years, CES National plans to support the launching of ten new high schools around the country. If you are interested in forming a team to start a new small CES high school, drop us a note at SmallSchools@essentialschools.org, and we'll be sure to put you on our mailing list for our call for proposals, which we will send out in December 2003.



HIGH SCHOOLS ON A HUMAN SCALE

HOW SMALL SCHOOLS
CAN TRANSFORM
AMERICAN EDUCATION

THOMAS TOCH

High Schools on a Human Scale: How Small Schools Can Transform American Education,

by Thomas Toch (Beacon Press, 144 pages, \$15.00), reviewed by Laura Flaxman

The prospect of high schools on a more human scale ultimately requires a belief on the part of educators and policy-makers that the necessary changes to the status quo needed to create such high

schools are worth the hard work needed to achieve them. The stories of the students and educators at Urban Academy, The Met, New Country, Julia Richman, and High Tech High suggest emphatically that they are."

I highly recommend Thomas Toch's *High Schools on a Human Scale*, which makes a compelling case for new, innovative small schools while also providing specific examples from which to learn. *High Schools on a Human Scale* contains a wealth of examples and ideas from some of the most innovative small schools in the country. With a persuasive foreword by Thomas Vander Ark of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and an instructive introduction detailing the history of our nation's public high schools, *High Schools on a Human Scale* is of interest to practitioners undertaking high school restructuring and the creation of small schools. Toch's skill as a journalist makes each school, with its successes and challenges, come alive.

The first chapter, about New York City's Julia Richman Education Complex, is a must-read for anyone grappling with transforming or reconstituting a large high school. Details about the Complex's inner, logistical workings offer ways to avoid pitfalls that can recreate many of the same conditions that compel traditional large schools to take on the work of transforming themselves into small schools in the first place. The Julia Richman Education Complex, formerly a large, traditional and dysfunctional high school, has been inventing and perfecting a new way of creating and growing excellent schools that share and maximize the spaces built for a very different, increasingly obsolete public high school model.

For educators and faculties interested in moving towards inquiry-centered teaching, the chapter on Urban Academy, a school within the Julia Richman Education Complex, would make a great text for a study group. Toch takes you into the school and gives you a good sense of the culture, philosophy and classrooms in a relatively limited number of well-written pages. One gets the sense of both the struggles and the promise of approaching teaching from this foundation of inquiry, with student thought and discourse strongly at the center.

High Tech High in San Diego, California is the subject of the third chapter. Although it shares some priorities with Urban Academy, particularly in terms of trying to build a program around student inquiry, it is exciting to see an example of another innovative small school that takes a completely different approach to schooling. As a former principal of a theme-based school, I found this chapter particularly instructive in thinking through the use of a thematic lens in designing a school. High Tech High's physical layout and nontraditional use of instructional time encourage readers to think creatively in designing other programs.

The Met, in Providence, truly pushes the envelope when it comes to using the real world as a classroom. Anyone interested in school-to-work programs and the central role that meaningful student internships can play in education would be interested in Toch's portrayal of this highly individualized school. The history, successes and challenges of the Met are presented in a way that is instructive to anyone interested in seriously overhauling the way we do high school education, but without sugar-coating. For example, that all Met students master common content area skills through their widely varied internships continues to be a challenge, particularly when it comes to math.

Minnesota New Country School in rural Minnesota is an experiment in teacher leadership and a co-operative form of school management. The premise is that substantive autonomy for every aspect of a school's program and operations makes for a highly professional, involved faculty and a superior school. Teachers are co-owners in the EdVisions co-op that operates Minnesota New Country School's charter and therefore they have a significant stake in the details of the school's management from student enrollment and attendance to fiscal responsibility. Teachers hire and evaluate other teachers without the constraints of tenure, seniority or other controls typically maintained by school boards and unions. In an example recounted in the chapter, a teacher who does not have enough students choosing his or her advisory, or who in other ways does not meet performance standards set by the school, can be terminated. Compared to the other examples in the book, I am struck by the limited focus on instruction and classroom practice in the chapter, if not the school. However, for those interested in exploring models of teacher-led schools, this piece would be a good starting point.

Any educator, policy-maker, or student of education could gain tremendously by reading this book. These schools and their stories provide a cornucopia of brilliant ideas and inventions ripe for further study and experimentation. As a school practitioner, it brings out all of my best teacher-as-thief impulses; for policy-makers, the implications for decentralization and site-based autonomy are critical; for researchers, there are clearly some groundbreaking new ideas being piloted and begging to be studied further. Very readable and informative, *High Schools on a Human Scale* is a must-read for anyone involved in high school reform on any level.

Laura Flaxman has recently joined CES as a Director of New & Mentor Schools. Most recently, Laura founded and served as principal of Life Academy of Health & Bioscience, a new small public high school in Oakland, California.

Personalized Learning: Preparing High School Students to Create their Futures,

edited by Joseph DiMartino, John Clarke, and Denise Wolk (The Scarecrow Press, 368 pages, \$43.95), reviewed by Jill Davidson

Personalized Learning affirms and enlightens the efforts of high school educators who base their pedagogy on knowing students' minds and hearts well, advocating structures and methods that support students' particular, idiosyncratic ways of learning and teachers' judgments about how best to teach them.

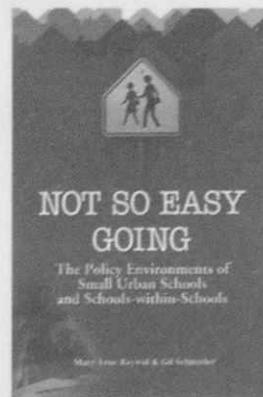
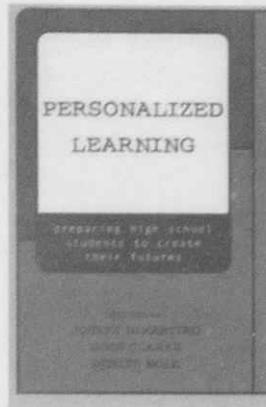
Editor Joseph DiMartino introduces the book, suggesting personalization can be a powerful lever that quickly creates fertile learning and teaching conditions because it puts the focus of a school where it should be, on students. DiMartino affectingly describes how school failed his own children, and makes the compelling assertion that personalization gains significance as students get older and prepare to find their places in the world beyond school.

Several among the book's eighteen chapters stand out. Heading up the book's first section, on personalized learning plans, Elliot Washor illustrates how such plans entirely guide teaching and learning at the Met in Providence, Rhode Island; a powerful essay by student Priscilla Santana follows, emphasizing the way that the Met's curriculum and teachers helped her engage with the world and create a path for herself.

Also in the first section, Anne Frederichs and David Gibson discuss the experience of using personalized learning plans at Montpelier High School in Montpelier, Vermont, making the point that personalization is alien to many students. This cogent warning is backed up by their emphasis on the skills and attributes that teachers, parents, advisors and friends need when the spotlight suddenly is on a student who has been comfortable in dim anonymity.

The second section looks at teaching; within it, discussing teacher training centered around personalization, A. Thomas Billings offers a useful ten-point list of ideas for student-centered learning. In the third section, devoted to school design, Mary Ann Lachat and Martha Williams write about how educators can collect and use data to make pedagogical decisions within the context of personalization.

The book's fourth section, on systems, contains a unique perspective from John Clarke on organic school change that evolves from relationships among adults. "Focused human energy is what school change requires," Clarke writes, and throughout *Personalized Learning*, positive human relationships and connections emerge as the simplest and best principle around which to structure schools.



Not So Easy Going: The Policy Environments of Small Urban Schools and Schools-within-Schools,

by Mary Anne Raywid and Gil Schmerler (ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 108 pages, \$13.00), reviewed by Jill Davidson

In *Not So Easy Going*, co-authors Mary Anne Raywid and Gil Schmerler look at crises and successes

in a variety of small schools to analyze the effects of policy environments. Their findings validate the experience of many CES educators: states and districts seek high achievement from students. But by adhering to outdated systems and assumptions, individual schools encounter seemingly endless barriers to autonomy, frustrating their efforts to downsize and thereby thwarting their best chances to create conditions for student success.

Raywid and Schmerler analyze this maddening phenomenon through stories from New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Portland (and, incongruously, rural Hawaii). The second chapter discusses New York City's small schools phenomenon as it unfolded in the 1970s and 1980s. Among other subjects, this chapter looks at the under-reported story of Deborah Meier's Learning Zones initiative, which would have grouped schools by orientation and focus rather than geography and would have swapped out "bureaucratic school control" for "interactive professional monitoring." Stephen E. Phillips, the first New York City superintendent of alternative schools, contributed the third chapter, an instructive history of small schools' growth in New York from the policy-maker perspective.

The next three chapters discuss the fate of small schools in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston, finding weaknesses due to lack of district commitment, state financial restrictions that caused priority shifts, and, in the case of Boston, the persistence of the Boston pilot schools as a "fringe" movement, a condition that preserved autonomy but limited their influence on the overall system. Analyses of individual schools follow, drawing lessons from Queens, New York's International High School, Portland, Oregon's Environmental Middle School, and New York City's Julia Richman Educational complex.

Not So Easy Going concludes with an summary of the system change that needs to happen, positing ten factors that will influence the creation of "safer, more humane, and more effective" small schools. This list doesn't solve problems: Raywid and Schmerler aren't out to suggest easy fixes. But their observations realistically describe the complexity of creating better schools.

Horace, the quarterly journal of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), is published by CES National. *Horace* combines educational research with "hands-on" resources and examples of innovative practices from CES schools around the country.

Visit the CES National website at www.essentialschools.org to read *Horace* issues from 1988 through the present. The staff at CES National invites your comments and contributions to *Horace* via the CES Interactive area of our website or at the contact information below.

Coalition of Essential Schools

The Coalition of Essential Schools, founded in 1984 by TheodoreSizer, is dedicated to creating and sustaining equitable, intellectually vibrant, personalized schools and to making such schools the norm of American public education. The CES national office is in Oakland, CA, with nineteen CES regional centers across the country.

CES schools share a common set of beliefs about the purpose and practice of schooling, known as the CES Common Principles. Based on decades of research and practice, the principles call for all schools to offer:

- Personalized instruction to address individual needs and interests
- Small schools and classrooms, where teachers and students know each other well and work in an atmosphere of trust and high expectations
- Multiple assessments based on performance of authentic tasks
- Equitable outcomes for students
- Democratic governance practices
- Close partnerships with the school's community

We aim to create a system that refuses to rank and sort students, and that, instead, treats each child as a precious being with great gifts to be nurtured and supported.

Our work supports the creation and sustenance of large numbers of individual schools that fully enact CES principles—schools that emphasize equity, personalization, and intellectual vibrancy. These schools can serve as models to other schools and demonstrations to the public that it is possible to re-imagine education.

In addition to individual schools, we also need to create the conditions under which whole systems of schools will become equitable, personalized, and intellectually vibrant. To affect these whole systems, CES National supports regional centers as they develop the capacity to aid schools and to influence school districts and states. We seek to influence wider public opinion and policy-makers to develop policy conditions conducive to the creation and sustenance of schools that enact CES principles.

Please visit our web site at www.essentialschools.org for more information on CES National, our affiliated regional centers, and affiliated schools. Interested schools, organizations, and individuals are invited to the website for more information about affiliating with CES National.

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Jill Davidson
Horace editor
j davidson@essentialschools.org

The Common Principles

Learning to use one's mind well

Less is More, depth over coverage

Goals apply to all students

Personalization

Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach

Demonstration of mastery

A tone of decency and trust

Commitment to the entire school

Resources dedicated to teaching and learning

Democracy and equity

RESOURCES

Schools Learning from Each Other

School Redesign Network

The School Redesign Network, based at Stanford University, is a powerful collaborative that provides resources both for creating small schools and for redesigning large schools. The School Redesign Network's web site is exceptionally useful, with lessons and ideas for small school design, guidelines, research overviews, video clips from scholars and practitioners discussing small school development, access to online discussion and email groups, and other resources to support small, high-performing schools. Its generous, comprehensive Field Guides, which gather multimedia materials aimed at supporting and stimulating school redesigners, are a valuable and rich synthesis of readings, school stories in print and video, interactive activities, and artifacts from schools. The website also features a section devoted to making the most of school visits. The School Redesign Network sponsors various offline "real life" events, including the study tours discussed in this issue's "Sustained School Partnerships: Mentoring, Collaboration, and Networks."

www.schoolredesign.net

Connected Learning Communities: A Toolkit for Reinventing High School (Chapter 7)—Jobs for the Future

This final chapter of a much larger report on community-connected learning created by Jobs for the Future and the U.S. Department of Education's New American High Schools Initiative makes the case for "design studios"—school visits that last for several days during which planning teams do their crucial planning work at the host school's site. This chapter provides a planning guideline, a worksheet for the host schools designed to help them identify how they can help visitors, sample schedules, observation worksheets, trip reflection worksheets, and an action planning guide meant to be used to capture ideas and energy while at the host school site. For schools that have the opportunity to collaborate with their hosts prior to an intensive visit, this chapter is a valuable resource.

www.jff.org/jff/PDFDocuments/CLCToolkitCh07.pdf

(requires Adobe Acrobat Reader)

Guide to Going on Site Visits—New Visions for Public Schools

New York City's New Visions for Public Schools offers this concise framework for site visits on its website. Geared toward New York schools in particular, the guide nonetheless is generally useful for any schools planning visits elsewhere, with suggestions for preparation, sample agendas for half-and full-day visits, school visit guidelines, and a sample site visit report.

www.newvisions.org/schoolsuccess/resources/sitevisit.shtml

Seeing Progress: A Guide to Visiting Schools Using Promising Programs—American Federation of Teachers

The American Federation of Teachers offers this 28-page guide to planning school visits, aimed at schools that are evaluating various improvement programs. It's not, therefore, relevant for helping to build deep and sustained relationships, but it's a great resource if you want a framework to think methodically about visiting schools. Among other materials, "Seeing Progress" contains a sample letter to send to a school that your team wants to visit, a detailed planning checklist to usher a visiting team through the process, a guide to questions to ask during a visit, a classroom observation overview, suggestions for how to create a planning team, and a sample visit debriefing packet. It's a worthwhile framework to use to think step-by-step about how to evaluate other schools.

www.aft.org/edissues/rsa/guide/change/seeing.pdf

(requires Adobe Acrobat Reader)

Student Learning in Small Schools: An Online Portfolio from What Kids Can Do

Most of the resources featured here concern "real-life" visits to schools for the sake of learning between school communities. Other possibilities for learning from other schools include visiting them online, and What Kids Can Do, in conjunction with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has created "Student Learning in Small Schools," a particularly rich and useful virtual school visit site. This online small schools portfolio devotes its four sections to the Minnesota New Country School (Henderson, MN), the Met (Providence, RI), Urban Academy (New York City), and High Tech High (San Diego, CA), with an additional area devoted to small schools resources. The site was created to complement Thomas Toch's *High Schools on a Human Scale* (see review, page 16). While the four school portraits aren't structurally identical, each is focused on student work, and each gets at the heart of what makes these schools work well for students. "Student Learning in Small Schools" demonstrates how these schools take advantage of the favorable conditions that smallness creates for maximum personalization and personal challenge. As well, the site provides a wealth of direct materials (forms, curricula, schedules, etc.) that practitioners can use to shape their own schools' efforts.

www.whatkidscando.org/portfoliosmallschools/portfoliohome.html

Site Visitation Toolkit—National Association of Secondary School Principals

This succinct toolkit, a collection of six documents, pays dual attention to the needs of visiting schools and host schools. Most visit resources don't deal with what host schools can and should do to prepare for visitors, so "Quick Tips for Hosting a Site Visit" may be of interest to schools expecting to open their doors to educators and others. The toolkit provides a three-page questionnaire for hosts to use to learn more about visiting schools—a helpful way to get past surface exchanges of information and onto more substantial matters. It also offers a checklist matrix for observations, organized along the Breaking Ranks/Turning Points framework, that is clearly organized and easily adaptable.
www.principals.org/schoolimprove/site_visit_tlkt.cfm

Specific Changes in the CPSS Visit Protocol—New England Association of Schools and Colleges

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Secondary Schools uses three-day on-site visits by peer evaluation teams as one of the central avenues to school accreditation. "Specific Changes in the CPSS Visit Protocol" provides an overview of the visiting team's schedule at a school that is seeking accreditation, describing activities designed to immerse visitors in the life of a school: meetings with teachers, receptions with representatives from the school community, evaluations of student work, custodian- and student-led building tours, shadowing students, and classroom observations. Along with other material from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Public Secondary Schools web site, the CPSS Visit Protocol is useful for any team aiming to employ an evidence-based model of observation.
www.neasc.org/cpss/visit_protocol.htm

Overview of Site Visit Protocol—High School Alliance

The High School Alliance, a partnership of over forty education- and youth-related organizations based at The Institute for Educational Leadership, has created a Site Visit Protocol designed to guide visitors through an evidence-based evaluation of a school. The Site Visit Protocol prompts visitors to look for specific indicators within five areas: shared norms and values, collective responsibility for implementing shared norms and values, focus on student learning, de-privatization of practice, and collaboration. A sixth section—which could stand alone as a school visit observation framework—looks at the structures and conditions that support good practice in a school: leadership, school autonomy and shared decision making, time for teacher planning and analysis, and professional development.
www.hsalliance.org/Protocol.pdf
(requires Adobe Acrobat Reader)

Looking at Student Work

This web site hones in on the effort of looking at student work collaboratively, a practice that many Coalition educators believe is at the heart of interschool collaboration and mutual improvement. It offers a strong collection of protocols, books and other research materials, teacher-generated research based on student work, and links to other organizations that focus on student work. For those who want to move deeply into sustained connection with other schools, the Looking at Student Work materials constitute a path of inquiry and discovery based on what's really happening in the realm of daily learning and student growth.
www.lasw.org

The CES School Benchmarks

Designed primarily for schools to evaluate their own progress as they move more deeply into CES practice, the CES School Benchmarks cite achievement indicators for each Common Principle organized by descriptions of students, learning environments, organizational practices, community members, and school leaders. Teams that want to develop their own observation frameworks for school visits that aim to assess a school's incorporation of the Common Principles will find the Benchmarks indispensable. This isn't a ready-made resource—the benchmarks need to be adapted for an observation framework—but this document is a singular guide to understanding CES philosophy as it lives in schools.
www.essentialschools.org/pdfs/benchmarks_2000.pdf
(requires Adobe Acrobat Reader)

GO TO THE SOURCE: More About the Schools Featured in this Issue

Schools

Alternative Community School

Public school serving grades 6-12
111 Chestnut St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
607/274-2183
www.icsd.k12.ny.us/acs/index.html

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
1021 Jennings Street
Bronx, NY 10460
718/861-0521
www.beaconschool.org/FLH/

Federal Hocking High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
8461 State Route 144
Stewart, OH 457780
740/662-6691
www.federalhocking.k12.oh.us

Fenway High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
174 Ipswich Street
Boston, MA 02215
617-635-9911
<http://fenway.boston.k12.ma.us/>

Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School

Public school serving grades 7-12
49 Antietam Street
Devens, MA 01432
978/772-3293
www.parker.org

Humanities Preparatory Academy

Public school serving grades 9-12
351 West 18th Street
New York, NY 10011
212/929-4433

Landmark High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
220 West 58th Street
New York, NY 10019
212/247-3414
www.landmarkhs.org

Leadership High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
300 Seneca Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94112
415/841-8910
www.leadershiphigh.org

Leominster High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
122 Granite Street
Leominster, MA 01453
978/534-7715
www.leominster.mec.edu/lhs_index.htm

Merlo Station High School

Cluster of public school programs
serving ages 14-21
841 SW Merlo Drive
Beaverton, OR 97006
503/259-5575
www.beavton.k12.or.us/merlo_station/index.html

Middle College High School

Public school serving grades 9-12 and
the first two years of college
LaGuardia Community College
31-10 Thompson Ave.
Long Island City, NY 11101
718/349-4000

North Star Academy

Public school serving grades 9-12
North Star Academy
P.O. Box 577
Ishpeming, MI 49849
906/486-8311
www.nsacd.com/index.html

Quest High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
18901 Timber Forest Drive
Humble, TX 77346
281/641-7300
<http://qhs.humble.k12.tx.us/>

Souhegan High School

Public school serving grades 9-12
PO Box 1152
412 Boston Post Road
Amherst, NH 03031
603/673-9940
www.sprise.com/shs/default.htm

Urban Academy

Public school serving grades 9-12
317 E. 67th Street
New York, NY 10021
212/570-5284
www.urbanacademy.org

Support Organizations

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
www.gatesfoundation.org

Boston Pilot Schools Network
www.bostonpilotschools.org

CES Northwest
www.cesnorthwest.org

Houston A+ Challenge
www.houstonaplus.org/

The National Center for Restructuring
Education, Schools, and Teaching
www.tc.columbia.edu/~ncrest/

New England Small Schools Network
www.nessn.org

New Visions for Public Schools
<http://www.newvisions.org/>

New York Performance Standards
Consortium
www.performanceassessment.org

School Redesign Network
www.schoolredesign.net

School Design

How do we design schools so that all students can learn to use their minds well? Topics include: structures for space and time, teacher collaboration, and data collection and analysis.

Classroom Practice

How do we bring Coalition ideas like less is more, teacher as coach, and demonstration of mastery to life in the classroom? Topics include: curriculum and instruction, assessment, and classroom culture.

NEXT ISSUE

Strategies for Equity in Math and Science

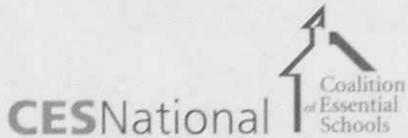
How do Coalition teachers address challenges of inequity as they raise science and math achievement for all? We examine several case studies, outlining teachers' particular concerns and describing curriculum, assessment, classroom culture, and other strategies for seeking equity while meeting math and science goals.

Leadership

What kinds of leadership are necessary to transform schools into more humane and intellectually rigorous environments? How can the change process be sustained? Topics include: governance, distributed leadership, and managing the change process.

Community Connections

How can schools most powerfully engage the community as advocates and partners in the education of its students? Topics include: parental involvement, service learning and internships, and using community members as resources.



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School Design

Mentoring and Collaboration among Essential Schools

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Mentoring and Collaboration among Essential Schools

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Notes on this Issue

Subscribers and other faithful readers will notice that we've changed *Horace's* appearance—not a makeover, really, but a make-better. We've executed these changes in a considered effort to make *Horace* as useful as possible for professional development and personal enrichment. In particular, the new size and the three holes to the left acknowledge that many of you archive *Horace* for future reference.

A continued thank you to the many faithful *Horace* subscribers; you're keeping *Horace* alive. If you—your school, your workplace, or yourself—don't subscribe, we urge you to join us. Subscription rates are \$35.00 per four-issue year, with discounts for multi-year subscriptions. Use the attached subscription card, call us toll-free at 1.800.62HORACE, or go to our website: www.essentialschools.org/horace.

Another way to receive *Horace* is to affiliate with CES. The connection with CES is well worth it. See more information on affiliation on our website, www.essentialschools.org, or call us at 510.433.1451.

Horace's next issue will focus on pedagogical strategies for equity in math and science. If you have ideas and experience to contribute, we're eager to hear from you via email or telephone.

As always, a big thank you to all of the schools, organizations, and individuals that provided information and inspiration to this issue of *Horace*.

Jill Davidson
Editor, *Horace*
jdavidson@essentialschools.org



Sustained School Partnerships: Mentoring, Collaboration, and Networks

No two schools are ever alike,
but lots of good schools share
the same convictions.

—TED SIZER

Students and teachers at Humanities Preparatory Academy

The truth about how to create sustainable conditions for powerful teaching and learning is bred in the bones of schools rather than the brains of researchers or policy-makers. Motivated by this belief, new and restructuring schools that aim to incorporate the CES Common Principles forge connections with other Coalition schools. They rely on each other for support, mutual learning, and perspective.

Twenty years ago, the Coalition of Essential Schools was born when a handful of schools realized the power of networking as they focused on personal connections, academic and personal growth, and equity. Ever since, CES's central mission—through Fall Forums, regional centers, the CES National website and more—has been to share school-based insight across its network in the service of creating a critical mass of equitable, personalized, intellectually vibrant schools. Bolstered by increased resources, research, and national support, the remarkable results of a number of these schools has propelled a groundswell of new and restructuring schools, hungry for knowledge, inspiration, and experience and seeking critical friends and mentors.

This demand for school practitioners' wisdom is thrilling. But the potential burden on well-established schools—schools that are finding ways to help students think critically, find academic and other kinds of personal success, and stay committed to themselves and their communities—imperils both their daily work and their evolution. To help share the wisdom of established schools without draining their resources, schools and support organizations are building systems and networks to share knowledge, foster personal connections, enrich both new and more established schools, and hold each other accountable for results.

Three qualities characterize sustained, mutually enriching interschool collaborations:

- **MUTUAL LEARNING.** Participants acknowledge equity among partners. More experienced schools can accelerate new and restructuring schools' learning; the newer schools can reflect to their partners both strengths and areas that need more work. Sustained, generative professional relationships are designed for mutual benefit, not for the transmission of on-high wisdom to acolytes.
- **BUILDING ON CULTURES OF COLLABORATION.** Mutually beneficial interschool collaborations are an extension of the professional learning communities that are well established within many Coalition schools. They use experiences—such as looking at student (and teacher) work together—that deepen professional capacity within individual schools. And they use communication techniques—such as protocols—that help people who don't know each other well focus quickly and get to work solving problems and building bonds.
- **ALLYING WITHIN LARGER NETWORKS.** School-to-school mentor relationships create networks for stability and support, strengthening the efforts of Coalition schools locally and nationwide, creating systems for accountability, and building capacity. These networks facilitate learning among like-minded schools and help them stand together in the face of inevitable policy, fiscal, and other challenges.

This issue of *Horace* looks at high schools in Texas, Michigan, Massachusetts, Ohio, and New York that have developed the habits and skills to build strong interschool collaborations.

Parker and Leominster: Opposites Attract

During the summer of 2003, at a New England Small Schools Network (NESSN) Summer Institute workshop on advisories and performance-based assessment, staff members from Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School and Leominster High School—about a fifteen-minute drive apart in central Massachusetts—realized that they had a great deal to teach and learn from each other. While close geographically, the schools might seem like unlikely partners. Leominster, founded as a comprehensive high school, serves one town, is forty years old, and has 1,800 students in grades 9-12. Parker, founded as a Coalition school, draws students from forty-two different towns, is nine years old, and has 365 students in grades 7-12.

But within these differences resides a potentially fruitful opportunity for partnership. Leominster sought support from NESSN while considering changes that would allow it to reach its goals, which include using multiple measures of assessment, lowering student-teacher ratios, and making itself more student-centered. Parker aimed to strengthen connections to local communities and was looking for ways to expand opportunities for its staff. "There's a real need for schools involved in change to deepen their information over time rather than offer the same introductory workshop over and over," says Parker's principal Teri Schrader, addressing Parker's faculty's need to keep learning even as they teach.

As a school designed around the Common Principles, featuring an unshakable student-centered focus, employing top-notch teachers, and featuring founding trustees and active participants Ted and Nancy Faust Sizer, Parker has attracted considerable attention in its nine years. Planning teams have traveled from far and wide to see the school. In response, and in order to heed the

CES Small Schools Project

Inspired by examples of collaboration among schools, and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CES National has begun a new initiative to designate twenty outstanding CES schools as mentor schools. These schools, working with CES National and our regional centers, will provide guidance for the creation of ten new small high schools and for the transformation of five existing large high schools into smaller units.

At press time, the first cohort of five mentor schools hasn't yet been chosen from among the candidates, but many of the schools that contributed stories and information to this issue are candidate mentor schools. To find out which schools are in the first round and to learn much more about the CES Small Schools Project, visit the CES National website.

If you are interested in forming a team to start a new small CES high school, drop us a note at SmallSchools@essentialschools.org. We'll put you on our mailing list for the call for proposals, which will begin in December 2003.

Cultures of Collaboration: The New Social Realities of Teaching

Educators in CES schools use collaborative enterprises such as teacher inquiry, critical friends groups, and peer coaching to learn from each other. These practices, write Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller in "Teaching and Teacher Development: A New Synthesis for a New Century," are hallmarks of "the new social realities of teaching" in schools that aim for personalized and powerful intellectual work across the entire school community.

Lieberman and Miller focus on how teachers seek ever-expanding avenues for renewal and connection as they move along "the continuum of professional development," which is characterized by shifts:

- from individualism to professional community
- from teaching at the center to learning at the center
- from technical work to inquiry
- from control to accountability
- from managed work to leadership
- from classroom concerns to whole school concerns
- from a weak knowledge base to a stronger, broader one.

The work that educators do as they build sustained relationships with staff members from other schools creates opportunities to move toward the more sophisticated and collaborative end of this continuum. These opportunities support veteran teachers' growth and engagement as they – and their schools – take on roles as mentors.

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/2000brandt/lieberman_ch3.html

call in its charter to support other schools, Parker established the Regional Teachers Center, an independently funded program area offering visitation days, in-depth workshops and customized programs designed to "teach Parker." Most of the time, people came, learned, and went home. What was missing was a chance to build sustained connections and find allies in a semi-rural, somewhat isolated setting. The opportunity to work with Leominster High School on advisories and more afforded Parker the chance to build regional capacity and to delve deeper into its faculty's expertise.

The partnership has started with ten faculty members from Parker traveling to Leominster to facilitate a day-long in-service on advisories for the Leominster High School entire faculty, with ongoing exchanges, visits, and professional development to follow. The Leominster High School collaboration offers Parker's faculty members an opportunity to develop sustained relationships with other teachers—an important advantage for all schools and especially small schools, which need to maintain connections to avoid isolation. Ted Sizer comments, "We're moving closer to being a mentor school. As that has evolved, the Teachers' Center is organizing itself to respond to not just a school's interest in advisories or something else we can talk about in a few hours, but to a school's comprehensive redesign and development." Working with both restructuring and new schools draws on different elements of the experience of Parker's staff members and adds a dimension of growth and challenge to their outreach efforts.

But it's obvious that working collaboratively with other schools considerably increases the workload for everyone at Parker, potentially jeopardizing student success and inviting faculty burnout. Teri Schrader readily acknowledges this downside, suggesting that the solution is to be realistic about the extra work and find ways to support it. "This is all on the backs of the Parker faculty," she says. "Our school isn't a show. Facilitating change and actively mentoring a few schools over the long haul draws on the good will of teachers. So we need to find ways to overstaff the school so we don't disadvantage our own students. I'd feel good letting a teacher rearrange her teaching load for a year in order to work with other teachers. It's great professional development for seasoned teachers to take on leadership."

Ted Sizer agrees, suggesting that the Parker faculty's experience with critical friends groups and other forms of collaborative inquiry has created a strong foundation for its move into the mentor role with Leominster. Sizer says, "This is the most effective professional development that our faculty get. It's the kind of work that keeps remarkable people at a school out in the boonies. The faculty members develop and plan how a career might play out in the school, and we find ways to reflect their increased work in their internal salary level. Everybody wins when you're asked to think about and put words to what you, in your gut, know is effective practice. It raises your consciousness about your own teaching."

Recognizing the advantages for Parker—especially the rich potential for professional development and faculty retention—and the advantage for all schools in the region that seek to find paths to personalization and authentic assessment in the face of state and national testing pressures, Schrader and others at Parker are committed to finding the resources and continuing the sustained partnerships with Leominster. "The luxury of overstaffing is the necessity of adequate mentoring. We're in it with them for them for the long haul, for three, four years, for however long it takes to evolve a program. Now we're sisters," says Schrader.

North Star and Quest: Challenges of Distance

While Parker and Leominster have the natural affinity of geography, the example of the collaboration between Ishpeming, Michigan's North Star Academy and Humble, Texas's Quest High School demonstrates that schools can find ways to support each other even with the challenges of distance. North Star's principal Mary St. Clair acknowledges the costs of the partnership with Quest. "It costs money," she admits. "But you have to put your finances where they're going to lead you in student achievement, so we built the travel into the CSRD grant that we had at the time."



RELATED RESOURCE

Horace 19.1, "Elements of Smallness Create Conditions for Success" contains "Making Great Teachers into Great Advisors: Advisory Training at Parker Charter Essential School," which spotlights Parker's advisory program.

www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/276



St. Clair and North Star's staff turned to Quest to learn more about developing an interdisciplinary curriculum, a persistent challenge, says St. Clair, in the predominant culture of high school in which teachers are trained in single disciplines. Work with Quest High School also established the foundation for North Star's senior exhibitions—or senior exploratories, the term both schools use. "The connection with Quest was crucial for us," recalls St. Clair. "Not only are we physically isolated, but we are educationally isolated. People in this rural community don't know what's happening at other schools. Sustainability is a huge issue if you don't have anything else to look at. One of the things that we felt when we walked into Quest was that it was great to be there because we were all speaking the same language. If you don't have resources nearby, you have to seek them out."

And North Star functioned as a critical friend for Quest, sharing observations and asking questions. St. Clair describes the schools' intentional efforts to learn from each other by observing authentic student and staff work in progress. "Before we go to another school, we try to frame what are we looking for and what we want to isolate. Then we ask the other school's staff to build in time for roundtable discussions around those questions. We ask the other staff to examine some of their dilemmas in front of us." Provided that the questions that occupy the two schools' attention are complementary, this sort of effort allows a mentor school to do the work of running its school while inviting partners to participate. And North Star teachers were mindful of the need to give back to their mentor partner. "We narrated everything while we were at Quest," says St. Clair, "And then we cleaned up those records and sent them on, so Quest's staff had a reflection process."

While there is still communication among staff members at the schools, distance, and the end of North Star's CSRD funding got the best of the North Star-Quest relationship. While it's not necessarily fair to draw the conclusion that long-distance mentor school partnerships aren't possible, it is useful to note that once the CSRD funding ran out, North Star and Quest have had to draw on their own already-tapped resources to support the work of continuing their relationship. Lacking proximity, funding, and the motivation to be mutually accountable for success, the return of attention to their own business at both schools makes sense.

Goldman Sachs New York Project: Establishing a Regional Network

At the same time, in New York City, the Goldman Sachs Foundation Institutes for School Redesign, Teaching, & Leadership drew together a larger network of schools committed to mutual improvement. A joint project of Columbia University Teachers College's National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST), the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF), and the New York City Board of Education, the Goldman Sachs project created clusters of three mentor schools and seventeen newer schools, providing the funding and outside support for inter-school professional development activities.



Teachers working together at Quest High School

NCREST co-director Jacqueline Ancess describes the project as an "apprenticeship model for newer schools to learn from and with more experienced schools and with other like-minded schools." One of the clusters brought together Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, Landmark High School in Manhattan, Brooklyn College Academy in Brooklyn, East Brooklyn Congregations High School for Public Safety & Law in Brooklyn, Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in the Bronx, and Robert F. Wagner Jr. High School for the Integration of Arts and Technology in Long Island City. Reflecting on the start of the project, Nancy Mann, principal of Fannie Lou Hamer, says, "You can't go in with a big plan. You have to get to know each other and each other's contexts." Once the schools assessed their common goals, strengths, and areas for improvement, they chose to focus their collaboration on literacy.

In city-wide professional development days and in more informal afternoon and evening gatherings, they analyzed student work. Faculty members visited each other's schools. And Cece Cunningham, then the principal of Middle College High School, the cluster's mentor school, built partnerships among the schools' leaders. As the project's capstone, representatives from each school conducted a five-day critical friends review of Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School, immersing themselves in the life of the school and generating observations and feedback on Fannie Lou Hamer's progress toward high standards of literacy and other goals.

Cece Cunningham emphasizes that this final critical friends review was an important element that added urgency and collective accountability to the schools' collaboration. "The Fannie Lou experience made it more than just about sitting around and talking," says Cunningham. "There was something in sight that results in a performance, in this case the review. Everyone was gearing up and preparing for that." Jacqueline Ancess also emphasized that the project demonstrated that productive partnerships were based on the exchange of assistance and insight, noting, "One of the major findings is that schools need to feel they have something to contribute. They don't want to just be listeners. What people were able to do was share their expertise." The final critical friends review made all participants accountable for their contributions; Fannie Lou Hamer's staff benefited tremendously from the intense look at their school by their peers, gaining a much clearer focus about their own work along with an assortment of strategies and ideas. Mann says of the experience, "If your expertise is insufficient to do what you need to do, it's a way of exploring other people's experience to broaden your own fund of expertise."

Though teachers, principals, and others from the schools participated in the Goldman Sachs Institutes, Cunningham placed particular emphasis on working with the schools' leaders, observing, "This kind of collaborative professional relationship among and between schools depends on the relationship that the principals establish." Though the Goldman-Sachs project has ended, most of the school leaders in the group have continued to meet together and with Cunningham. Vivian Orlen, principal of Landmark High School, comments that she doesn't want to lose the relationships that developed. "We had to work together in a sustained way to learn from each other," Orlen says of the network of support among the schools and in particular of the meetings of the school leaders, facilitated by Cunningham. "I loved those meetings. They were a place to scream for help and deal with the real issues that we faced as school leaders."



RELATED RESOURCE

Horace 14.5, "How Friends Can Be Critical As Schools Make Essential Changes" examines how schools build collaborative cultures, providing ways that school people can help each other participate in a cycle of inquiry that examines data, teaching practices, and student work as a means of making change.

www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/43



Building on Collaborative Cultures

Experience from Coalition schools shows that getting to the heart of what helps students learn best produces a truly well-functioning team; as educator George Wood, principal of Stewart, Ohio's Federal Hocking High School, observes, "The best way to build a meaningful partnership is by doing protocols around sharing student work." Usually, collegiality is forged by time and shared experience. It is based, if not on friendships, then on the ease of proximity and personal connections. And usually, sustained collegial support happens under the aegis of a permanent structure that brings partici-



Landmark High School staff members meet at the start of the school year.

pants together regularly, such as a school's team meetings.

The Goldman Sachs project demonstrated that it is possible to bring people from different schools together to look at student work while preserving each school's particular identity and direction. Jacqueline Ancess says that this construction of inter-school support depends on honoring the diversity of the schools rather than expecting them all to follow a certain path. "I find the idea of telling schools, 'You're going to learn our way' doesn't really work." To emphasize this point, Cece Cunningham used the metaphor of a journey as a getting-started activity for school teams. "We often do this with a huge map of the world, but in this case, we used New York City and asked people to decide how they planned to get to a common destination," Cunningham describes. "Each school had to go from their campus to a party on a boat in Sheepshead Bay. All of the schools came up with completely different and creative routes—some took the subway, then a Big Apple bus, others took a boat around city. What this showed was that they're all going to a destination together, the destination of academic achievement for their kids, from different places and in different ways. We used this image over and over, through the whole project. It helped people understand how and why they could be different."

In addition to thoughtfully structured activities, Cunningham relied on informal experiences to forge the group of school leaders. "We met in the evenings, at my house, and we always included food and beverage. Then some of the other principals would invite the group into their houses. This sense of hospitality and relationship building, when you're in someone else's house and eating their food, goes a long way to strengthening ties. In other settings, you don't take potshots at each other."

Other educators attest to the power of the informal network of personal relationships that builds up among similarly oriented schools in a region. Rosemary Sedgwick, in charge of School Development and Partnerships at Boston's Fenway High School, says that personal connections undergird the strength of the school's networks, such as the Boston Pilot Schools Network and NESSN. "A lot of our relationships go through people who used to work together; the infiltration of employees moving through the networks keeps our schools glued together."

School Interaction Continuum

With thanks to John Donne, we observe that no school is an island, entire of itself. Mutually influential relationships fall along a continuum that ranges from informal, intermittent contact through deeply sustained collaboration. As you plan goals and professional development, consider ways to move your school to the next level.

Mentor Relationships

Residencies

School Visits

Emails, Phone Calls, Online Networking

Networking at Conferences & Meetings

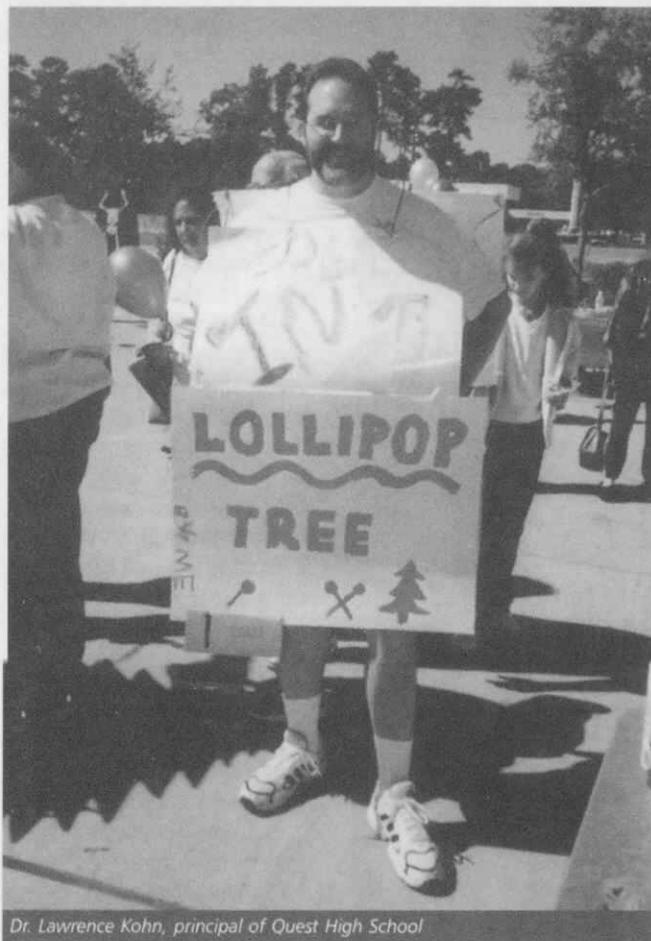
Often, new small schools are founded by people who move on after tenure at a more established Essential school. Vincent Brevetti, principal of Manhattan's Humanities Preparatory Academy, a CES school that is also part of the New York-based New Visions for Public Schools network, thinks that the move of school personnel from established schools to newer or recreating schools merits special attention. "School cultures are so idiosyncratic, despite whatever comes down the pike. The power of a school's personality is quite astounding," he comments. "So if you can create a school culture based on democratic principles and collaborative leadership, you have a much better chance of success." Faculty members and school leaders that move among school environments are able to transmit an understanding of the importance of such qualities to new, coalescing school cultures.

Cece Cunningham thinks that establishing interdependencies and collaboration among schools within a region also serves to diminish the threat of competition that can arise. Cunningham says, "There has to be so much trust so that people won't be judged by their colleagues. This is the hardest thing if you're all in a single school district like New York where all the schools are being ranked and compared. You need to go against that culture." Establishing a stake in the success of each other's schools is the best way to resist the divide-and-conquer mentality. And to do that, says Cunningham: "You have to push yourself to be your best adult self in professional relationships. That's when you learn."

Long-Term Networks for Stability and Support

In addition to working with like-minded Essential schools, Quest High School participated in the Houston-area Beacon Schools project, sponsored by the Houston A+ Challenge (formerly the Houston Annenberg Challenge). Quest's principal Lawrence Kohn traces the development of a local policy environment supportive of student-centered learning to the Beacon School program, which ran from 1997 through 2001. Kohn acknowledges that the Beacon School funding and infrastructure guided Quest to focus its collaborations locally. "We think our help is much more focused and consistent in our own school district than anywhere else," he says, citing the creation of a new high school in Humble structured around small learning communities. Kohn attributes the success of the idea of human-scale schooling to Quest's faculty's persistence with their area colleagues. "You have to follow up and stay in there with them. If you don't, people regress back to their old ways. You have to focus on how to get to learning goals and relentless follow up and support until it's part of the culture and reflected in what they do."

Janice Adams, principal of Merlo Station High School in Beaverton, Oregon, sees a similar pattern of influence in her region. "I believe that the CES model has become as extensive in schools in our vicinity because we started doing it," Adams says, describing increased affiliation with CES in her region through the CSR process. Holli Hansen, Associate Director of CES's Northwest regional center,



Dr. Lawrence Kohn, principal of Quest High School