

## MANUAL HIGH SCHOOL CONCEPT RECOMMENDATIONS

### ITEM # 1

**ACTION REQUIRED: The Board gives the Administration the Authority to implement the following recommendations related to the conceptual design.**

**Staff reorganization**

The key ingredient to any school improvement model is strong leadership, which is not held only at the administrative level. Changes in roles and responsibilities for most staff will occur, but the leadership issue must be addressed in the early planning stages of implementing small learning communities.

In a study of successful school districts, *Beyond Islands of Excellence*, the Learning first Alliance found that large-scale improvement will elude us until we redefine leadership (Togneri, 2003). We accomplish this by creating opportunities for better performance, using ongoing assessment data to keep it real, and to monitor progress. Furthermore, and most importantly, we accomplish this by replacing conventional professional development with regular times for self-managing teams to prepare and improve their lessons together. (Schmoker, 2006).

It is our goal to address the years of professional isolation that teachers often experience from their colleagues and from constructive supervision that produces the gap between what we know and what we do.

We recommend new leadership which includes the hiring of a new Principal and assistant Principal to be identified by March 2008. All certified staff that are currently employed at Manual High School will be required to re-apply for positions in the newly designed school.

The research supports the fact that in schools that are successful, staff believes that all students can and must achieve high standards. They recognize that the No Child Left Behind act, adequate yearly progress (AYP), and state testing programs create the floor, not the ceiling for what all need to achieve. Passing the tests is the minimum and is far from the definition of academic excellence. (Successful Practices Network, 2004).

**Reorganize the school to include a junior academy, a ninth grade academy, and up to four career academies organized around small learning communities of 80 to 150 students each.**

Research on American's most successful high schools and what makes them work (Daggett, 2004) identifies certain characteristics that are consistent across most successful high schools. The first of these characteristics includes the focusing of instruction around students' interests, learning styles, and aptitudes through a variety of small learning community approaches, or academies.

The second is an unrelenting commitment by administrators and teachers to excellence for all students with a particular emphasis on literacy across the curriculum.

According to Daggett, small learning communities permit educators to develop a personal relationship over an extended period of time with students. It also enables outside mentors, business partners, and others to create personal relationships with the faculty and students. These personal relationships prove to be essential in motivating and nurturing students.

□ **Authority to proceed with Career Academies and to investigate the possibility of establishing a partnership with Talent Development High School or other career academy models**

Due to the fact that so many of the elements of design in our recommendations are similar to those of the Talent Development High Schools through John Hopkins University, the committee is recommending that we plan to implement the 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy the first year, and continue to research the possibility of creating a formal partnership with John Hopkins University by July 1. We are seeking approval from the Board of Education to continue discussions about adopting the TDHS model with John Hopkins for full implementation by the second year of restructuring.

**Full implementation of the TDHS model includes:**

- Reorganizing schools into small learning communities, including a Ninth Grade Success Academy, Career Academies for the upper grades, and an after-hours Twilight School. The Twilight School is an after-hours program with targeted courses to get students back on track for graduation, and with small classes and support services.
- Instituting research-based curriculum as well as initiating instructional strategies, such as looping, block scheduling, student portfolios and data folders have been used to move students toward improved academic performance in curricula areas including English and Math.
- Enrichment and recovery opportunities and extra support for students. It also provides professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to support implementation of the recommended reforms.

- The creation of parent-and-community-involvement activities that encourage student career and college development.

A key feature of the implementation process for Talent Development is the support provided to each school by an on-site organizational facilitator and a team of coaches who work daily with school leaders to support implementation of the model. In addition, a team of Talent Development curriculum developers and trainers are in frequent contact with the school-based facilitators and the key members of the school's leadership and instructional teams.

(See attached Simplified Conceptual Framework for the TDHS model)

### **The Jr. High School Academy (Manual High School Prep Academy)**

We are recommending that 80 students in grades 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade be enrolled in a Jr. Academy housed in a small learning community within Manual High School. The rationale for the Middle School Academy stems from the committee's desire and recognition of the need to reach students who may be at risk of academic failure before they enter high school. It also allows opportunity for those students with academic potential to be nurtured and supported at an early grade level so that they may reach their optimal academic potential.

Students that do not have adequate academic skills to succeed in the high school curriculum are identified early and enrolled in an enrichment program. The Jr. Academy creates an opportunity for the expansion of managed choice in our district. Students will experience benefits offered by the block schedule which allow for opportunity to double dose students in math and reading and other catch up courses. Enrichment and acceleration strategies will be emphasized above traditional remediation approaches. (See sample block schedule attached)

Critical to the design of the Jr. Academy is the understanding by parents that this will be a school of 'choice and commitment'. Students, their parents, and the faculty of the Manual High School Jr. Academy "have made a choice to be at the school".

Choice entails commitment – a commitment that not every parent and student is willing to make. Therefore, this school will be self-selective. Families must be willing to apply, sign on to a rigorous program that includes longer days, longer year and possibly summer school. Parents will sign a compact, or covenant indicating their willingness to partner with staff and commit to monthly activities at the school.

All parents will be required to attend an orientation and to be actively involved in developing a personal education plan (PEP) for their child.

### **The Ninth Grade Academy**

The core design element recommended for Manual High School is the ninth grade academy which would be a self-contained school-within-a-school organized around interdisciplinary teacher teams that share the same students and have common daily planning time. Manual High School receives eighty-five percent of its incoming freshmen from Trewyn middle School. ISAT (2007) indicates that 54.4 % of Trewyn's 8<sup>th</sup> grade students did not meet AYP standards in reading compared to 59.2 % who did not meet AYP standards in math.

The ninth grade marks the beginning of success or failure in the school careers of many students. In the book “The Pivotal Year” (Marshall, 2003), ninth grade is the place where “the rubber meets the road,” so to speak, and many students lack sufficient social and academic skills to succeed in the instructional environment of public high schools.

The practices and offerings of the ninth grade academy would be designed to help ease students’ transition into high school, encourage good attendance, and promote positive learning behaviors.

According to the research, schools that have successfully implemented 9<sup>th</sup> grade academies find that by the end of grade 9, students have typically made dramatic improvement in their basic skills, enabling them to complete a normal high school curriculum. They have also been indoctrinated into the culture of high expectations and caring adults. (Daggett, 2004).

### **Career Academies**

Career Academies are school-within-a-school programs operating in high schools grades 10-12. They offer career-related curricula based on a career theme, academic coursework, and work experience through partnerships with local employers.

In each Career Academy students stay with a group of teachers over three years in high school, referred to as a small learning community. The aim is to create a more personalized and supportive learning environment for students and teachers.

Career Academies offer students a combination of academic and “new vocational education” curricula and uses a career theme to integrate the two. In line with what is being called “new vocational education”, Career Academies now seek to include a broad range of students and to combine a rigorous academic curriculum with exposure to extensive information about an industry both in the workplace

and in the classroom. The career theme is used to integrate curricula and provide exposure to a broad array of careers in a given field and does not necessarily focus on preparing students for jobs in those areas.

Career Academies also establish partnerships with local employers in an effort to build connections between school and work and to provide students with a range of career development and work-based learning opportunities.

**Research indicates that:**

Career Academies (CA) increased both the level of interpersonal support students experienced during high school and their participation in career awareness and work-based learning activities

The CA substantially improved high school outcomes among students at high risk of dropping out. For this group, the Academies reduced dropout rates, improved attendance, increased academic course-taking, and increased the likelihood of earning enough credits to graduate on time.

Among students least likely to drop out of high school, the CA increased the likelihood of graduating on time. The Academies also increased vocational course-taking for these students without reducing their likelihood of completing a basic core academic curriculum.

In sites where the Academies produced particularly dramatic enhancements in the interpersonal support that students received from teachers and peers, the CA reduced dropout rates and improved school engagement for both high-risk and medium-risk subgroups (about 75 percent of the students served ). Academies that did not enhance these supports actually increased dropout rates and reduced school engagement for some students.

Research indicates that Career Academies do not improve standardized math and reading achievement tests scores on those tests currently in use, but does indicate that promising approaches may involve aligning the Career Academies' curricula with high standards and providing teaches with the incentives and capacity to deliver on such standards. (MDRC, 2007).

**Change the structure of the school day and school year**

Our recommendation is that the school day is lengthen by 45 minutes and the school year by 5 additional days.

This change allows for more opportunities for staff professional development and the establishment of professional learning communities as well as offering students opportunities for more time for instruction especially in the core subjects.

Lengthening the school day allows opportunities for block scheduling, credit recovery, and more time with low-performing students who are behind grade level and need more time to reach standards and more opportunity to help students to advance towards their postsecondary aspirations by giving them access to work experiences and to early college credit.

Research indicated that many high schools are succeeding in raising student achievement and closing the achievement gap between different groups of students by increasing the length of their school day and/or year.

A study of high-performing high schools in Massachusetts found that all of the top performing schools had expanded time for learning. (Pennington, 2006)

Furthermore, according to the Center for American Progress, a key attribute of successful extended learning time schools is their recognition that extended learning offerings at the high school level need to engage and interest young people, and to accommodate their need to work and/or pursue interests outside of school.

#### **Offer Choice**

By choice we mean that parents throughout the community may take advantage of the opportunity to enroll their child in Manual High School and Jr. Academy by agreeing to the high expectations that this school will set. Students in the Manual Attendance area will comprise no less than 50% of the total enrollment. Students from the community at large will be provided transportation regardless of their residence within the District 150 attendance areas.

Choice is also defined by whether the parent is willing to make the commitment that this school demands, and which will be spelled out in parent compacts that set expectations and are signed by teachers, parents, and students.

#### **Expectations will include:**

- Enrollment in the school for no less than one full year. Transfers will not be approved mid year.
- Parent/family partnerships that include expectation of involvement in parent related activities no less than one time per month as part of a parent/school compact that ties into an individualized education plan.
- Families must attend parent orientation as part of enrollment process.
- Parents must commit to no less than one parent activity per month at the school (as outlined in their individualized parent compact).

Extensive research suggests that parent involvement programs improve student academic achievement and enhance educational programs for youth; indeed, family involvement in learning has been identified as the single most important

determinant of success for at-risk children and youth (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992).

- **We recommend “Dynamic Programming” which will include a rigorous and relevant curriculum, a “double dosing of math and reading”, personal education plans and portfolios for each student, and ongoing authentic assessments of student progress.**
- **Establishment of “Professional Learning Communities” and an extensive, intense, professional development plan to be implemented by June 2008.**

In highly successful schools, quality professional development for teachers is guided by the same principles as quality education for students. Professional development can be characterized as teacher-centered, rigorous, relevant, collaborative, supported, and sustained. (Daggett, 2004)

- **Approve facility design to support small learning communities, culture and climate, and increased security.**

Specific to climate include improvements to the overall learning environment including painting and updating furnishing and converting the front foyer into a welcome area and lounge for parents and community members.

Schools successful in dealing with dropout address overall school climate in order to facilitate student engagement, focus on easing the transition into high school, provide rigorous and relevant curriculum, help ensure alignment with state standards, implement meaningful professional development, and prepare students for rigor in a way that does not bore them. (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007)

- **Set into motion plan to for air conditioning for the building.**
- **Create an advisory council made up of internal and external team members who will meet on an ongoing throughout the implementation and evaluation stages.**
- **Approval to restructure the special education program to include students in regular division classes to the extent possible and align with the special education regulations related to inclusion. Re-assess and update student IEP’s to reflect students’ current needs. Provide co-teaching strategies to support needs of special needs students in self-contained classes and inclusion classrooms as necessary and appropriate.**

According to the current School Improvement Plan, approximately 30% of the students attending Manual High School have been labeled “Special Ed”. A plan to address the needs of special needs students is critical to the success of the restructuring recommendations.

See recommendations regarding Special Education

- Incorporate into the design support of a comprehensive Mentoring program and Mentor recruitment plan.**
- Incorporate into the design a plan for Service Learning opportunities for students in 10-12 grades.**
- Create Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the union that addresses potential staffing concerns along with Memorandums of Understanding that allows access of resources from community into classrooms to provide additional expertise. (There is guidance in Title I Legislation)**
- Support the inclusion of a publicly funded health center and expansion of a child care center in the facility to served both staff and parents' children ages birth to five.**
- Identify funding that would allow a full time business liaison coordinator to work with members of the business community and school personnel**
- Continued support and approval from Board to work collaboratively and build partnerships with Full Service Community Schools.**

**While it is evident that students will benefit from strong instructional programs, effective and high-quality teachers, and engaging and safe schools, many students who are failing to thrive in middle and high school need additional supports. The most at-risk students with multiple indicators for dropout are often located in the highest poverty areas in unstable home and community environments, and require more than academic, structural, and system wide interventions. Often these students require tiered and even intensive supports (National High School Center, 2007).**

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