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ABSTRACT

This handbook describes how a New York City high school transformed itself into a model school. Boys and Girls High School is located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, one of the city's toughest neighborhoods. Over the period 1986-94, the school experienced increases in school attendance, the graduation rate, the number of college-bound students, the number of regents-endorsed diplomas, and enrollment. In 15 chapters, the principal describes his philosophy and administrative practices in the following areas: providing effective leadership, building teamwork, providing student incentive programs and in-house academic options, encouraging parent involvement, conducting perimeter patrols and ensuring school safety, creating a positive and orderly environment, managing holidays, preventing student fights, enforcing discipline policies, and strengthening community relations. The principal maintains that students want and need an orderly school environment; this provides the basis for student searches, a dress code, and a strict discipline policy. Effective leadership also means being a visible leader, encouraging parent involvement, and providing student incentives.  
 (LMI)

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*A Handbook on How to  
Create a Positive Environment  
in Our Schools.*

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**BY FRANK N. MICKENS**

Principal of Boys and Girls High School  
Chancellor of Fulton Street

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*William Lloyd*

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# Foreward

The first time I heard Frank Mickens talk, I realized I was listening to a man of exceptional vision. He was speaking about one of the most daunting tasks of our day: revitalizing troubled schools. I invited Frank and some of his students to our offices so that we could learn more about this local hero. It was then that I became aware of his goal of publishing this handbook with the proceeds going to a scholarship fund he had set up for his students.

Frank's passion and zeal, his discipline and daring, and his love for the children and for education have captured my attention and my admiration. He is one of those exceptional people who can turn beliefs into behavior and sustain the behavior.

He guides, inspires, instructs and encourages those around him with tough love. There are hard and fast rules in his school of 4,300 students and he is the first to spell them out and enforce them. Frank has radically changed the school he walked into. Eight years ago, Boys and Girls High School was known for drugs, danger and abysmal academic standards. Today, the school excels at offering youngsters a "safe haven" where they can learn, grow and ultimately, succeed.

This handbook is a guide to a better life for educators, administrators, students, parents and the community at large. It is our hope that by sharing Frank's wisdom with people who are determined to affect change, youngsters will someday think of urban schools as places of mental and physical nourishment.

Joseph Keilty  
Executive Vice President, American Express Company

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## Introduction

In 1984, Boys and Girls High School was described as one of the worst high schools in New York City. Located in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant, one of the City's toughest neighborhoods, the school was a sad reminder of the despair and urban decay that surrounded it.

Nearly one-third of the student population at Boys and Girls High School was labeled "chronic" truants and the level of academic achievement was abysmal. School-related violence was so rampant that both students and staff had come to accept an atmosphere of disorder, disrespect and lack of security as the daily norm. As a result, the perception of the school was so negative that few parents, if any, wanted their children to attend.

Today, we are proud to say that Boys and Girls High School represents the best in Bed-Stuy. It didn't take a miracle to turn around the nation's 14th largest high school. It took hard work on the part of students, staff, parents and the community who decided to make a difference. Dedication, team work and strong leadership have helped to reverse the downward trends and lack of achievement that once characterized our school.

This handbook was written because of the tremendous interest around the country in our initiatives. As a manual for change, it discusses the fundamental things we do at Boys and Girls High School to create and maintain a positive and safe learning environment—without which education cannot take place.

As a result of the changes in the learning environment of our school, we have made significant progress in the following areas:

	1986	1994
School Attendance	66%	82%
Graduation Rate	81%	95%
Students Going to College	50%	75%
Regents-Endorsed Diplomas	2	74
Student Enrollment	2,800	4,300

Clearly, many of the problems that once plagued Boys and Girls High School are not unique to our school. Negative student behavior, violence and a lack of leadership and responsibility among staff have seemingly become endemic to schools in America, particularly in our urban areas. It is my hope that the readers can take a few of our ideas and utilize them to improve and revitalize the learning environment in their schools.

It is my fervent belief that our schools can work if given an atmosphere that promotes academic excellence, school pride and a sense of purpose. And the only way that will happen is if we have the **commitment** to make it happen.

"Most of all, Boys and Girls High School has meant  
a growing experience. The school has given me the  
opportunity, the chance, the high self-esteem, and the  
hope that I never had before. Thanks."

Heather Lewis, Class of 1991



## Effective Leadership

Leadership is a powerful tool for change and, in my opinion, the most critical factor in turning around troubled schools. Administrators who can provide vision and direction are invaluable to establishing productive, success-oriented school environments. To begin with, someone has to bring together ideas, put them into focus, get the ball rolling, make decisions, and stand by them. That someone is the Principal. What are some of the leadership qualities that an effective Principal should have?

### RISK TAKER

It is better to take risks than to sit by and let a bad situation become worse. As an educational leader, one must be willing to take risks in the areas of school policy, students and staff safety, instruction and staff accountability.

At Boys and Girls High School, I developed "perimeter safety" because I knew how important the outside is in reference to the school inside. In essence, we were staking a claim to our entire school campus. It was better to do this than to let negative forces claim the outer campus area.

Our Principal's Academy and Self-Contained classes were created to meet the needs of at-risk students so they could eventually return to the mainstream after intensive counseling and instruction.

Our ability to move some administrative and teaching staff was critical to sending the messages that Boys and Girls High School was not going to be a dumping ground for inferior staff and that staff accountability is a priority.

## ACTIVIST

If you want an effective school, the Principal must be active. He/she must spend time in the classrooms, hallways, lunchrooms and the perimeter of the building to get to know the student population and the staff. I am proud to say I know most of my 4,300 students – at least by face.

Principal and student interaction is invaluable in terms of assisting students and giving them the feeling that you are there for them. Although the pace is exhausting, this level of involvement serves the following purposes:

- The Principal gets a sense of the tone of the building.
- The Principal is able to informally articulate school rules and policies.
- The Principal is able to informally evaluate and assess the level of instruction by the staff.

## DOER

Principals assigned to turn around schools must be prepared to do whatever is necessary to create the desired changes.

I remember coming to Boys and Girls High School eight years ago and presenting to the staff my student incentive program. I asked for volunteers to get the program off the ground, and seven staff volunteered. We held an initial meeting and I haven't seen them since. Because I believed in this program, it was up to me to get the job done.

Delegation is an important part of leadership, but until you find the right personnel, the leader may have to be responsible for initiating, implementing and coordinating various programs.

## Building The Team

The enormous amount of energy, talent and commitment needed to change our failing schools requires a **Team Effort**.

The multitude of tasks and responsibilities involved in running a school is as great and complex as what it takes to run a successful business.

Therefore the **Team Effort** is as fundamental to putting a school back on track as it is to making a losing business venture profitable. Change is difficult and one person, regardless of how dynamic he or she may be, cannot do the job alone. It requires a team of dedicated, hardworking professionals including all staff, teachers and Assistant Principals as well as custodians and paraprofessionals, to improve the conditions in these schools.

### ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Good Assistant Principals are crucial to the success of a school. The most important requirements for your first assistant are loyalty, competence and sharing the vision. I am extremely fortunate to have on board Ms. Janet Moore, our Assistant Principal of Administration. She is responsible for personnel, programming and hundreds of reports. The Principal must encourage the Assistant Principals to be part of the team or move on.

In order to improve the school's instructional programs, an Assistant Principal must be willing to write unsatisfactory observations of department members when warranted. But it is equally important that Assistant Principals also commend staff for excellent instruction and exceptional performance.

### INSPIRED TEACHERS

Teachers have an invaluable impact on students. They have a direct effect on the students' performance and thirst (or lack thereof) for learning and knowledge.

The accessibility of the staff, the openness of the counselors, the friendliness of the administration, and the love and care for every individual are qualities that distinguish Boys and Girls High School from other schools.

Academically, the school is great. But beyond grades, there is an inherent force that unites the entire school community. My intellectual, cultural and spiritual growth all resulted from my Boys and Girls High School experience. So, what has Boys and Girls High School meant to me? Everything I am, and ever will be."

—Sam Harris, Class of 2011

Our schools desperately need inspired teachers who exhibit a love for teaching and genuine concern for students. Students respect teachers who are caring, demanding and provide them with quality work. Students' behavior and attitudes are tremendously affected by the quality of the teacher. There is a definite contrast between students who are challenged by a good teacher and those who are not. The challenged students are interested and motivated, while the others are disinterested and bored.

Selecting teachers is a daunting task, but I have found one thing that might help the process just by looking at their credentials: teachers who have had student teaching experience have a decided advantage over those who have not. Student teaching allows new teachers to gain the experience of the classroom without the total responsibility. Therefore, they are able to concentrate on learning the academic routines and are more at ease in the classroom environment.

It is imperative that good teachers understand that they are appreciated. By highlighting teachers of excellence with letters of commendation and notes of appreciation, you can foster pride and professionalism in a large segment of your staff.

At Boys and Girls High School, we videotape effective teachers and show the tapes at departmental and faculty conferences. Also, you can ask excellent teachers to make presentations at staff development sessions to share their ideas and re-energize the entire staff.

#### **TEACHER BEHAVIOR**

In schools around the country, a few teachers have, from time to time, become involved in behavior that is unbecoming to the profession. My theory is simple: if their behavior is detrimental to the kids, then move them. You cannot have these types of persons working in your school.

I have found the best policy is to work with your superintendent to bring disciplinary charges against those who violate professional standards of behavior.

## TEACHER RECRUITMENT

I know we can do better. Educational systems, particularly in our urban areas, must do a better job in recruiting prospective teachers. We need to adopt some hints from the corporate world in recruiting and guiding our teachers through the system.

We can begin by eliminating the cattle-call type hiring that is currently in effect. This can be accomplished by better articulation between the Board of Education and the education departments of the various colleges and universities.

Once prospective teachers are identified, they should be ushered through the system by one person who can provide the expertise and guidance to help ensure a smooth transition.

## SCHOOL DEANS

The Deans must share the vision of the school administration in terms of consistent and fair policies. They are vital because of what they can do to prevent trouble situations. To be effective counselors and conflict resolution mediators, they must listen and have the confidence and respect of the students.

The position of Dean is for the person who wants to make a difference. As with the other members of the team, the Dean must be actively involved in the school and willing to go the extra mile at all times.

## GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

The quality of work of Guidance Counselors is critical for the academic and social success of the students. In many cases, they can make the difference between a student becoming a dropout or a college applicant.

In addition, to the responsibility of guiding young people through the very difficult adolescent years, Guidance Counselors are also responsible for completing the huge volume of paperwork required for programming and record updating. It takes an exceptional person to carry out all of the tasks involved.

The caseloads of the Counselors are enormous, which makes their job even more difficult. There is no doubt that we need more competent Counselors to meet the needs of our students.

### SECURITY STAFF

The Security staff of a school must be efficient, alert and part of a school-wide philosophy of prevention. They can be very effective in preventing potentially dangerous situations and serving as the eyes and ears for our Deans.

The Principal must be familiar with all Security personnel and able to evaluate them with his/her designated security supervisor.

*At Boys and Girls High School, the Security staff works closely with the Deans. A team approach is a must!*

### SECRETARIES

The Secretary to the Principal is key to the public's perception of the school. In my case, Ms. Ruth Brown has brought a high sense of professionalism and patience to my office.

Equally important are the rest of the Secretaries who perform their tasks in a professional manner. Their part in the basic functioning of the school often goes unnoticed. At Boys and Girls High School, we honor all our Secretaries on Secretaries Day as a sign of appreciation.

#### **PARAPROFESSIONALS, FAMILY WORKERS, AIDES, SOCIAL WORKERS**

These support personnel are crucial to the team effort. Their work is sometimes unheralded, but I am a firm believer that they all can have a positive effect on kids.

#### **CUSTODIANS**

The cleanliness of a building is very important to the students and staff of a school because it helps create a positive environment.

I am very proud of the fact that today Boys and Girls High School is one of the cleanest schools in New York City. Our custodians are very diligent and proud of their work.

#### **CAFETERIA PERSONNEL**

Our Dietitian and kitchen workers are an intricate part of our school. The service they provide to our students can make a big difference in the day of individual students.

I make it a point to familiarize myself with and pass through the kitchen on a daily basis (sometimes more than once). If you ever meet me in person, you can see that I spend a lot of time in our school cafeteria.

#### **STUDENTS AS PARTNERS**

Students have been instrumental in bringing change to a troubled high school and making it better. It takes time, but by offering a positive atmosphere students will begin to feel that this is a "New School." They will feel that they have staked an investment in the school. As a result, you will see a decrease in vandalism, graffiti and negative behavior. This process begins with a vision by the Principal, together with a large segment of staff believing they have to do more than in a regular situation. Everyday, in some form or another, this vision must be articulated and demonstrated by individual action.



School staff must work to develop a rapport with their students. Caring, sincere individuals on staff will allow students to feel they are a part of something special. Also crucial is the development and implementation of programs for students. The conditions in our neighborhoods are so devastating that many of the students would love to stay at school day and night. They need and yearn for a safe learning environment in which they can grow.

In addition to regular extra-curricular programs, our staff has created other student activities. For example, at Boys and Girls High School we have the Travel Club. In the past two years, students have traveled to London, Paris, Rome, Florence and Amsterdam. The Travel Club raises funds for their trips in all sorts of ways, including selling baked goods and candy, holding dances, and producing the best bagels and coffee for the staff on Fridays. The Club has grown in membership each year.

Another innovative program recently implemented is our "Sweet Success Club." This club is open to our overweight students. They take an exercise class in the morning and they eat a specially prepared breakfast and lunch. Five staff members supervise this activity. This program has been instrumental in helping to raise self-esteem for students.

Students have given tremendous support to the staff by informing them of potentially dangerous situations. All information is held confidential. We cannot afford to expose the student informants because if we did, retaliation would take place – most likely in the neighborhood. Students will come forward, but only if there is complete trust.

*Our students have participated in community activities such as senior citizen Thanksgiving and Christmas drives. They have also served as hosts and hostesses to a large number of community events held at our school. This allows students to be part of the larger community and it reflects well on their reputation.*

*"This school stands as a role model to me and thousands of other students. It has triumphed over many obstacles which once prevented it from positive growth. Before, more students were trying to exit than enter. Today, it is quite crowded and many would like to become part of its population.*

*Without a doubt, I will never forget this great institution. It has become a permanent part of my person, a part that I can never ignore. It is the voice inside my psyche that says, 'You can and will succeed'."*

*Reading Course, Class of 1994*

## Student Incentive Programs

When I came to Boys and Girls High School as Principal in 1985, I was intent on identifying and acknowledging students who were doing something positive. This Student Incentive Program started out as our "Academic Mission." It quickly became obvious to me that students, parents, staff and the community were waiting for such an invitation; the Academic Mission has exceeded all my expectations.

The Student Incentive Program highlights the following groups of students:

### HONOR ROLL

Principal Certificate: 90 average and above; no failures

Assistant Principal Certificate: 85--89 average; no failures

Honor Roll Certificate: 80--84 average; no failures

Twice a year, students and their parents are honored at our Honor Roll Dinner. The event brings together six to eight hundred students, parents, staff and friends to celebrate excellence. Students are rewarded with plaques, T-shirts, certificates and other awards. Every marking period, students who obtain Honor Roll status are given a certificate.

The cost involved in holding these dinners is not an obstacle. I have always relied on - and been met with great response by - staff and parents to provide the refreshments and local merchants to pay for the awards. If you have the determination to go forward with this type of program, financial constraints are easily overcome.

#### **STUDENT OF THE MONTH**

The purpose of this program is to recognize individual students who have demonstrated excellence and improvement. At Boys and Girls High School, our staff selects 44 students per month. The program is administered by subject department, but the key to success is staff involvement and a coordinator to see the program through.

The students and their parents are honored at an Awards Luncheon and pictures of the students are prominently displayed throughout the school.

#### **ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

The purpose of this program is to honor those students who achieve an average of 75-79 and no failures. It acknowledges students who are close to Honor Roll status and encourages them to strive to achieve a higher academic ranking. Each marking period students who are eligible for the achievement award receive a certificate.

#### **STAFF MENTORING**

This program is an excellent way of bringing staff and students together and provides an additional support system for the students.

Staff is encouraged to mentor one or two at-risk students. The criteria is simple: the staff may check on the student's progress, call them at home, check with guidance counselors, meet with them during their lunch period or utilize whatever techniques are appropriate.

Staff mentors, students and their parents are honored at an awards breakfast at the end of the year.

#### **BROTHERHOOD/SISTERHOOD**

We established this program in an effort to reach as many students as possible.

Every marking period, students who pass all their classes receive a certificate. We found that many students in this category had never received any type of recognition, and this type of program can help encourage some of them to reach for higher academic standings.

#### **ATTENDANCE AWARDS**

The purpose of this program is to increase the students' awareness of the importance of coming to school every day. Each month, students with perfect attendance receive a certificate. Twice a year, students with perfect attendance receive awards at student assemblies.

*In an eight-year period, our daily attendance went from 66% to 84%.*

#### **REGENTS-ENDORSED DIPLOMA SCHOLARSHIPS**

Over the past few years, we have given special recognition to those students who are awarded Regents-endorsed diplomas by giving them a \$100 scholarship from our scholarship fund as a token of their hard work.

*Six years ago, Boys and Girls High School awarded two Regents-endorsed diplomas. In June 1994, we awarded 74 Regents-endorsed diplomas.*

#### **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. SCHOLARSHIPS**

Eight years ago, we inaugurated the Martin Luther King, Jr. Basketball Classic. People pay to watch basketball teams from different schools compete with each other all day. As part of the Classic, we publish a program book of the players and schools. Local businesses pay for ads in the journal and the students sell the program books at the Classic. The proceeds from this event are set aside for scholarships for outstanding seniors. Students are required to submit applications and indicate why they are deserving of the scholarship. In 1994, we raised \$13,000 for this program.

### **PROJECT SCHOLARSHIPS**

Our school serves seven to eight of the toughest housing projects in this country. Three years ago, we decided to honor the perseverance of the 30 graduating seniors who resided in these projects by giving them \$100 each. The Project Scholarships make a statement to our students that despite living under the most difficult conditions, they can succeed.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS**

Wherever I have spoken or been honored, my mind is always targeted on helping our students. Whenever possible on these occasions, I try to secure funds from people or groups who have an interest in contributing to the financial welfare of our students. Contributions from churches and organizations have dramatically increased our scholarships to seniors.

## Academic Options For Students

Boys and Girls High School has found a high degree of success in several in-house alternative programs for young people. The students placed in these programs have exhibited aggressive behavior toward other students or they have transferred from other schools where they have demonstrated negative behavior, had high absenteeism and showed an inability to function in a regular school environment. Many of these students are bright, but for a variety of reasons are unable to adjust to school on a consistent basis.

The in-house alternative programs include the following:

### PRINCIPAL'S ACADEMY

The Academy consists of a select group of students chosen by the Principal in consultation with school deans and counselors.

Students are assigned to a shortened school day and are taught by outstanding teachers in various subject areas. This takes away the stigma of the programs being labeled a "dumping ground." The duration of the program is one semester, after which the students' progress is evaluated with regard to their placement within the general student body population.

### SELF-CONTAINED CLASSES

This program is an attempt to provide a change in the students' environment in order to personalize their education as much as possible.

The two self-contained classes, one for older students (grades 10-11) and one for younger ones (grade 9), are taught by one experienced, dedicated teacher per group. All major subjects are covered. In addition, a heavy emphasis is placed on socialization skills to try to remedy the students' previous behavior.

The self-contained class for younger students is particularly important because of the large number of incoming ninth-grade students who have been absent from 50 to 100 days in their middle school. Students in this category need small, structured classes.

Students assigned to the Academy or to the self-contained classes are eligible to attend school on Saturday or Sunday (more on this later).

#### **P. M. SCHOOL**

P.M. School allows students to remain on campus and take additional classes for advancement or make-up. Students take two classes, one and a half hours each, after the regular school day on Mondays and Wednesdays. A small meal is provided for the students prior to P.M. School.

#### **SATURDAY SCHOOL**

Students who are short of credits are eligible to enroll in our Saturday School. Four classes for credit are offered. Students cannot be absent for any reason. The no absence policy instills discipline and a sense of responsibility.

The student who passes the four classes in addition to their regular schedule not only receives a tremendous boost in self-esteem, but continues positive progress toward their diploma.

#### **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Students enrolled in this program have had a record of non-attendance or erratic behavior. The students take three academic subjects and their regular school day progress is monitored very closely. For most of the students in this population, this is a last chance. Every effort is made to keep them focused.

*In February 1994, Boys and Girls High School established the first Sunday School for academic credit in the United States.*



## SUMMER SCHOOL

All students at Boys and Girls High School are eligible to attend Summer School and must take three credits.

One of the best components of the Summer School is our Freshmen population. All entering freshmen are encouraged to come to Summer School. Their attendance allows them to receive three academic credits which gives them a head start, and they are able to acclimate themselves to the school and staff before the September school year begins. This experience is invaluable for freshmen students coming into a high school with a population of over 4,000.

*Unfortunately, in today's society, we don't know when and if many young people will ever have the opportunity to turn their lives around. The ability to overcome family situations, the immediate environment and peer pressure has no exact time frame. Schools must be ready to take a lead role in accommodating large numbers of students who can become "survivors."*

*We have expanded the Summer School program from 75 students to 900 students in a period of eight years. We had to fight to establish the Summer School because the educational system felt that our neighborhood was unsafe. We have proved them wrong!*

## Getting Parents Into School

One of the major complaints of the school community is its inability to attract parents to school. With a little determination and some unorthodox approaches, they will come!

### P. T. A. MEETINGS

Parents are reluctant to come to P.T.A. meetings on weeknights. Either they've worked all day and are too tired or they fear for their safety wandering out at night. For the past five years, we have held our P.T.A. meetings on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. (It's important to stress that the meetings end at 12 noon, so that parents can go about their regular Saturday tasks.) The results have been very positive.

On some Saturdays when we have served breakfast, we have drawn as many as 900 parents. Refreshments never hurt to draw a crowd!

### OPEN SCHOOL

Eight years ago, teachers at Boys and Girls High School used to joke about the small turnout before the Open School Afternoon and Evening. We decided to try a few new techniques to increase parent attendance during open School Conferences. Today, those techniques have been tried and tested and, I'm happy to report, work wonders:

- Students are given letters announcing the Open School date to bring home.
- Attractive signs are posted throughout the school.
- A teacher orientation workshop at the Faculty Conference is held prior to Open School.

- Provisions are made for parents who come early. The worst thing is to keep parents waiting outside your building. Serve coffee and cake, if you can. In addition, make available several sign-in areas in order to avoid backlog.
- Send parents a SUMMONS! I have used the Summons (see page 26) for the past 13 years and the response has been unbelievable. Parents are startled to receive a summons in the mail and even though it's not the real thing, it certainly helps the response rates!

#### **NEW 9TH AND 10TH GRADE OPEN HOUSE BREAKFAST**

Several years ago, we instituted a Special Open House for new 9th and 10th grade students. From that emerged the Breakfast with Parents: teachers of new 9th and 10th graders join the students' parents for breakfast. This informal gathering is held several weeks after the school year starts and before the regular Open School date. The response has been fantastic. A large number of teachers volunteer their time, and parents welcome an additional opportunity to meet with their child's teacher.

I think this program could work on all levels – elementary and junior high school.

#### **FRESHMEN ORIENTATION**

In late August or early September, we hold our annual Freshmen Orientation. This program is divided into two: evening and day.

*Evening program:* Our staff greets the freshmen students and their parents during an evening orientation program in the auditorium. I take this opportunity to explain our school philosophy to the parents and students, and recognize the hundreds of freshmen who have successfully completed our Summer School.

*Day program:* Following the evening program, freshmen students spend the following day in a more concentrated orientation regarding our school – a small amount of time that proves invaluable in easing their freshmen fears.

**PARENT/PRINCIPAL ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS**

As Principal, I try to meet with parents individually before or after the regular school day. There have been occasions when I have met parents on a Saturday or Sunday, schedule permitting. Meeting before or after school allows me to give quality time to the parent. During the school day, I limit the number of meetings with parents so that I can observe staff and students in the classrooms, cafeterias, and offer general assistance in monitoring student movement.

**PARENTS GO TO SCHOOL, TOO**

Our community-based organization, The Carter G. Woodson Program, sponsors a Saturday G.E.D. (General Equivalency Diploma) course for parents of students attending our school. Over 150 parents attend these sessions on Saturdays. The Woodson Program is run by the New York City Youth Services Agency specifically for the students and families of Boys and Girls High School.

BOYS AND GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL  
COUNTY OF KINGS

PARENTS  
TO MEET AND CONVERSE WITH  
STAFF

**Summons**

# 1  
BOYS AND GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL  
FOR  
OPEN SCHOOL WEEK

DATES  
MARCH 11 1998 FROM 8 00 PM TO 9 30 PM  
MARCH 18 1998 FROM 12 30 PM TO 1 00 PM

DR. FRANK MICKENS  
PRINCIPAL CHANCELLOR OF FULTON STREET  
1700 FULTON STREET  
BROOKLYN NEW YORK 11211



## Decentralizing Key Personnel

Many schools place their Deans offices, supervisory staff and Security Officers on the main floor of the building. This is in sharp contrast with the fact that most classrooms are located on the upper floors of a building. When problems occur, staff has to run to the area trouble spot.

In my experience, decentralizing offices, particularly the Deans' offices, allows for visibility and gives an authoritative presence on each floor. The Deans can serve as a preventive force, and if a problem situation occurs, they can respond quickly.

Security Officers should also be placed on individual floors. Deans and Security Officers form a tough team.

Many Deans might argue that having their offices in a centralized area allows for better efficiency of records. If you want better efficiency in your building, the Deans' offices should be moved to classroom floors and they should be moved today.

In addition, due to the size of our population, I request that our Assistant Principals and coordinators join the Deans, Guidance Counselors and Security Officers to patrol one period a day. I have included a chart (see page 28) illustrating the plan that I use every day for each area of the building, including the perimeter.

### PRINCIPAL'S UPSTAIRS OFFICE

Principals should consider setting up an upper floor office. I have done this in the three schools where I have served as Principal. All you need is a small office with a phone and desk. The Principal's upstairs office allows

him/her to spend quality time with staff and students, and makes it easier to observe the quality of instruction, have small meetings and monitor the "real" tone of your building.

The success of a smoothly-run office lies with a great First Assistant Principal and secretary. The First Assistant Principal must be capable of representing the Principal in a very positive manner until there is a chance for both people to confer. The Secretary must be an excellent office manager capable of prioritizing calls and reaching the Principal in an emergency situation.

Of course, there is a downside to spending so much time "upstairs" throughout the day: the paperwork accumulates and the phone calls have to be returned. Nonetheless, I have found that my increased visibility is well worth the extra hours.

	Official	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6	Period 7	Period 8	Period 9
4th Floor-1									
3rd Floor-1									
Lockers									
Cafeteria A									
Cafeteria B									
		SCHENECTADY			MAIN			UTICA	
Morning Outside									
Afternoon Outside									

## Perimeter Patrol

Students should have the right to come to school and leave at the end of the day without the fear of being harassed, threatened or physically harmed. To this end, it is imperative that schools develop a comprehensive plan to protect students and prevent incidents where they most often occur – on the outside perimeter of the school. The outside perimeter of the school must be covered consistently every day.

To provide safety for more than 4,000 students on the perimeter of the school, Boys and Girls High School developed the following plan:

- 1 Members of the staff make a commitment to assist in protecting “their” kids. We have a total of ten staff members situated at different strategic locations, including myself, one Assistant Principal, three Deans, and five school Safety Officers. From time to time, we ask parent volunteers to join us on the perimeter patrol. For the past eight years, the perimeter patrol has been on duty for one hour during the morning arrival and one hour during afternoon dismissal. Nothing takes precedence over the perimeter patrol – they’re out there rain or snow.
- 2 Develop a relationship with your local police precinct. I firmly believe that the protection of 4,300 students at Boys and Girls High School is a major consideration for the City of New York. I make this known very clearly to the local precinct captain and even the Police Commissioner, whom I have phoned, faxed and written in a few cases when I felt we were not receiving proper services for our students. The relationship-building has paid off: the local precinct provides two police officers and a police van during the morning arrival and afternoon departure.

3 Student involvement in the perimeter patrol is a must. Schools should articulate to their students that negative behavior is unacceptable on the perimeter of the campus and will be dealt with accordingly. Unless you resolve a perimeter problem immediately, it will lead to problems within the building.



## Cafeterias – Would You Invite A Guest?

The question for all school staff members should be, "Is the cafeteria a place I'd like visitors to see?" I believe most schools have allowed their cafeterias to become an unpleasant place for students. It is in the cafeteria that gambling, fighting, cutting and general disorder reign in most urban middle and high schools. So again, we're talking about quality of life. The cafeteria should be a place where students can eat quality food, converse and socialize without fear.

In my experience, you have to begin by hiring a Cafeteria Coordinator responsible for maintaining a safe and positive environment. The individual sets the tone for what is and is not acceptable, and is responsible, serious and treats the cafeteria as his/her classroom. The Principal must make this area a priority and lend additional support to the Cafeteria Coordinator when needed.

The cafeteria must have clear and concise rules which are enforced on a daily basis. For example, if walkmans are prohibited in the school, that means they are prohibited in the cafeteria.

The Principal must work very closely with the Dietitian. The Principal should relay his expectations and ideas to a trained professional who is able to meet them. The desired relationship isn't easy to achieve. I should know, I'm on my sixth and hopefully last Dietitian in the past eight years. The expected qualifications of a Dietitian should be:

- prepares meals carefully
- able to supervise a large kitchen staff
- able to coordinate large banquet type functions (we sometimes hold breakfast, luncheons and dinners for 1,000 people)
- likes kids.

In addition to a good Dietitian and Cafeteria Coordinator, I suggest the following helpful hints to improve a cafeteria:

- Display attractive signs regarding the few rules that must be observed.
- Have the Cafeteria Coordinator regularly reiterate the rules to students.
- Set up a student committee to develop ideas for a positive environment.
- Assign student monitors for each lunch period to help with the set up and clean up.
- Establish a procedure regarding student clean up of their area; the Cafeteria Coordinator must monitor the clean up period and cite those who are negligent.
- Make sure you, the Principal, eat periodically with the students in the cafeteria.
- If you are fortunate enough to have two cafeterias, it is beneficial to separate the younger students from the older ones.

Remember, the tone of any school building changes during the school lunch periods because there's more movement by the students. Keep this in mind in terms of assignment of your support personnel.

## Holidays And Special Times

During holidays and special times of the year, schools must increase their support staff to monitor student movement and behavior. The key to effective monitoring of these periods is developing a plan. Key staff should be participants in the development and implementation of these plans. These occasions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Opening and closing of the school term.
- Exam time.
- Halloween: this is the one holiday where extra special consideration should be given. Kids really love to use Halloween as an excuse to pull some of the wildest (and most dangerous) stunts. I suggest the following preventive measures be taken:
  - hall lockers should be cleaned out several days before Halloween;
  - letters/announcements should be distributed to students and parents regarding cooperation and expected behavior;
  - students should be searched a few days before and on Halloween.
- Thanksgiving/Christmas/Easter.
- Mid-winter break.
- Half-days or any change in normal school schedule.

Once you've undertaken one or two of these occasions, it will become much easier. It certainly helps a great deal if everyone cooperates and is keenly aware of what's happening in their immediate patrol area. Some helpful hints that have worked for me include the following:

- Start special patrols a week in advance – and don't forget the outside of the building.
- Add extra staff to your regular patrol.
- Add extra personnel to areas such as the cafeteria.
- No parties.
- No video lessons.
- Notify police precinct of changes in schedules on special days.

"At Boys and Girls High School, I began to feel important in the sense that someone was actually looking out for my well-being. It was like a shelter during a rain storm! I couldn't even begin to explain how comforting it is to have found a safe haven amongst the drugs and crime that have infested our community."

Donal E. Ryan, 1993

## Preventing The Fighting

One of the biggest problems in our schools today is student fighting. Anger, frustration, depression, or difficulty handling the pains of adolescence often cause students to act out at the slightest provocation. In a state of "emotional crisis," they create situations which cause physical and violent confrontations in hallways, classrooms, cafeterias and on the perimeter of the school.

At Boys and Girls High School, our approach to this problem is positive and emphasizes prevention:

### A POSITIVE APPROACH

Students are encouraged to see someone (i.e., a Dean, Counselor, Security Officer, aide, paraprofessional, teacher or Principal) if they are having problems with another student. This reminder is announced daily over the loudspeaker and mentioned in grade assemblies held by the Principal. Signs are also posted prominently throughout the building urging students to "see someone" or to help a friend who is about to get into trouble.

### A FEW, ENFORCED RULES

Schools have a tendency to set many rules and worry about enforcement later. Students will always watch to see if the rules are enforced. It is advisable to make a few good rules and make sure you have the ability to enforce them.

Make the rules and penalties for fighting clear to students, parents and staff. Every school should formulate a policy that includes input from students, parents and staff. The important thing to remember is to take action when the rules are broken.

### **INVOLVE STUDENTS IN POSITIVE ACTIVITIES**

Statistics show that students who are involved in extra-curricular activities tend not to be involved in fights. The more teams and clubs in a school, the more students feel good about themselves and their school.

### **GOOD INSTRUCTION/GOOD MANAGEMENT**

Engaging, captivating lessons in the classroom take the students' attention away from negative behavior and focus it on a positive learning experience. Poor classroom management gives disruptive students the opportunity to take control.

### **ALERT STAFF**

Staff should report all arguments or disputes to the Deans. Many times, these reports are instrumental in avoiding fights.

### **PASSING IN THE HALLS**

With more than 4,000 students, monitoring student behavior during the change of periods is extremely important to us. Teachers should be outside their rooms as much as possible. In addition, Deans and other support staff should be strategically stationed every period and in communication with each other. If a fight is going to happen, it typically happens during the passing time.

### **GETTING STUDENTS OFF THE STREETS**

Avoid having large numbers of students "hanging out" waiting to enter school. Trouble can easily develop, and it is more difficult to control in a large, crowded atmosphere.

At Boys and Girls High School, we open our cafeterias and auditoriums prior to the beginning of each school day. Students can socialize while eating breakfast or having access to the auditorium. In rainy or cold weather, it is essential to get the majority of the students into your building as quickly as possible, so they can be relaxed and ready to start the day.

## ASSEMBLIES

At Boys and Girls High School, we utilize assemblies to review our academic agenda, discuss appropriate behavior and highlight improved and outstanding student progress. The assembly time is important because it brings us together as a family. We also divide small groups of students into "houses," assign them counselors and hold regular meetings.

If your school is unable to hold large assemblies, start small and increase the size gradually. Remember to plan the assembly period. This involves entrance, seating and departure procedures as well as assignment of staff to make it work.



## Mick's Fortune 500

Student management is crucial to the success of turning around a school and maintaining a positive direction.

At Boys and Girls High School, we believe that students should be accountable for their actions, particularly their destructive ones.

For the past five years, we have documented, evaluated and recommended academic options, such as P.M. School or Saturday school, for youngsters who exhibit behavior which is not conducive to the school environment. We take into consideration the students' grades, age and recommendations from Deans and Guidance Counselors. The final determination of the students' program is made by the Principal.

A computer-generated list is kept on the 250-500 young people who have had problems over several years. This list is reviewed every six months. The majority of the students on the list are moved to full schedules as their grades and behavior improve.

Every effort is made to turn around the lives of the students on Mick's *Fortune 500* list. The students are constantly monitored and many are placed in our heralded Principal Academy and self-contained program described in Chapter Four.

It is important to note that the documentation on all students in Mick's *Fortune 500* list is never included on the student's permanent record.

The moral values I received at The High have given me motivation, strength and persistence. I am able to take with me the principles of Boys and Girls High wherever I go.

In the words of James Baldwin, "If you know from whence you came, there is no limit to where you can grow!"

Kevin Brown

## Standard Practices Of Discipline

In this chapter, I describe programs that are standard operating procedure at Boys and Girls High School. They have been developed to provide discipline, safety and success for the entire school population. The programs may not work for everyone, but they've done wonders for our school.

### SEARCHES

Three years ago, our school made a decision to search every student every day. Prior to that, we had done random searches at different intervals of the school year.

I became fed up with the lack of response from Board of Education officials to provide the 14th largest high school in America with the most up-to-date/state-of-the-art safety equipment, such as metal detectors.

After discussions with our parents, students and the Parents Association, I made the decision to search every student. I held assembly programs, parents meetings and talks with small groups of students to fully explain the purpose and process of a student search program.

The search program was not a hard sell for our students. They realized, and I thank God for this, that this program was for their own safety. They endorsed the program overwhelmingly.

The search is conducted for all students. Our young men and ladies go to separate entrances as they enter the building to be searched. The personnel assigned to search the students consists of Deans, an Assistant Principal, Security Officers and the Principal.

The search program has been criticized by a few as an infringement on the rights of our students. I say that if we can prevent an injury or save a life, it is worth any infringement.

#### DRESS CODE

Inappropriate clothing is a distraction and is not permitted at Boys and Girls High School. The Dress Code is clearly articulated in the student handbook, flyers, signs and assemblies. Students understand that the attire for school is different from what one wears to the beach or a party.

I feel that by maintaining a dress code, we are teaching an invaluable lesson to our students about what is expected in the world of work.

#### DRESS FOR SUCCESS

The "Dress for Success" program involves students dressing up on selected days of the week: our young men wear shirts and ties on Mondays and Tuesdays; our young ladies are urged to dress for success on Mondays.

This program has surpassed my wildest dreams. It is great to see our young men dressed in shirts and ties. Their parents love it and family members sometimes buy them attractive shirts and ties just for the program.

Dress for Success gives students a different look and experience.

*Initially, people from across the country donated ties and shirts for our young men. The response was resounding. For the past three years, we have been fortunate to have Mr. Tudor Jones, a caring member of our community, support the program. Without his contributions, it is doubtful as to whether or not this program would have continued. Because of Mr. Jones, any young man can acquire a shirt and tie – whether or not he can afford them.*

## **EXPENSIVE COATS**

Thousands of our New York City youth have been injured or even killed for their coats.

I was working in my office one night at about 6:30 p.m. when a student who had just finished our P.M. School knocked on my office door and told me that she had been held at knife point several blocks away from school. The perpetrator wanted her leather coat but was frightened away by a passing motorist.

I comforted the student and began to think about how she could have been killed for a leather coat. I knew then that somehow we had to ban the \$300 - \$900 leather, suede, shearling and "eight ball" coats that had become lethal status symbols in our schools. I acted immediately by calling an emergency meeting of our Parent-Teacher Community Association executive board. I met with the student government, convened grade assemblies, handed out flyers, and spoke with students in our cafeterias. Within 48 hours, we had initiated a school ban on leather, shearling and "eight ball" coats.

This policy was supported by our school and community because both groups realized the danger of wearing such coats. Additionally, this policy has helped minimize potentially dangerous situations involving the stealing or fighting over these items.

## **EXCESSIVE, LARGE JEWELRY**

Over the years, I have reviewed and observed the characteristics of students who have achieved academically. One of the things I noticed was that they did not wear large hoop earrings or large, extravagant chains. When I spoke with them they indicated that they didn't need those things to feel good about themselves.

At the same time, I realized that a number of young people in the city were being injured or even killed for their jewelry. Students in our school had also reported being assaulted for their jewelry as they traveled to and from school.

I met with our student body and indicated that excessive jewelry would be banned. Our parents approved of this decision. Initially, violators had their jewelry taken until a parent conference could be arranged. At present, the very few students who wear large earrings are warned and their names are taken. If the problem persists, a parent conference is called.

#### **DETENTION PROGRAM FOR LATENESS**

Boys and Girls High School averaged 350–400 students late to school per day during my first three years as Principal. We tried every strategy to reduce that figure. Parents were notified by phone and mail, and conferences were set up to review the student's lateness. The results of our efforts were not encouraging. Nothing seemed to make a difference until we decided to give detention for student lateness. There was a sudden dramatic decrease in the number of students that came late to school.

It's great to see our students running to school to be on time. Hopefully, we are establishing good habits for future work experience.

It is important to note that personnel makes a big difference. One of our Deans, Max Rosario, took over our detention program and improved it tremendously. It improved because he has been organized, relentless and committed to the program.

*"Boys and Girls has meant being proud of your identity. It has meant jumping over hurdles and overcoming obstacles that lie in your way. It is the type of school that teaches discipline, respect and self-control. At Boys and Girls I felt safe, secure and the reassurance of success."*

*"At 'The High' I had the chance to become the second person in my family to graduate from high school, and the first to attend college. My dreams started to come true when I entered 'The High.'"*

*Leah and Alex, C. 1994*

## Selling Your School

In order for a school to build a positive image and get good publicity, a great deal of work has to be done. In the past few years, Boys and Girls High School has been the recipient of terrific publicity, including:

- The first stop for Nelson Mandela's visit to the United States.
- Highlighted continuously on local, national and worldwide TV and radio.
- Featured frequently in *The New York Times* and national magazines.
- Acclaimed a "School of Excellence"
- Parents line up at 6:30 a.m. to try to register their kids.

I wish all of the above had happened the first day I arrived as the Principal of Boys and Girls High School. Unfortunately, it was a slow process. Our staff, students, parents and the community have worked hard to build a solid school program.

The first thing I did as Principal was to begin building a viable product out of Boys and Girls High School. I made it a point of not going out into the community that often. After a period of six months, I hit the trail and haven't stopped. The following are some of the key ways to sell your school:

### STUDENTS

Students at Boys and Girls High School have become our best sales people. They are great ambassadors because of the experiences that they have had with our staff, the environment in which they learn, and a sense of family and purpose.



They have encouraged other family members and friends to attend. Word has spread to places as far away as North Carolina, Liberia, Puerto Rico, Barbados, Virginia, Dominican Republic, Trinidad, Nigeria, Guyana and Jamaica.

Our students have developed a pride for their school and are proud to wear the extensive line of merchandise that we have developed – from T-shirts to umbrellas to towels, caps and aprons. Each year, we add new items. The students wear the clothing with pride and it solicits untold positive publicity.

## **PARENTS**

Parents are some of our biggest boosters. They want a safe environment and a quality education for their child. Boys and Girls High School provides that, and parents are the first to tell that to family and friends.

Parents in the Brooklyn and New York City areas will do anything to get their child into this school. I have seen them change addresses; get politicians, judges and even an F.B.I. agent to call me; and pressure Board of Education officials to try and admit their child even though it might be overcrowded or the child does not have enough credits.

## **GOING INTO THE COMMUNITY**

Every year I increase our opportunities to speak or perform in the community. I personally have spoken at over 100 churches, civic organizations, graduations and educational groups over the years. You would be surprised at how many excellent students we have recruited at these affairs.

The staff makes presentations at feeder schools' assemblies and P.T.A. meetings. Our presentations were sometimes met with skepticism, but that did not deter our efforts. The important point is to get out and keep pushing.

Eight years ago, we started taking pictures of positive events and of kids being honored and sent them to local newspapers. Many times, the papers printed the picture and accompanying information. My advice is to make an attempt – don't sit back!

Also, our student service squads, the Red Berets and the Sophisticated Gents, have served as hosts to community functions all over the city.

#### **BULLETIN BOARDS AND SIGNS**

I am very big on attractive Bulletin Boards featuring pictures of students. Not only are the boards important to students and staff, but also to visitors who come to your school.

Our school is also flooded with signs that are message carriers. They illustrate many of our initiatives and serve as reminders to our students.

#### **OPEN HOUSE**

Hold Open House sessions to show off your school. Have your students and staff participate.

## Personal Opinions

I have some strong opinions about the way a school can function properly. As my closing chapter, I want to offer my thoughts on four issues: Principals; student transfers; restructuring; and middle school alternatives.

### PRINCIPALS

I wrote in Chapter Five about limiting parent meetings until after the school day or on weekends. I also want to point out that meetings with Superintendents, central staff, coordinators and others should be held before or after school or on weekends. Principals can find themselves out of the school building three times a week in order to attend these meetings; that's three times a week when the Principal is not in school observing classes, providing resources, maintaining a high level of energy, monitoring the tone of their building and giving direction.

I will admit that from time to time a few important agenda items are significant, but they do not warrant taking Principals out of school. We must stop this practice and allow Principals to work without interruption as much as possible.

### STUDENT TRANSFERS

New York City has an antiquated system of moving students who have had serious problems in high schools. A student at one high school may have attacked a teacher or Principal and is moved to another large high school. This same student may cause a riot in the cafeteria of the second school and then is transferred for the third time into the local zoned high school.

Boys and Girls, a zoned high school, was the recipient of a large number of such students until eight years ago. At that time, a decision was made to review every transfer student.

I was accused by a variety of advocacy groups of trying to be "selective." That was not the case at all. I believe that students who have been disruptive in one large high school should not be sent to another school of the same size. Also, students coming out of penal institutions should not be sent to a large high school. These students who have shown disruptive, often destructive, behavior should be allowed to finish their education in a small alternative setting. Many of these students are bright and would benefit much more by individualized attention in a smaller setting.

#### RESTRUCTURING SCHOOLS

This touchy subject has become one of the more popular educational thrusts.

In New York City, this movement has manifested itself in the closing or the phasing out of large high schools which have experienced academic and behavioral problems. The process usually follows this pattern:

(a) remove the present students; (b) establish a theme and a new name; and (c) bring in new staff and better academically-prepared students.

Boys and Girls High School is the only New York City high school with a troubled past that has changed from within. This change was not the result of replacing current students, establishing a new theme or bringing in all new staff. Rather, it was the result of dedicated risk-taking leadership, competent administrators, energetic teachers and the recruitment of committed staff on all levels. The key ingredient, however, was the commitment of students, parents and the community to accept the challenge.

Certainly, there are schools that need a total restructuring, but we must face the reality that we cannot restructure all of our large high schools.

Size is a matter of concern. We could do a much better job at Boys and Girls High School with 2,000 students rather than our present 4,300. If bureaucrats had their way, they would add another 1,000 students to our

school and then add Boys and Girls High School to the list of schools to be restructured. But I won't allow this.

While restructuring schools is an initiative that has some positive aspects, it should not be considered a panacea for the ills facing our large high schools.

#### MIDDLE SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES

Most middle schools have about twenty students who create havoc for the entire school. Teachers and Principals have told me that this is a problem year after year. As a former middle school Principal, I experienced this problem firsthand.

Every district should develop alternative settings for youngsters who continually act out and prevent the other students from learning and teachers from teaching. The students assigned to the alternative settings are usually bright but are experiencing problems at home or within the environment. In addition, the middle school age students can be very difficult because of the physical and emotional changes the youngsters are experiencing.

Alternative settings should not be stigma-promoting, but rather an attempt to work with students to help them mature socially. If there is a concerted effort for such programs to succeed, then many of these young people will be better able to handle the high school of their choice.

What has Boys and Girls meant to me? Boys and Girls has given me and a lot of students hope for a brighter tomorrow. When I walk down the road to the real world in June, I'll be taking Boys and Girls with me in my heart and mind. Memories can be the precious things one takes on a journey.

Thanks to Boys and Girls, I've got enough to last a lifetime."

Denise Taylor, Class of 1994

## Don't Stand Still

Each year, schools should strive to improve in the areas of student achievement, instructional initiatives, staff development, safety and student welfare. Schools encounter problems, however, when they try to implement massive revision that looks and sounds good on paper, but is extremely difficult to execute.

In my experience, I have found that it is helpful to consider the following guidelines when undertaking a new initiative:

- Keep it simple.
- Is it something you can get others to buy into?
- Who are the people who can implement it?
- Is it good for kids, staff and parents?
- Can it be accomplished?
- Can it be sustained?

It's much easier for me to illustrate my points by example, so I have included the following two initiatives:

### IMPLEMENTING NEW YORK CITY'S NEW MATH AND SCIENCE CURRICULUM

New York City has mandated an upgraded curriculum in Math and Science. In addition to passing six Regents Competency exams, students entering the ninth grade will have to take Regents courses in Sequential Math 1, 2 and 3; and Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science or Physics before they graduate.

There is serious concern about the success of such a radical initiative because so many students do not build a solid foundation in math and science during their elementary and middle school years.

No one should be against raising standards, but without proper preparation by students, teachers and administrators, such an effort is extremely difficult to implement.

I had suggested a more realistic approach to the new math and science initiative, including building a math and science program in our elementary and middle schools and introducing the selected Regents subjects in a more gradual form. But – you guessed it – the Board of Education didn't go for it and the original plan for the initiative was adopted. When it was made mandatory, I did not stand still, but instead went ahead with the following plan to make the new initiative a success:

- 1 I reviewed and developed a plan for student placement in math and science.
- 2 An intense effort was made to get our incoming ninth graders to attend our Summer School so that they could begin to take courses in math and science.
- 3 Every effort was made to recruit increased numbers of math and science teachers. Ms. Karen Hutchinson, our Science Coordinator, left no stone unturned in her efforts to find the very best talent for our kids. We hired a large number of Peace Corps fellows as math teachers.
- 4 Over the summer months, we brainstormed on how to provide our entering freshmen with as much assistance as possible with the math and science initiative. We knew that they would have difficulty in these areas because of their lack of preparation during their elementary and middle school years. It was decided that we would have all freshmen attend Saturday School, where they would take math, science and creative writing for credit. The response from parents and students has been overwhelmingly positive.



*Even though I vehemently opposed the math and science initiative, once it was mandated, we moved quickly and thoughtfully to ensure its success in our school.*

#### **ENHANCEMENT OF OUR COLLEGE PLACEMENT PROGRAM**

Over the past few years, we have been able to place a large number of seniors in some of the finest colleges and universities in the country. Mr. Monte Griffith, our College Advisor, has done a magnificent job of assisting our students.

After evaluating our student population, I felt there was a need to expand the opportunities for students with average academic ability. Again, we developed a plan and followed it step by step:

- 1 We created a position for an additional college advisor to work with our students to help each of them gain access to collegiate programs that would meet their individual needs.
- 2 We changed our College Day to College Night so that we could get the participation of our parents.
- 3 A heavy emphasis was placed on preparing our junior class for college.
- 4 We included an S.A.T. course in our P.M. School.
- 5 I spoke to 800 college admissions officers at the National Association of College Admission Counselors in Chicago and was able to recruit 30 additional colleges to participate in our College Night. In addition, I have committed to sending a staff member to this conference in the future to encourage even more colleges to participate in our college placement program.
- 6 Seniors at Boys and Girls High School will sell copies of this book and all the proceeds will go into a scholarship fund that will be presented to them at graduation.

*"Don't Stand Still" is a theme for all schools. We can all improve if we have the will and determination to keep moving forward.*

## About The Author

Frank N. Mickens was born and raised in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, New York.

Mr. Mickens attended Junior Academy during the elementary years of his education. He continued his education in the New York City public schools and graduated from Erasmus Hall High School in 1964. Mr. Mickens completed his undergraduate studies at the State University of New York at Potsdam. He received his Masters Degree from New York University, and completed post graduate work at Columbia University. In December 1991, Mr. Mickens was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters from Medgar Evers College.

Mr. Mickens has over 25 years of experience as an educator in the New York City Public School System. Throughout his career, Mr. Mickens has served in the positions of teacher, Dean, basketball coach, Assistant Principal, Principal and assistant superintendent.

He started in 1968 as a teacher of Social Studies at the old Boys High School and spent a combined ten years at the old Boys High and the new Boys and Girls High School. From 1979 - 1982, he served as Assistant Principal of Junior High School 109 in Queens. From 1982 - 1985, he was Principal of Junior High School 324 in Bedford Stuyvesant. In 1985, Mr. Mickens was appointed Principal of Martin Luther King, Jr. High School.

For the past eight years, Mr. Mickens has served as Principal of Boys and Girls High School. He has received nationwide recognition for his commitment to young people, and for the relentless campaign of his positive program on self-esteem at Boys and Girls High School.

In recognition of his initiatives for young people, Mr. Mickens has been featured often in *The New York Times*, *New York* magazine, *New York Newsday*, and *The New York Amsterdam News*. He has appeared on *The Today Show*, *Ceraldo*, *Good Day New York*, *CNN*, *Best Talk in Town*, *The McCreary Report* and *The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour* with Charlayne Hunter-Gault. On March 7, 1992, Mr. Mickens was selected by ABC National News as the "Person of the Week."

Mr. Mickens has attended the Harvard University's Principals' Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education as a part-time visiting practitioner.

On November 18, 1992, Mr. Mickens was appointed by New York City School Chancellor Fernandez to serve in the position of Administrative Superintendent in addition to his duties as Principal of Boys and Girls High School. At the same time, Mr. Mickens serves as an Assistant Principal at Long Island University, New York University and PACE University.

A noted lecturer on effective schools, Mr. Mickens has spoken at educational forums throughout New York City; Atlanta; Chicago; Boston; Washington, D.C.; Kentucky and Georgia.

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NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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